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Persimmon Sheep Cheese Salad

(Serves 4)

Ingredients:

2-3 Fuyu persimmons, ripe and sliced

4-5 cups baby arugula, washed and dried

Hard Sheep cheese, shaved or cut into small squares

¼ cup dried cranberries

Method:

Combine salad ingredients together in a large bowl and dress with your favorite salad dressing; a simple vinaigrette is not only time saving, but allows the flavor of the salad ingredients to shine.

- Denise McAllan, Purchasing

PRODUCE NOTES

October 23, 2007

Persimmons: Autumn Beauties

I grew up eating dried persimmons, called *hoshigaki*, which many Japanese American families eat during Japanese New Year because persimmons are a symbol of good health and longevity. Our *hoshigaki* were grown and dried and given to us each year by another Japanese American family, our friends the Uyedas, who had lovely persimmon trees at their home in Los Angeles. The chewy dried persimmons were sweeter than candy! The labor-intensive process of making *hoshigaki*, hand-dried persimmons, is a disappearing art, but thankfully there are historians and interested groups dedicated to preserving the tradition.

Persimmons are actually not native to Japan—they originated in China. They are very beloved in Japan, though, and the image of persimmon trees loaded with fruit but bare of leaves, set against a snowy, wintry mountain scene is common in classic Japanese artwork, on fabrics, and on Japanese New Year greeting cards. Commodore Matthew Perry went to Japan in the mid-1850's and brought persimmon trees to Washington, DC, and around 1870, the USDA introduced grafted cultivars of Japanese persimmons into California, Georgia, and later, Florida. This subtropical tree grows well in California and the Southeast United States. (Today, California grows over 90% of the United States' persimmons.)

There is a type of persimmon native to North America, too. *Diospyros virginiana* is the botanical name of the native grape-sized persimmon, which is astringent till ripe. The Algonquin people called this fruit "putchamin", "pasimian" or "pessamin". From the Algonquin word, we get "persimmon".

Although there are over a hundred varieties of persimmons, two are readily available here: the Hachiya and the Fuyu. The Hachiya is acorn-shaped with bright orange skin and a papery, soft green calyx attached. The Hachiyas are full of tannins, and so they are very astringent until they are ripe. When ripe, they are extremely soft-fleshed. They're very delicious

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the more elongated, Hachiya-type persimmon

Fall Market Report

The past few weeks brought cooler temperatures and early rain to many local growing areas, which slowed down plant growth and harvesting abilities. As a result, supply of many items have tightened up and prices have increased.

Broccoli prices will come back down in the next week as supply becomes more available. Meanwhile **lettuce** supply is spotty and dropping off slightly. **Celery** supply was also affected by cooler weather conditions, but availability is decent.

New fall items include asparagus from Argentina and Chile, which has arrived slightly earlier than last year and should last until Thanksgiving—get it while you can! The **first satsumas** have appeared and taste great, but many growers are waiting for higher color and increased sugar content before harvesting them, so expect some gaps. **Cranberries** just arrived but the crop is very tight this year, which means higher prices. **Young white ginger** from Hawaii also arrived, and Ecuadorian **gold pineapples** should be available soon. By the beginning of November, **mangoes and navels** should be available.

Items that are in transition and **almost done are figs, Marian Trading Co. Thompson grapes, melons, heirloom tomatoes and cherry tomatoes.**

It's unlikely that we will see any more California-grown strawberries or raspberries until next year. The early rain has prematurely ended the California tomato season, and continued rain threatens to end the bell pepper growing season as well. Local eggplant, cucumber, and zucchini supply is slowly dwindling, with low availability on varieties.

The traditional fall items are in full swing: **pomegranates, persimmons, hard squash and pumpkins abound.** Although the **apple market in general is strong**, expect lighter supply on domestic Fujis this season. There was a short crop of Bartlett pears this year; the season is already over. However, **supplies on d'Anjou, Comice, and Asian pear varieties are good.** There's good availability on all potato varieties, and some **dry farmed specialty potatoes** are in our future. **Green bean** supply should be consistent through the end of this month and into November.

- Denise McAllan, Purchasing

Persimmons, continued

eaten plain. Chill a ripe Hachiya, cut it in half, hold a half in your cupped hand, and eat the sweet, squishy flesh with a spoon. I like to add a squeeze of lemon to cut the sweetness. The pulp of the Hachiya is used for puddings, cakes, smoothies and desserts.

The Fuyu persimmon is squat, shaped like a tomato, and can be bright orange to deep red-orange in color. You can eat this variety



of persimmon when it's crisp and firm (or wait till it's a little bit soft) —it's not astringent at all. It has sweet flesh, and you can slice it like an apple and eat it that way, or use it in salads. If you cut it horizontally, you'll see there's a star shape inside.

Enjoy this lovely fruit of autumn!

- Dani Yamamoto

Persimmon Pudding

(adapted from the *Joy of Cooking*)

- Denise McAllan

Ingredients:

4-6 very ripe Hachiya persimmons, seeded
4 large eggs
2 ½ cups of buttermilk (replace with coconut milk for a vegan version)
¼ cup (1/2 stick) unsalted butter, melted
1 ½ cups sugar
1 ½ cups all purpose flour
1 ½ teaspoons baking powder
1 ½ teaspoons baking soda
½ teaspoon each of ginger, nutmeg, allspice, and cinnamon
pinch of salt

Method:

1. Preheat oven to 400°. Remove the persimmon pulp from the fruit with a spoon; you will need 1 ½ cups of persimmon pulp. Puree pulp in a blender and remove to a bowl. Whisk in the eggs until light, followed by the buttermilk and butter.
2. Combine the remaining dry ingredients together, stirring well, then add to the wet persimmon mixture, whisking until combined.
3. Pour into a shallow, buttered 3-quart baking dish, and bake until the top is a deep golden brown, about 50 minutes.
4. Serve warm or cold with whipped cream, or ice cream.