

Produce Exchange 4 Feb 2017

Greeting swappers

February already and only one total fire ban – what a relief. Is anyone else finding their plum trees having a rest after bumper crops every year to date? After a damp winter and spring, maybe they are not panicking about drought so not reproducing madly as insurance.

Bitter greens - “*la cicoria*” - keep growing themselves without any help at my place. So thanks to swapper Anita Triado, here is a wonderfully lyrical piece about them and the benefits to your liver!



My knowledge of bitter greens in general has roots in the folklore of the generally endearing term to describe women of a certain age) from the central Italy, which I frequented, without fail, in the beautiful medieval F of the Umbrian hilltop town. The vecchiette enticed me to try them and cook them. However it was the population at large who drilled into me t ingesting regular doses of " la cicoria" (somewhat of a euphemism for b general).

Italians are obsessed with their health. Milk is only taken up to late mon is bad for digestion, so no cappuccinos after that time), a "teperature" o to bed, they flee from draughts en masse, and it is uncommon to meet doesn't know their current blood pressure and other essential readings. ALL particularly concerned about the state of their livers and the need regularly of their inevitable built up of toxins and to move that sluggish e the body.

And what easier way to do this but to incorporate with the delicious cic Italian table?

For those not fortunate enough to live in the provinces, with access to t and the oft wild varieties they would bring to market (which often includ to yank out of my garden in Australia), cultivated cicoria is ubiquitous a in all green grocers. In addition to this, pre-cooked dark green balls are local delicatessens and in the deli section of supermarkets. It also routi restaurants as a "verdura" of the day.

The bitter aspect of the greens is wherein lies its benefit. Bitter cleanses recognise this. It can take some getting used to, the bitterness, but I've Think Liver and now I eat it willingly.

Generally cicoria is served two ways (at least in central Italy): it is simply boiled (not toooo long) in ample and salted water, chopped finely, squeezed well of its water and served with a fine splash of olive oil and a good squeeze of lemon. Alternatively, after the squeezing/chopping, it is " ripassata in padella con ooglio, oli e peperoncino", re-cooked gently in the fry-pan, oil (olive, obviously), garlic and (dried) chilli.

Cicoria is eaten after meat as a side dish but it also shows up at light evening meals in its simple form accompanied by (fresh) mozzarella, bread, olive oil, a few tomatoes maybe (summer) ...and don't forget the lemon juice-essential ingredient.

Cicoria can also be fancied up in several ways, my favourite being the following: once boiled/squeezed/chopped, toss it with a couple of beaten eggs and some ricotta and a touch of nutmeg and pour it into a pie shell as a "torta salata" (savoury tart). Great for a picnic too.

Chicory, when you find it, is not routinely particularly expensive. A weekly dose of bitters is undoubtedly less expensive than its fancy liver cleansing counterparts. And infinitely more satisfying. ...once you "get it".

Buon appetito!

Thanks Anita - I am inspired to try harder to love my bitter greens, and shall bring some to the swap.

I will also have various bulbs – Dutch Iris (pictured), Narcissus, Grape Hyacinths, Sp. Gladiolus (small white ones).



Produce swaps are an idea whose time has come – attached is a lovely email from Trentham Food Swap which we helped set up and loaned our signs to, and continue contact with. January was their third year anniversary, you can visit them every third Saturday to see what grows in Trentham.



Boosting Community Campaigning and Collaboration in and around Macedon Ranges

As you know, last year was a busy one for many of us working for change in our Shire and helping new people to stand and become elected as Councillors. Encouraged by the success of reinvigorating democracy and electing a progressive Council, there is an appetite among the community for building and maintaining momentum for social change. If you are curious or interested, diarize this first workshop of a series on the theme of boosting community campaigning and collaboration in and around Macedon Ranges: **"Power" Tools to Effect Change, Saturday Feb 18, Woodend Neighbourhood House, 1.30-4.30 pm.**

This workshop will outline practical and versatile tools relevant for us swappers interested in environmental issues like climate change, sustainability, food localisation...or anyone working for social and policy change.

If anyone would like information explaining more about the workshops contact Alice Aird at airda@bigpond.com and cc me.

I will be away for the March (and May) swap so if anyone feels like setting up and keeping an eye on it let me know. I'm happy to send the monthly email before I leave.

Cheers – Helen

Addendum:

Anyone wanting the seeds or bulbs listed below (I shall bring them on Saturday) can please bring labelled envelopes or paper bags for transporting them. You can help yourself - I got weak about doing lots of small individually labelled lots.

Bulbs: Dutch Iris; Sp gladioli; Narcissus; Grape Hyacinth (Muscari); Aphelion (Blue Star)



Seeds: Coriander; Love-in-the Mist (Nigella); Sweep pea; Honesty; Poppy – purple mophead; Poppy – single purple; Calendula (a Marigold)

Also, I've run out of the black plastic forestry tubes if anyone has some spares.

The Farmers market has new paths, and we are still at the entrance but a couple of metres along, where the BBQ was.

See you at 10 for swapping on Saturday - Helen