

Gardening GUSTO

Victory Gardens and Sweet Potato Muffins

BY KATHERINE WHITESIDE

A while ago I wrote a bit about World War II Victory Gardens (*"A Farm in Your Yard and A Chicken in Every Pot"* September 12 and 13, 2017). Since we have just marked the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Versailles (June 28, 1919) I was prompted to see what was happening on the home garden front during World War I.

It turns out that Victory Gardens actually were born during The Great War (1914-1918). During that intense period of fighting, there was a terrible shortage of food in Europe as fertile farms became bloody battlefields. Likewise, in the United States, farm boys shipped off to become doughboys and agricultural production fell far behind what was need to send

across the ocean to keep the troops healthy.

(An aside: WWI American troops were known as doughboys for the fried dumplings served in their mess tents. That fried dough eventually became doughnuts, but no infantry soldier stays strong on fried dough.)

During that period of food shortage, Americans at home were urged to grow vegetables, fruits, and herbs on any available land (back yards, school yards, empty lots, etc) so that more commercially-produced food could be exported to the troops. Those WWI plots became known as Victory Gardens, and as people found that they liked growing their own food, the movement toward domestic

vegetable and fruit gardens kept growing and, eventually, re-emerged as Victory Gardens (2.0) in WW II.

Typical Victory Gardens looked much like vegetable gardens today. They usually contained beans, beets, cabbage, kale, kohlrabi, lettuce, peas, tomatoes, turnips, squash, and Swiss chard. Americans were also encouraged to keep backyard chickens, both for eggs and for meat, and to master the preserving arts of canning,

could actually feed people -- in place of sharecropping soil-depleting cotton. (See a WWI era recipe for sweet potato muffins at right.)

Today, many people of a certain age first became interested in growing food from watching their grandparents garden. Those granies were probably Victory Gardening during one or both World Wars. These now-grown grandchildren of that mid-century era are now (if they're lucky) grandparents themselves. Therefore, today it is our turn to pass along the knowledge and satisfaction of gardening to the next generations. Keep gardening a victorious activity.

Take time to show your little ones where food comes from, whether you grow your own, patronize your local farmers' market, or organize family trips to a work-

ing farm. (The excellent Glynwood "Food and Farm Day" is a free, annual event perfectly suited for family outings. Here's where to find out about upcoming farm events: www.glynwood.org/events/calendar.html)

The real victory in a garden is the deep satisfaction of working on the land, observing the many miracles of nature, bringing home-grown harvest to the table, and watching how your work grows strong, healthy bodies. That's how we keep the victory in gardening. Upward and onward my friends!

See you here next week for ten things to plant now and the go-to on garlic. Stay cool and garden hard.



Illustration by Peter Gergely

drying, and pickling.

George Washington Carver (1860s-1943), was born into slavery and became the first black student at Iowa State in 1891. After graduating with a B.S. degree in Agriculture, Carver became a pioneering botanist, ecologist, and environmentalist, as well as the esteemed head of Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University).

Carver wrote many of the instructional pamphlets distributed to Victory Gardening Americans. His work taught novice gardeners how to succeed with growing food. On a broader scale, Carver researched the breeding, cultivation, and economics of growing peanuts and sweet potatoes -- crops that

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BOSCOBEL
HOUSE AND GARDENS

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Sweet Potato Muffins

We don't grow sweet potatoes but I have seen bountiful harvests of these treats from local gardens. If you want to grow a sweet tater patch here in the Hudson Valley, I suggest you purchase slips from Johnny's Selected Seeds for the 'Beauregard' variety. A slip is a piece of the potato that has rooted. When planted, one slip will produce many potatoes. 'Beauregard' sweets were bred to produce high yields in our cooler region.

Although we don't grow our own, my family eats lots of sweet potatoes. We always bake them unpeeled (I think they're kind of yucky when boiled) and eat them with butter or sour cream or both. Sweet potatoes are packed with vitamins A and C, and make a great "first food" for infants just starting on their tiny gourmet journeys.

I always bake one or two extra sweet potatoes because they make good leftover finger foods the next day, even cold right out of the fridge. This wonderful WWI recipe for left-over sweet potato muffins makes a great treat that has no added sugar. Eat in good health! (from *Best War Time Recipes* by the Royal Baking Powder Company, 1918)

Here's What You Need

- Flour: one cup
- Baking powder: 4 teaspoons
- Salt: 1 teaspoon
- Left-over, cooled, mashed sweet potatoes: 1 cup
- Egg: one, beaten well
- Milk: one cup (NOTE: Due to wartime scarcity, the original recipe calls for milk thinned with water. The muffins are richer if you use whole milk only.)
- OPTIONAL: add soaked raisins, ground spices (cinnamon, nutmeg, all spice, ginger) and/or walnuts.

Just Do This:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a muffin tin or line with papers
2. In one bowl, sift the flour, baking powder and salt together.
3. Add the cold mashed sweet potatoes and mix.
4. Add the beaten egg and milk and mix well.

Pour batter into muffin tin and bake for 25 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into a middle muffin comes out clean. Cool on a rack and serve with butter or cream cheese. These are a great "anytime" treat. It's summer: you have to keep your gardening strength up!

This is the 459th Gardening Gusto column Katherine has written. Stay tuned here every week for tried-and-true organic gardening tips and simply delicious family recipes. Katherine is the author of six books, including The Way We Garden Now, illustrated by pediatrician/gardener/artist Peter Gergely.

Moms Encouraged to Participate in Big Latch On Across County

BY ERIC GROSS

Putnam's breastfeeding moms are being encouraged to join thousands of other women around the world by participating in Friday's Big Latch On.

The annual event, an opportunity to support and promote breastfeeding, is traditionally held during World Breastfeeding Week. Last year some 60,000 people took part in 778 events in 28 countries showing support for 22,592 breastfeeding parents and 21,500 children who 'latched on' and were breastfed.

Putnam's "Big Latch-On" will be hosted by the Putnam County Department of Health and will take place at two locations on Friday -- the Carmel Fire Department headquarters and the Desmond-Fish Library in

Garrison. Participants will receive goody bags and refreshments will be served. Commissioner of Health Dr. Michael Nesheiwat described the latch on as "part of our initiative to promote and support the highly beneficial practice of breastfeeding for both maternal and infant health."

County Executive MaryEllen Odell also encouraged moms to participate: "What represents family better than a mother and her newborn child. The latch-on event is a socially responsible initiative to support Putnam moms and their babies."

Registration begins at 9:45 a.m. with the latch on getting underway at 10:30 a.m. Dr. Nesheiwat has encouraged moms to arrive at the firehouse early enough to complete registration and settle in: "Bring a blanket, pillow

or cushion for more comfortable seating. All breastfeeding mothers in Putnam surrounding counties are invited to participate. Siblings, other family members, friends are also welcome. Let's break the global Latch On record for more women breastfeeding at the same time."

We'd tell you about the 10 awards we won this year, including first place ones; but that would take away from the room we devote to local news. The PCNR: All local all the time.

San Damiano Farm
at Graymoor