

July

Get out to the Farmers Markets and Roadside stands because all our fresh North Carolina peaches are here and we are bursting with produce. We have so much fresh, homegrown produce right now it is just amazing. You can talk to the farmers and know exactly what you are getting and where it is grown. I really enjoyed buying all the produce for these recipes because there was so much to choose from not to mention, they were sampling peaches, watermelons and blueberries. I even bought some fresh corn, six-week peas, butter beans and squash while I was there for dinner. Now is the time so drop buy or make a day of it at the market and savor the flavor of North Carolina Agriculture.

NC Peach Cobbler

1qt fresh peaches (5-6 med. Size)
2-cup sugar (divided)
1 stick butter
1-cup self-rising flour
1-cup milk

Preheat oven to 350. In a 2 qt saucepan, mix together the peaches and 1 cup sugar. Cook on low heat until juice is drawn from fruit. Place butter in 2 qt casserole and place in the oven (or microwave) until the butter is melted. Mix 1 cup sugar, flour and milk. Beat with wire whisk until smooth (will be very thin). Pour flour mixture over hot butter and spoon fruit and juice evenly over the batter. Do not stir. Bake 40 minutes or until crust is golden brown. (Dough rises to top to form crust and thicken juice)

PERSONAL Note: I love peach cobbler with homemade vanilla ice cream. If you didn't know, we have a North Carolina Department of Agriculture blog and I blog monthly. That's the recipe this month, how to make homemade vanilla ice cream.
Go to: <http://info.ncagr.com/blog/>

How to Peel a Peach

Bring a pot of water to a boil. Turn it off and gently submerge several peaches with a slotted for 45 seconds. Fix a bowl with ice and water. After 45 seconds remove the peaches and submerge them into the ice bath for 30 seconds. Remove the peaches and with a knife, slice through the skin down the entire peach. Then pull off the skin. So your peaches don't discolor right away, re-submerge them into the ice bath for a few minutes. If the peeling doesn't come off easily, simply put them back into the hot water and the ice bath again.

Tomato and Cucumber Soup with Croutons

For the soup:
¼ cup oil
2 medium onions

4 small cloves garlic
2 ¼ pounds ripe NC tomatoes, quartered
3 large NC cucumbers, peeled, halved, seeded and coarsely chopped
1-teaspoon salt
1-teaspoon pepper
1 ½ tablespoons tomato paste
4 ½ cups canned low-salt chicken broth
1 ½ teaspoons thyme

For the croutons:

1 French bread loaf, sliced in ¼ inch rounds
6 tablespoons margarine
1-teaspoon chili powder
Dash garlic powder
Dash salt and pepper

For the soup: Sauté onion and garlic 2-5 minutes (longer if time permits). Add tomatoes and cucumbers; sauté several more minutes. Add salt and pepper. Add tomato paste and mix in broth. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer until vegetables are very soft, about 30 minutes; stir occasionally. Let cool, then puree and reheat or puree soup in very small batches.

For the croutons: Spread butter on both sides of the bread; sprinkle with spices. Bake at 375 degrees until golden on both sides. Tear or slice into croutons.

PERSONAL Note: This recipe is from my family's cookbook. My cousin, Teresa Bennett came up with this one back in 1998 and it is delicious!! It is the perfect summertime soup.