



Week of April 20, 2009

Market News, See What's Sprouted!

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Asparagus is coming from Peru right now. Remember that Peru sizes their asparagus small so you may want to order a size up. **Carrot** prices are lower and product is coming from Texas and Mexico. **Fava Beans** are available, and **Sugar Snaps** are a good buy next week. The **Pepper** market has changed again. Regular Peppers - Green, Red, & Yellow have all come down in price, but **Poblano & Jalapenos** have all gone up in price. Go figure. **Cilantro & Tomatillos** have also gone up in price. Maybe this has to do with the pre-Cinco de Mayo hype that's going on. **Tomato** prices are down for next week and quality is improving. We have a wonderful local farmer that's producing heirlooms for us, and what is coming in is beautiful! **Strawberries** are down. Unfortunately, not all berries are in that category. **Blues** are still very expensive, but are switching to US grown product. **Blackberries** are very reasonable right now, and are your best value. **Raspberries** are still at a stupid price and show no sign of coming down in price anytime soon, but at least they are not climbing any higher. We are going to have California stone fruit soon. Hopefully we will have some available by

mid week, next week. We have plenty of **Yellow Watermelon**, and it is very good. **Oranges** are excellent out of California. When you get towards the end of the season navel oranges always get better. **Grapes** are steady and nice selections of **Apples** are still available. **Cantaloupe** is running very good, **Honeydew** are just fair. **Passion Fruit, Star Fruit, and Chirimoyas** are all available. **Figs** are slowly trickling in. They should be larger and more plentiful in a couple of weeks; cold weather affected the **Morels & Ramps** this week, so supply is very tight for next week and higher-priced. **White Asparagus** is back and in plentiful supply and makes a nice change of pace, or you can mix and match with Green. Price for White is also very reasonable. If you're looking for something really special to add to your Spring Menus we have some **Black Garlic** available (amazing stuff)! Also available throughout this spring is **Ultra Mini Bok Choy, Purple Asparagus, Purple Artichokes, English Peas, and Wild Arugula.**



Top Crops!

Texas
Heirloom Tomatoes
BBQ Onions
Fingerling Potatoes
Celery Root

In the Spotlight

Fava Beans

...and a nice Chianti? Ok, seriously fava beans have a buttery texture and a wonderful nutty flavor. They can be served simply boiled, mashed and spread on crostini, or added to spring stews and soups. They are often paired with artichokes or other spring vegetables such as peas and morels. Favas are nutrition superheroes. They are high in fiber and iron, and low in sodium and fat. They have no cholesterol but so much protein, they are called the meat of the poor. As a matter of fact, Italians credit the fava bean as a factor in saving Sicilians from starvation during a time of famine. Since then, the fava has been considered good luck.

Fava Beans





Upgrading quality during downturns

By PAMELA PARSEGHIAN - Nation's Restaurant News
(April 20, 2009) Many corporate chefs at chain restaurants, as well as those heading up fine-dining kitchens, say now—during a time of economic hardship—is the time to maintain or improve food quality, not decrease it.

Given lower commodity prices and the need to offer cash-strapped consumers better reasons to part with their money, some chefs say they are seizing the opportunity and improving dishes by purchasing superior products.

“We are exploiting these economic times to upgrade ingredients without affecting the bottom line,” says Stefano Cordova, vice president and corporate chef of [Bertucci's](#), the 90-unit Italian dinnerhouse chain based Northborough, Mass. “We are taking advantage of the commodity prices coming down.”

For example, Cordova says he recently started purchasing, “Sicilian sea salt; natural chicken; all-natural, unbleached, nonbromated flour and all-natural, hormone-free milk.”

Lower dairy prices have proven a boon in the ability to offer the hormone-free milk, he says.

“The price of dairy has definitely come down dramatically,” he says. “We moved from regular milk for the same price that we paid before. It was a good opportunity for us, especially since 90 percent of the milk is used for the kids’ menu. I had been trying to get that milk for a long time.”

Since lobster prices have come down by about 20 percent when compared with the same time last year, Cordova says he will highlight the seafood in an upcoming limited-time-offer dish with fettuccine and shrimp in a light cream sauce. The plan is to sell the dish for \$16.95, the same price a tomato-based lobster and shrimp pasta dish sold for last spring. But this year there will be an extra ounce of seafood made up of half shrimp and half lobster, Cordova says.

Business at Bertucci's has been “pretty much stable,” he says, with the exception that catering to businesses, especially for takeout lunches, is declining. Still, the per-person check average remains at about \$14.50 to \$15.

“It is much easier to gain profitability through increased sales, which means a better guest experience,” as opposed to

cutting food costs, says Dennis Lombardi, executive vice president of foodservice strategies for WD Partners, a restaurant design and development firm based in Dublin, Ohio.

Negotiating down

“We’re seeing more independent operators banding together to create local co-ops,” Lombardi says. “There is even more pressure to negotiate the last 10th of a cent for larger chains. There’s a lot of science and a lot of art to negotiating.”

These days many practiced buyers are negotiating for long-term buying contracts, such as for 18-month periods, to ensure “stable and predictable” pricing in this shaky time, Lombardi says. But that’s a gamble, he adds, as prices rise and fall like a roller coaster.

Smart food buying “is like the old Vaudeville act of balancing a plate on a stick,” he explains. “It is a balancing act.”

Kelley Jones, managing partner of [Suite & Tender](#) in San Diego, says he’s finding savings by working with and building relations with vendors to “negotiate prices down.” He’s also taking advantage of “prompt-payment discounts” of 2 percent to 3 percent for paying within 15 days.

Saving face and dollars

“I prefer closing the restaurant than to decrease the quality,” says Franck Savoy, managing partner of [Restaurant Guy Savoy](#) in Las Vegas, which is an offshoot of the critically acclaimed Parisian outlet.

“Business is a little slower, but it is not as dramatic as it could be,” he says, noting that it is down about 15 percent since last October and November.

Still, Savoy says he hasn’t changed menu prices, including for his \$68 artichoke soup with black truffles and mushroom brioche. But he did add a discounted pre-theater, three-course menu for \$98, “which is a bargain for us,” he says. His “Menu Prestige” sells for \$290 and everyone at the table must order it. “My mantra is ‘Don’t discount, don’t discount,’” says Steve Schimoler of [Crop](#) in Cleveland. “The minute you lower the value for something you’re doing, you’re screwed because you never get back to that value.”