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Congress Acts To Amend Organic Foods Law Amid Industry Split

In a move applauded by some members of the organic community and strongly opposed by others, a congressional subcommittee added a rider to the Agricultural Appropriations Bill last week that provides for changes to the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990.

The Organic Trade Association, based in Greenfield, Mass., proposed the language of the amendment, which focuses on standards for synthetic ingredients in organic food processing, on transition guidelines for dairy cows, and on the power of the Secretary of Agriculture to grant emergency exemptions for "commercially unavailable" organic crops.

While a number of organic manufacturers resolutely supported OTA's initiative, the Organic Consumers Association, Consumers Union, The Center for Food Safety, and other advocacy and consumer watchdog groups fought it, generating more than 300,000 messages to Congress from consumers and industry members opposing the rider. The legislation was temporarily delayed to give the organic industry time to reach a compromise, to no avail.

The rider overturns a previous court ruling in favor of Maine organic blueberry farmer Arthur Harvey, who argued that the OFPA prohibits use of any synthetics. But under federal organic standards written to fulfill the law and implemented in 2002, 38 synthetic ingredients have been approved for use in multi-ingredient organic food processing.

If Harvey's lawsuit sought to bring organic practices in line with the letter of the 1990 law, OTA says it aimed to revise the law to reflect practices currently in use and vital, they say, to continued growth of the organic industry. In a statement to The Natural Foods Merchandiser, OTA said, "No new synthetic substances, including ingredients, may be allowed in organic production without the review and approval of the National Organic Standards Board [a citizen advisory board to the U.S. Department of Agriculture], and no loophole was created by Congress' decision. The process is ex-

actly the way it has always been."

Critics of the amendment say that the new language opens the door to use of many more synthetics, weakens the authority and input of the NOSB, and ignores consumers who want rigorous organic standards.



"I think what has not been adequately factored in is what consumers expect of this label, and what consumers will do when the label doesn't meet their

expectations," said Urvashi Rangan, a senior scientist and policy analyst at Consumers Union in Yonkers, N.Y.

Though Shea said that her company saw the legislative move as a "very transparent process," Peggy Miars, executive director of Santa Cruz, Calif.-based California Certified Organic Farmers, expressed concerns about methods that some have characterized as secretive: "It appears that this will be better for organic producers, who are our clients; on the other hand, we're not happy with the manner in which the amendment was passed. We don't feel we were able to express our opinion and take a stance on it before the amendment was passed."

Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., who authored the charter for the national organic standards and labeling program and who inserted the temporary language to propel an industry compromise, said, "The Harvey case could have major impacts on the future of the organic industry, both for producers and processors. That is why I added language to the Senate bill instructing USDA to study the implications of the decision and report back to Congress. I believe a deliberative process to achieve consensus within the organic community would have been more appropriate."

November 8-10, 2005

Harvest Blend Regular

- Red Chard
- Broccoli
- Curly Parsley
- Red Onions
- Garnett Sweet Potatoes
- Green Bell Peppers
- Zucchini
- Cucumbers
- Tomatoes
- Braeburn Apples
- Bosc Pears
- Bananas
- Fuyu Persimmons
- Valencia Oranges

See the web site for details on our other options. Produce bag contents are subject to change based on availability.

Account Updates



We've gotten a lot of new customers lately, so this is a reminder that whenever possible, all changes to your account should be made through the Member Area of the web site.

Due to the amount of email we get, we cannot promise that requests sent to us in email will be seen in time for your next delivery.

If you have any questions about your account, we'd be glad to help. But please remember to use the web site whenever possible.

Recipes

Ribs With Sweet Potatoes

- 3 pounds pork spareribs
- 7 tbsp soy sauce, divided use
- 6 tbsp light brown sugar
- 4 tbsp hoisin sauce
- 2 tbsp rice wine or sherry
- 2 tbsp finely grated ginger
- 5 cloves garlic, peeled, divided use
- 1 small red chili, finely chopped
- 1.5 pounds medium sweet potatoes, cut into 1-inch chunks
- 1 tbsp vegetable oil
- 2 tbsp butter
- 1 tbsp lemon juice
- 2 cups baby spinach leaves

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Place the ribs in a large pot of cold water. Bring to a boil and simmer for 30 minutes; drain. Pat the ribs dry with paper towels and return to the dry pot. Combine 6 tbsp of the soy sauce, the sugar, hoisin sauce, rice wine, ginger, 2 cloves minced garlic and the chili. Pour over the ribs and turn to coat. Marinate at room temperature for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, toss the sweet potatoes and the remaining garlic cloves in the vegetable oil with the remaining soy sauce. Place in a single layer in a large roasting pan lined with aluminum foil or parchment paper (don't use waxed paper). Roast for 15 minutes.

Place the ribs on top of the sweet potatoes, reserving any extra marinade. Return to oven and roast for 45 minutes or until dark and sticky. Baste with the extra marinade periodically. Remove the ribs from pan, set aside and keep warm. In a bowl, mash the sweet potatoes, garlic, butter and lemon juice. Serve with the ribs and spinach.

Two Cheese Chard Parsley Quiche

- 2 cups flour, all-purpose, plus extra for working the dough
- 1 tsp salt
- 1/2 cup butter, unsalted, chilled
- 3 tbsp margarine, chilled
- 6 tbsp water, water
- 1 bunch chard, medium-sized leaves, thick middle ribs removed
- 1 each parsley, fresh, bunch, flat-leaf, stems removed
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1 pepper, freshly ground
- 3 each eggs
- 1/3 cup belpaese, or similar cheese, cut into 1/2 inch cubes
- 1/4 cup parmesan cheese, freshly grated
- 2 tsp butter

To make the pastry shell, sift together the flour and salt into a bowl. Cut the chilled butter and margarine into 1/2-inch chunks and add them to the flour mixture. Using a pastry blender or 2 knives, cut in the butter and margarine until the mixture forms pea-size balls. Add the ice water, 1 tbsp at a time. At the same time, turn the dough with a fork and then with your fingertips just enough to dampen it. This method will help to keep the pastry light and flaky. Do not overwork the dough or it will become tough. Gather the dough into a ball, wrap it in aluminum foil or plastic wrap and

refrigerate for 15 minutes. (The chilling will make it easier to roll out.) Preheat the oven to 475 degrees.

To prepare the crust: On a lightly floured work surface, roll out the chilled dough into a round about 11 1/2 inches in diameter and 1/8 inch thick. Drape the pastry over the rolling pin and carefully transfer it to a 9-to-10-inch tart pan. Unfold it from the pin and press it gently into the pan. Trim off the overlap even with the pan's rim. Line the tart shell with aluminum foil and then add a layer of pastry weights or dried beans. Place the weighted pastry pan on a baking sheet. Place both in the preheated oven to bake partially, until faintly golden, 8 or 9 minutes.

Remove from the oven, lift out the weights, remove the aluminum foil, and let the crust cool completely on the baking sheet. Reduce the oven heat to 375 degrees. To make the filling, arrange the chard leaves on a steamer rack over gently boiling water, cover and steam for 5 to 7 minutes. The leaves should retain their pretty green color but be greatly reduced in volume. Remove the chard from the steamer and squeeze the leaves to extract any water. Cut the chard into chiffonade strips by stacking the leaves, rolling them up into a thin cigar shape and then cutting them crosswise in thin shreds. Set aside.

Steam the parsley leaves as you did the chard, but for 3 to 5 minutes. Remove from the steamer and squeeze dry. Mince the parsley. Again squeeze the chard and parsley to remove excess water. Set aside.

Warm the olive oil in a skillet over low heat. Add the garlic and saute until just soft, 1 or 2 minutes. Add the chard and parsley, reduce the heat to very low and cook, turning often, until the greens have absorbed the oil, about 5 minutes. Remove from the heat and set aside.

In a large mixing bowl, combine the cream, salt, pepper and eggs. Beat lightly, then add the olive oil-infused greens and the cheeses. With the partially cooked shell in place on the baking sheet, fill it as full as possible with the mixture without spilling any over the top. Cut the butter into bits and dot the top of the quiche. Place in the preheated 375-degree oven and bake until the filling is puffed and golden and a knife inserted in the center comes out clean, about 30 to 35 minutes. Remove from the oven and serve immediately or let cool to room temperature. Cut into wedges to serve.

Chard-Zucchini Frittata

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 cups finely shredded Swiss chard
- 1 cup thinly sliced zucchini
- 8 eggs
- 1/4 cup grated parmesan or romano cheese
- salt, pepper to taste

If the zucchini is more than 1 1/2 inches in diameter (3.5 cm), half or quarter the squash lengthwise before slicing. Heat oil in a large non-stick skillet over medium-high heat. Add minced garlic and sauté until translucent, but not golden. Add chard and reduce heat to medium low. Sauté chard, stirring occasionally, until almost completely wilted (about 5 minutes).

Meanwhile, beat the eggs together until lightly foamy. Add the cheese, salt and pepper and beat until thoroughly mixed with the eggs. Spread chard as evenly as you can across the bottom of the skillet and then spread the zucchini slices over the chard. Cook for another two to three minutes until the chard is thoroughly wilted, but not crispy or burnt. Lower the heat if necessary.

Pour in the egg and cheese mixture gently over the vegetables and cook until the frittata loosens from the sides of the pan and is golden on the bottom. Heat the frittata under the broiler until the top side is golden brown. Note: This method should only be used with an oven-safe skillet – i.e., no plastic handles. Slice the frittata into wedges and serve.