

Prairie Grass Cafe Celebrates the Fall with Delicious Pumpkin Specials

Written by Australian Business

CHICAGO, IL, September 16, 2013 **/24-7PressRelease/** -- With fall at our doorstep, the scent of fresh pumpkin and autumnal spices have started wafting through the kitchen at Prairie Grass Cafe (601 Skokie Blvd. Northbrook, IL 847-205-4433). "The first batch of heirloom pumpkins just arrived," says Northbrook's Prairie Grass Cafe chef/owner Sarah Stegner. "We have our pumpkins specially grown for us by farmer Tracey Vowell from a local farm, Three Sisters Garden, in Kankakee, IL," she says. "It's a special time of year. We use between 1,000- and 1,500 lbs each season."

On the menu.

Pumpkins dishes typically run mid-September through November, as long as the pumpkins are available. Expect to find offerings including: Grilled Honey Glazed Heirloom "Luxury Pie Pumpkins" with Capriole Farm Goat Cheese and Toasted Pumpkin Seeds (\$8.50); Three Sisters Garden Heirloom Luxury Pie Pumpkin Soup (\$5.50); Maple Leaf Farm Crispy Half Duck with Roasted Pumpkin and Heirloom Kale with Huckleberries Sauce (\$28); Roasted Pumpkin Fritters with Pumpkin Honey Butter (\$8), Stuffed Pumpkin French Toast with Grilled Pumpkin Wedges (\$12) and Sarah's Mom's Pumpkin Pie with Whipped Cream (\$7.50).

Prairie Grass Cafe uses two pumpkin varieties. The first, the Heirloom Luxury Pie Pumpkin, is a beautiful pumpkin that was introduced in 1893 by Johnson & Stokes. The Heirloom Luxury Pie Pumpkin is a lovely golden fruit with white netting, typically in the 6lb range and perfect for pie making. In fact, this is one of the best tasting pie pumpkins you can use; with very sweet and smooth flesh, it's a favorite of all who use it," according to SeedSavers.org. Sarah says it's petite and has a smooth silky texture and intense pumpkin flavor. "It's also perfect for our grilled pumpkin."

The second variety used by Prairie Grass Cafe is a large pumpkin called Kankakee Brown, says Stegner. "It's a special variety that only Three Sisters Farm grows." It has rich flavor and the meat is dense, not stringy.

Three Sisters Garden Heirloom Luxury Pie Pumpkin SoupBy Sarah Stegner and George Bumbaris

(serves 4-6 people)

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Tracey from Three Sisters Garden agreed to grow Heirloom Luxury Pie Pumpkins for me. They are less stringy and less watery than a regular pumpkin. They have intense pumpkin flavor. Each year we have sold out on all her pumpkins. This year she grew 1500 lbs for us! They are really delicious!

Ingredients: 3 cups pumpkin, peeled, seeds removed and cut into 2" chunks
½ cup onion, peeled and chopped
2 Tablespoons olive oil
3 sprigs fresh thyme
2 bay leaves
Salt
8 cups chicken stock
½ cup heavy cream

Method: In a large soup pot saute the pumpkin in the olive oil with the onions, thyme, bay leaves and salt. Cook over medium heat until the onions are transparent. Do not add color to the vegetables.

Add the chicken stock and simmer for 30 minutes or until the pumpkin is tender and the liquid reduces by about a ¼ of its original volume.

Add the cream and simmer another 5 minutes.

Remove from the stove. Take the thyme and bay leaves out of the soup. Blend well.

Serve hot with toasted pumpkin seeds and popcorn.

About Three Sisters Farm Tracey Vowell and Kathe Roybal worked in the restaurant industry until they grew tired of the hard work and decided on a career change. They bought their nine-acre farm in 2000, and named it after the Native American practice of growing corn, beans, and squash in the same mounds - a sophisticated, sustainable system that provided long-term soil fertility and a healthy diet then, and still does. The partners (that's Tracey on left, Kathe at right) focus on specialty vegetables like microgreens (which they grow year-round), pea shoots, heirloom tomatoes, summer and winter squashes, herbs, fresh beans (shelled at the Market) and huitlacoche, a mushroom particularly prized in Mexican cuisine.

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Prairie Grass Cafe (601 Skokie Blvd.; Northbrook, IL.; 847-205-4433) supports Chicago's Green City Market and local sustainable farms, selecting the freshest ingredients to reflect the season. Prairie Grass Cafe currently serves lunch Monday - Friday 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.; and dinner Monday - Sunday; Tuesday - Thursday 5 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., Friday and Saturday 5 p.m. to 10:30 p.m., and Monday and Sunday 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Prairie Grass Cafe also serves breakfast Saturdays 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Sundays 9:30 p.m. to 2 p.m. Light fare is available in the bar Monday through Friday 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. For more information or to make a reservation, please call (847) 205-4433 or visit <http://www.prairiegrasscafe.com>.