

"THE LITTLE LIBRARY MAGAZINE"



ISSUE 2, SPRING 2026

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**A COMMUNITY
ZINE PROJECT
(THAT YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE TO)**

**HAMILTON'S OWN SINCE 2025
EACH ONE MADE BY HAND**

An ode to Phở Lạc Viên

For 14 years, Pho Lac Vien quietly served our community from a humble basement storefront at the corner of Locke and York.

Their food was reliably delicious. Prices were generously modest. Service was effortlessly charming.

Eating at Pho Lac Vien felt like you were going home to eat with your family, only easier and tastier.

Nothing is more comforting on a cold, wet, windy, or any kind of day than digging into a steaming bowl of pho and sprinkling it with herbs and aromatics. Be and Dao made that experience exponentially better through their enthusiasm and culinary craft.

As more time passes since they closed for business, in June 2025, we crave fresh rolls and pho with each glimpse of the building. This makes us all the more grateful to Be and Dao for working so hard to build this iconic hub over so many years.

Be and Dao, your restaurant kept us fed, happy, and connected. Thank you for bringing our community so much delightful food and warmth! -- A&V



When Food is Love

(or at least tolerance)

by Giamedin

I was reminded how much my husband loves me when I decided to turn vegetarian. I know what you're thinking, "Oh god, he's going to tell me a 40 page story about how food is love and because this is a paper zine I can't just plug the URL into justtherecipe.com and skip all the crap". With that in mind, here are the recipes I want to share and I will continue the tale of how my husband ~~almost divorced~~ gracefully adapted to my late in life vegetarianism. See you after the break.



Paneer Korma

(recipe adapted from <https://hebbarskitchen.com>)

Ingredients:

1/4 cup oil
20 cubes paneer
2 onion sliced
3 tbsp curd
3 tbsp cashew
2 tbsp ghee
1 tsp cumin
1/2 inch cinnamon
4 cloves
1/2 tsp turmeric
1 tsp chili powder
1 tsp coriander powder
1/2 tsp cumin powder
2 cup hot water
1 tsp salt

Directions:

Heat oil in dutch oven on stove top and roast paneer cubes. Set aside paneer cubes in a bowl once golden brown.



Chop onions and fry in the same oil. Transfer oil and onions into blender and let cool. Add tomatoes, curd and cashew, and grind to a smooth paste. This mixture is your masala paste, keep it to one side for now.

continued ➔

➔ **(cont)**

In a dutch oven, heat 2 tbsp ghee.

Add cumin, cinnamon, and cloves, and saute on low flame till the spices turn aromatic.

Add turmeric, chili powder, coriander powder, and cumin.

Saute till spices turn aromatic. Do not burn the spices.

Add in prepared masala paste and cook well.

Cook until the masala paste is cooked well separating the oil.

Add hot water, salt, and mix well adjusting the consistency.

Boil for 5 minutes or until the oil separates.

Add in fried paneer and cook on low flame.

Jeera Rice

(recipe adapted from www.indianhealthyrecipes.com)

Ingredients:

1 ½ cups aged basmati rice
2 tbsp ghee (or oil/butter)
1 green chili slit and de-seeded (optional)
3 cups water (use less if not using aged rice)
½ to ¾ tsp salt

Whole spices:

2 tsp cumin seeds (jeera)
1 bay leaf (tej patta)
4 green cardamoms (elaichi)
2 inch cinnamon piece (dalchini)
4 cloves (laung)
1 strand mace (javitri) (optional)

Directions:

Rinse rice three times and soak in 3 cups water for 20 minutes. (If using non-aged just rinse and cook, no need to soak.)

Drain with colander.

On a medium flame, heat ghee in a pot. Add all the spices and let them sizzle for 2 minutes, until aromatic.

Stir in the green chili & rice.

Fry on a high heat for 2 to 3 minutes while stirring gently.

Pour water and add salt.

Mix well and taste test the water to adjust salt.

Bring to a rolling boil on a high heat.



continued ➔

➔ **(cont)**

Reduce the heat to low and cook covered until water is absorbed & the rice is cooked through. (15 to 17 minutes)
Turn off and rest for 10 minutes
Fluff up jeera rice with a fork before serving.



If you are still with me, thanks for coming back! *(If not, enjoy your paneer and rice dinner you ungrateful git. Not that you're reading this, instead you're digging in to your succulent Indian meal. Either that or scraping burned rice from the bottom of the pot when you realized you didn't stir it enough while frying. If you're like my husband you're probably then eating the crunchy ghee infused rice bits as you scrape them from the pot.)*

My switch to vegetarianism is ongoing. It took me a good long while to convince my husband that I really would prefer not to have a steak, so he switched to cooking me salmon. I kept hinting, mentioning, and then outright telling my husband that I would prefer to stop eating meat altogether but it was not registering. For him, the food he cooked was an expression of love, and my not wanting to eat it was a rejection of that love. Eventually it came to a head when I just stopped eating the meat portions of a meal, scraping them into the green bin. We argued, and went to bed fuming. The next day I went to work and spent the day stressing over what the eventual resolution would be.

When I came home from work the next day, the house smelled of strange new spices. While I had spent the day stressing, my husband had gone shopping. He picked out the two recipes above and went out and bought all of the spices, ghee, and a blender so he could prepare them. It took him some doing, having to travel to multiple new grocers to find everything that was required. When I came in he simply told me I needed to unpack and set up the blender.

We cooked together that night. Measuring new spices and preparing new foods. Translating the language of love.



Foraging in Hamilton

by A.R.

General Foraging tips:

- If you're not sure you've ID'ed a plant correctly, don't eat it!
- May seem obvious, but avoid plants frequented by dogs and by the side of busy roads
- Bring a little shovel, a small *sharp* knife or scissors, and a bag for taking home the spoils.
- Only take what you can easily use.

Ramps/Wild Leeks [*Harvest: Early Spring*]

Identification - a type of wild onion. They have long thin red/purple or white stems, long green leaves and white roots. Smell like raw green chives. If you think you have a ramp but are unsure, rub the leaves and smell. A look-alike plant is Lily of the Valley (which definitely doesn't smell like onions at all and is poisonous).

Harvest sustainably - only the tops of the plants, never the roots, and from the middle of clumps so that the population stays strong. With a small sharp knife, cut leaves from the center of clusters of ramp plants, and never pull up their roots.

Best cooked. Delicious sliced up and fried or make a pesto sauce after blanching.



Dandelion

[Harvest: Spring is best]

'Weeds' are usually just plants that ruin the aesthetics of our regular gardens. We all know what dandelions look like with their serrated edge leaves, long stems and sunny yellow flowers. The roots, leaves and flowers are edible raw or cooked but the stems are not edible.

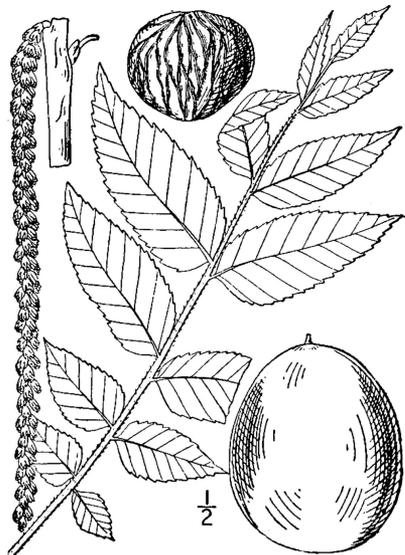


Great in a salad, pesto, or roasted and steeped as a tea.

Black Walnut *[Harvest: September/October]*

Yellow green fruits that go brown as they age. Harvest while the hulls are still green to brown, not black and mushy.

Work outside. Roll the fruit under your shoe to slip off hull. Next step: remove the black gunk. Wearing gloves, put the nuts in a bowl or bucket and spray or scrub with water. Keep the ones that sink; discard the floaters. Cure them in a ventilated bag or basket in a dry, warm place so they don't mold. Throw out the hulls in the garbage, not compost. The hulls are harmful to other plants.



Get these before the squirrels do!

Staghorn Sumac *[Harvest: Fall to Winter]*

The 'fruits' of a tree which are seeds clustered into a cone shape, covered in fine reddish purple fuzz. The fuzz will stick to your hands. Snip off the sumac from the tree at the base of the fruit. The flavour is in the red fluff; that's what you want to keep. Separate out the clusters and further remove stems. Discard any buggy bits.

Sumac-ade:

1 cone worth of sumac seeds to 1 cup boiling water
Pour boiling water over sumac seeds to make a steeped tea. Strain through cheesecloth or coffee filter. Add sugar to taste.



Happy Foraging!



OpenSnackMap

by D.S.

One happy consequence of fixing up my bike (see issue 1) is that during the warmer months I've started discovering more the fruit trees in my neighbourhood - including some on public land, or have branches overhanging the sidewalks. A scavenger at heart, I'm not one to turn down a free tasty snack! And as long as I'm leaving plenty for other passers-by, I don't see any harm in enjoying one of these delicious free gifts of nature.

In the spirit of sharing, maintaining, and enjoying the commons, I wondered: what if there was a way to map our urban bounty that isn't built on a platform controlled by a massive US tech corporation?

Well, it turns out there is: OpenStreetMap.org is a community-run alternative to services from companies like Google and Microsoft, and it can be edited by anyone. Sort of like Wikipedia. But for maps. And it's getting better and more detailed every day.

On OpenStreetMap you can map just about anything - there are even methods for mapping things like the accessibility features at street intersections. And, it turns out, a way to map fruit trees suitable for public foraging.

So far, I've mapped a peach tree, an apple tree, and a mulberry tree. This spring/summer/fall I plan on mapping more. And you're welcome to join me!

Check out <https://overpass-turbo.eu/s/2ltH> to see the map so far.

Here's how to properly add a tree to
OpenStreetMap:

1. Only add a tree with this method if it's suitable for foraging by members of the public.
2. Find out the scientific name for the tree. For example, a peach tree's scientific name is 'Prunus Persica'. Wikipedia is a great resource for this.
3. Go to openstreetmap.org and create an account.
4. Click the 'edit' button and zoom in to the location of the tree.
5. Add a 'point' where the tree is.
6. Select 'tree' as the feature type.
7. Add any other information that you know is correct, and leave the other fields blank.
8. In the 'tags' section: you'll see that one tag is already pre-filled with what's known as a 'key-value pair'. In this case, the 'key' is "natural" and the 'value' is "tree". Here are the tags you would add in order to map a peach tree (change them to map a different species of tree):

<u>Key</u>	<u>Value</u>
foraging	yes
genus	Prunus
species	Prunus Persica
trees	peach_trees

9. Save your work - and in a few minutes, you should be able to see your addition(s) at the link on the previous page. Have fun!!



The Little Library Magazine is a free community zine that you are invited to contribute to.

To sign up for occasional email updates, send a note to:

littlelibrarymagazine@hotcoffeehamont.ca

or visit:

<https://wiki.hotcoffeehamont.ca>

for submission guidelines and to view/download/print copies of past issues.

Thanks for reading!

