

FRESH FACTS

FOR THE WEEK OF MAY 11, 2008

When life gives you LEMONS, it is traditional wisdom to make LEMONade. But James Carling has gone one better – he makes Limoncello!

The founder and president of The Ventura Limoncello Company based in Ventura, CA, (www.venturalimoncello.com), Carling uses wife Manuela Zaretti-Carling's family recipe to produce the handcrafted distilled spirit in the style of Limoncello produced along Italy's Amalfi Coast.

Carling explains, "LEMONS grown in Ventura County are some of the best in the world because they're grown year-round and there's perfect weather here to create LEMONS with exceptional taste."

The family-owned business in Ventura, CA recently held the launch party for its new product as a benefit for Road to a Cure (www.road2acure.org) to raise awareness of pancreatic cancer.

Although Carling says his favorite way to enjoy Limoncello is "ice cold, straight up, right after dinner which is a tradition in Italy," he has been developing additional recipes for enjoying the LEMON spirit for summer entertaining, including a "Limosa", (think Mimosa with Limoncello instead of ORANGE juice), and A-PEARatini, mixing Limoncello with PEAR vodka and white CRANBERRY juice in a martini glass.

"Ice cold Ventura Limoncello makes a great topping over fresh BERRIES, vanilla gelato or ice cream and any sort of white cake like pound cake. We even had a cheesecake made with it that took first prize at last year's Malibu Pie Contest" says Carling.

Oxnard is the place to be for STRAWBERRY lovers the weekend of May 17 and 18 for the 25th annual California Strawberry Festival (www.strawberry-festival.org).

That same weekend, California's Central Coast hosts the 49th annual ARTICHOKE Festival in Castroville (www.artichoke-festival.org) celebrating the edible thistle that's a spring and summer menu favorite for many.

The 30th annual Gilroy GARLIC Festival kicks off for a three-day weekend July 25-27 (www.gilroygarlicfestival.com) for lovers of the Stinking Rose.

On July 26 and 27, Oxnard, CA turns its attention to the 15th annual Salsa Festival (www.oxnardsalsafestival.com). And before summer ends, the 17th annual Nature Sweet TOMATO Festival is planned for September 14 (www.tomatofest.com) in Carmel by the Sea.

This Week in FRUITS

SEEDLESS WATERMELON is among the most economical FRUIT choices available this week, delicious served ice cold or blended into a refreshing beverage.

Quality is excellent on California STRAWBERRIES and abundant supplies are making prices very reasonable. BLACKBERRIES and RASPBERRIES are also in steady supply at moderate prices. Keep BERRIES unwashed and refrigerated until ready to use to maintain optimum quality. Slice and enjoy atop pound cake or bread pudding.

HAWAIIAN PINEAPPLE is in steady supply at very reasonable prices.

First of the season CHERRIES are coming to market, with prices decreasing gradually as volume improves.

Another Hawaiian tropical favorite, PAPAYA, is decreasing in price and makes a perfect match in salads with STRAWBERRIES.

California's summer stoneFRUIT season has begun with the arrival of new crop fresh APRICOTS. Peel, remove the pit, stuff halves with goat cheese and PISTACHIO NUTS for an easy appetizer serving. Grilled apricots are also perfect sides for scallops and shrimp dish.

Hot house grown TOMATOES are in steady supply at moderate prices. Slice firm TOMATOES, brush with oil and grill, then sprinkle with grated Parmesan cheese.

GALA and BRAEBURN APPLES are the best values in the treeFRUIT category this week.

BARTLETT PEARS are decreasing in price, with crunchy ASIAN PEARS also in steady supply at moderate prices.

KIWIFRUIT continues to be a very economical FRUIT choice. Blend with STRAWBERRIES, yogurt, honey, LIME juice and MINT to create a tangy FRUIT soup. Serve chilled garnished with sour cream or toasted COCONUT.

When the kids want a snack, reach for RED SEEDLESS GRAPES, in steady supply at reasonable prices.

BANANAS are another kid-friendly snack in steady supply. Enjoy straight from the peel or peel and cut, dipping into yogurt or melted chocolate prior to freezing.

New crop VALENCIA ORANGES top the hit parade of CITRUS values this week, with RUBY RED GRAPEFRUIT and LEMONS also excellent choices.

This Week in VEGETABLES

GREEN BEANS are among this week's best values in the VEGETABLE category, perfect for using in a classic Salad Nicoise or steaming and serving as a side dish dressed with LEMON butter or slivered ALMONDS.

RUSSET POTATO prices are decreasing. Perfect for baking as a side dish to steak, RUSSETS can also be cut in wedges, brushed with olive oil, sprinkled with minced HERBS and roasted.

The ONION section has a new offering from Frieda's, GARLIC Delight, an all natural, spreadable mix of GARLIC, canola oil, LEMON juice and salt that can be used as a seafood sauce, VEGGIE dip, sandwich spread or meat marinade.

SPINACH, ROMAINE LETTUCE and ICEBERG LETTUCE are among the best salad values this week.

GREEN CABBAGE is plentiful at economical prices.

Salad toppings in steady supply include CUCUMBERS, MUSHROOMS, RADISHES, GREEN ONIONS, SPROUTS, CELERY, CARROTS and JICAMA.

Large sizes continue to predominate in the ARTICHOKE harvest. Steam and enjoy piping hot or chilled with a variety of dipping sauces.

Quality is very good on new crop SWEET WHITE CORN. Barbecue right in the husk or remove the husk and boil on the stovetop and enjoy spread with BASIL or THYME butter and sea salt.

CAULIFLOWER and BROCCOLI are reasonably priced side dish choices this week.

COLLARD GREENS are a good side dish choice, sautéed with GARLIC and butter.

CILANTRO is one of many fresh HERB varieties in plentiful supply. Try fresh HERBS sprinkled into egg scrambles, add to grilled cheese sandwiches or as a cocktail garnish for Bloody Marys.

[This Week in FLORAL](#)

Blooming HYDRANGIAS, ANTHURIUM, ORCHIDS and MINIATURE ROSES are among the best potted plant values this week. In cut arrangements, supply is plentiful on CALLA LILIES, TULIPS, ROSES, CARNATIONS and DAISIES.

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