

*food* LET'S EAT

*gulf  
kitchens*  
GO  
GREEN

IMAGES THIS SPREAD BY C. ROSS.

*Gulf Coast farmers, cooks, and diners all benefit from the fact that buying food grown locally with safe farm practices is easier than ever these days.*

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**Y**ou know how fat, juicy blackberries taste better plucked right from the bush? Or, how warm sweet tomatoes from your backyard vine taste soooo much better than the ones you get from the grocery store that have to ripen on the kitchen counter for a day or so? Once picked, produce begins to lose flavor and nutrients, that's why food eaten soon after picking is so much better and better for you. It's this concept that started the Slow Food Movement years ago, which is an organized attempt to fight the fast food trend and encourage people to slow down to enjoy food and appreciate where it's grown. Today, locally grown food and great just-picked flavor is more available to Gulf Coast cooks and others around the country more than ever before.

We can credit the chefs and restaurant owners like Lucy Buffett of Lulu's at Homeport Marina in Gulf Shores, Alabama for getting it started in our region by insisting upon supporting local farmers to give their customers optimum flavor on the plate. The variety of food fresh from local farms along the Gulf Coast has grown, especially with the trend to buy and eat "green," from just fruits and vegetables to eggs, cheese, beef, chicken, pork, and honey all from producers all along our shores.

That's because the farmers have done their part. They've spent years prepping their land, filling out paperwork, and working hot hours in the sun to grow food the healthy and environmentally safe way. As cooks, our part is simply to take a fun trip to the local farmers' market, like New Orleans' historic Crescent City Farmer's Market, or to the local food cooperative, like Ever'man Natural Foods in Pensacola. We can even pick up the phone and call companies like Off the Vine Produce in Shalimar, Florida, to order a box of fresh local produce delivered to our doors.

Says Shana Wolf of Off the Vine Produce home delivery company, "I had a farmer friend who struggled with deciding whether to harvest his crop when it was at its peak—nutritionally and flavorwise—though it would go bad if not bought within a day or two, or to pick it before ripening which would allow it more time at the market in good condition. With Off the Vine Produce, we collect what's most fresh from the farmers, box it right away, and take it to customers who can have the fruits and vegetables when they have the most nutrients and flavor. The farmer doesn't lose his produce and the customer gets healthy food." Currently the company delivers to Gulf cities such as Pensacola, Seaside, and Destin, but they are expanding due to demand.

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**For other sources of food grown with flavor and the environment in mind, check these websites:**

[www.go.coop](http://www.go.coop) Click on the apple icon to find natural food cooperatives in your area.

[www.organic.org](http://www.organic.org) Lists farmers markets, grocery markets, and organic food producers.

[www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org) Provides names of restaurants, organic growers, groceries, cooperatives, farmers markets, and CSAs (community-supported agriculture groups that offer subscriptions to food deliveries from the farm).

[www.slowfoodusa.org](http://www.slowfoodusa.org) Click on your state's Slow Food chapter website which varies in info offered. May include local food sources or food events.

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Deborah Garrison Lowery is a freelance writer in Birmingham, AL who enjoys trips to summer farmers markets with her kids for the great locally grown food *and* the festive family atmosphere.



Shana Wolf says that six years ago she and two friends came up with starting Off the Vine Produce, a Shalimar, Florida, company that buys USDA-certified organic produce from local farmers and delivers it to the doors of customers in various Gulf Coast cities and others. Its goal is to get produce at its peak to customers when it tastes the best and is most nutritious. The company also provides a new set of delicious recipes each month on its website, [www.offthevineproduce.com](http://www.offthevineproduce.com). You can check this site to see if deliveries are coming to your area. Here's Shana's refreshing garden relish that's great with potatoes, pasta, chicken, or even draped over chilled lettuce leaves for a summertime salad.

## Sweet Summer Tomato Relish

Makes: 4 cups | Prep time: 15 minutes

Chill time: 4+ hours

- 3 medium plum tomatoes, finely chopped (about 2 cups)
- 1 small zucchini, finely chopped (about 1 $\frac{1}{3}$  cups)
- 1 stalk celery, finely chopped (about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup)
- 1 tablespoon minced red onion
- 4 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar or strawberry balsamic vinegar
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon dry mustard
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon poppy seeds

- 1 Combine tomatoes, zucchini, and celery in a bowl and set aside.
- 2 Combine onion and remaining ingredients in a container with a tight-fitting lid. Secure lid on dressing mixture and shake well. Pour over tomato mixture.
- 3 Cover and chill at least 4 hours. Serve with roasted potatoes, pasta, salad greens, or grilled chicken.

When the owner of Lulu's at Homeport Marina in Gulf Shores heads to the grill with this steak recipe from her new cookbook, *Crazy Sista Cooking—Cuisine and Conversation with Lucy Anne Buffett*, you can bet she's using beef that supports local farmers. In fact, Boutwell Farms of Clayton, Alabama, a certified organic farm, supplies all the beef for her restaurant. So next time you order a "Cheeseburger in Paradise" from the menu, be assured you're going green while listening to Lucy's big brother's famous song by the same name.

To order Lucy's cookbook, check out her website at [www.crazysistacooking.com](http://www.crazysistacooking.com) or call 251-967-5858.

For more about Boutwell Farms (Boutwell family pictured below) check the website at [www.boutwellfarms.com](http://www.boutwellfarms.com).





# Tenderloin of Beef with White Horseradish Sauce

Serves: 4 | Prep Time: 15 minutes | Marinate Time: 2 hours | Cook Time: 7 minutes

4 (4- to 5-ounce) beef tenderloin steaks  
Coarsely ground black pepper

One Love Marinade (recipe follows)  
White Horseradish Sauce (recipe follows)

**1** Rub steaks generously with black pepper and place in a zip-top plastic bag. Add One Love Marinade to bag, close top securely, and marinate steaks in the refrigerator 2 hours, turning bag after 1 hour.

**2** Heat grill to 350 degrees. Coat grill rack with cooking spray and place steaks on rack. Cook 3-1/2 minutes; turn steaks and cook an additional 3-1/2 minutes or until desired doneness.

**3** Remove from grill and allow steaks to rest 10 minutes. Serve steaks with White Horseradish Sauce.

## One Love Marinade

- 1/2 cup teriyaki sauce
- 2 tablespoons crushed garlic
- 1/4 cup mirin (rice cooking wine)
- 1 teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 dashes hot sauce

Combine all ingredients. Use to marinate beef, chicken, or pork.

Yield: about 2/3 cup.



## White Horseradish Sauce

- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 1/2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1/4 cup prepared horseradish
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 dashes hot sauce
- 1/4 teaspoon white pepper
- 1 teaspoon freshly chopped rosemary leaves

Combine all ingredients. Yield: about 1 cup.

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Every summer you'll find Paul Davidson setting up shop at the Red Stick Farmers Market in Baton Rouge where he sells his organically grown fruits and vegetables. Back on EquiTerra Farm in Clinton, where he has lived for 32 years, he also raises lamb, goats, chickens, and tends beehives in an effort to realize his dream of establishing a small sustainable farm. This easy recipe for tender lamb kabobs with a sweet blueberry sauce is one of his fresh-off-the-farm family favorites.

## Grilled Lamb Kabobs with Blueberry Glaze

Serves: 4 | Prep time: 10 minutes

Marinate time: 1+ hours | Cook time: 8 minutes

- 1 pound boneless lamb, cut in 1-1/2 inch cubes
  - 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
  - 1/2 teaspoon Cajun seasoning
  - 1/4 cup olive oil
  - 1/4 cup Worcestershire sauce
- Blueberry Glaze (recipe follows)

**1** Sprinkle lamb cubes with garlic powder and Cajun seasoning. Combine olive oil and Worcestershire sauce in a zip-top plastic bag. Add lamb, close top securely, and marinate at least 1 hour in the refrigerator.

**2** Thread lamb cubes on skewers. Heat grill to 350 degrees and coat grill rack with cooking spray. Place skewers on grill rack and cook 8 minutes, turning skewers once. Remove lamb from skewers and serve with Blueberry Glaze.

Note: Add vegetables to skewers, if desired.

### Blueberry Glaze

- 1 cup fresh blueberries
  - 1/2 cup dry white wine
  - 1/4 cup honey
  - 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1** Combine all ingredients in a saucepan over medium heat. Cook, stirring occasionally, until mixture comes to a boil. Reduce heat and cook 3 minutes or until slightly thickened. Serve with lamb, pork, chicken, or over cake or ice cream. Yield: 3/4 cup.

*Paul Davidson working the garden with draft horses—and his son—with his blueberry crop in the background.*

