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## Economic downturn leads to great deals on variety of commodities

By Roberta Sabban  
 Special to the Daily News  
 Wednesday, June 03, 2009

One positive side of the economic downturn is that the cost of many of the foods have come down by 2 percent from last year. This is especially true of ingredients you would use to prepare meals at home.

Purveyors from specialty gourmet shops to mega-supermarkets are encouraging consumers with a wide range of inspiring foods. Many businesses related to agriculture throughout the world are becoming creative in the fight to survive.

The future of entire industries depends upon the choices you make with your fork. You will discover a wide range of imported delicacies plus a cornucopia of fresh, healthy food produced locally.



[\(enlarge photo\)](#)

Steve Gyland in his seafood shop, Cod and Capers, in Palm Beach Gardens.

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### Fish and shellfish

Americans consumed 16.6 pounds of fish and shellfish in 2006, according to the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the figures edge up every year.

Of that, fillets and fish steaks, both fresh and frozen, account for 5.2 pounds. Next is tuna, both canned and fresh. Shrimp is the all-time favorite shellfish, with a record annual consumption of 4.4 pounds per person.

Stephen Gyland, owner of Cod & Capers Seafood wholesale and retail fish market, keeps his eye on the turbulent fluctuations of the local and international world of seafood.



Daily News photo by Ruth Cincotta.

[\(enlarge photo\)](#)

Dover Sole in Marsala Sauce.

Gyland signed on as a navigator on a sailboat owned by the Campbell Co. for a voyage circling the world. The sea got into his blood; he signed on with the Department of Interior Fisheries Conservation, and was instrumental in the first lobster tag program in the 1970s.

Fish was once a staple of the American diet, particularly along the water. "Today, consumers think of fish as a luxury commodity, ordering it mostly in restaurants," he said.

"Seafood is an international product and what happens in Europe and Japan affects our local lobster here," Gyland said. "Of the Florida lobster catch, 50 percent is exported ... to Europe or Japan. When the euro goes down and the dollar goes up, the Florida lobster becomes a less-attractive commodity ..."

"The harvest started in August and hit a brick wall. Wholesale prices fell from \$23 per pound to \$12."

In November Maine lobster dropped to an average of \$2 per pound ex-vessel or at the docks, Gyland said. Processors committed to the boats were denied bank credit lines, so "there were no funds to process the lobsters and whatever was left of the catch went to the live market."

At the same time the price of luxury fish from Europe suddenly dropped. Dover sole is usually harvested in the fall and is commonly served whole and deboned tableside. When the euro is high, more of the fish stays in Europe. Demand in Europe fell and wholesalers started shipping larger quantities to the United States.

Last year, fresh Dover sole was retailing from \$35 to \$38 per pound; today it retails for \$16 a pound. Each fish weighs about a pound. It is flatter than our local Mid-Atlantic fluke or gray sole. It has a unique, mild flavor and delicate, firm texture.

A bounty of fresh wild seafood is fished from Florida waters all year. The pink shrimp harvest is almost over; the white shrimp season is beginning. Smaller to medium shrimp are the best value at 40 count per pound, selling for \$5 to \$6 a pound.

At this time last year fuel costs were nearly double today's, so many fishermen could not afford to take their boats out. This year there is more optimism and consumers will benefit from a bounty of local seafood in the marketplace.

**Beef, veal and lamb**

Meat prices are down across the board, said Harry Bush of Bush Brothers, a local meatpacking plant in business for more than 80 years. "Beef prices have dropped by about 15 percent and veal prices are down 25 percent. Although veal racks are holding their price, the best values are in the loin or Porterhouse cut."

Stewing veal cut from the shoulder sells for about \$8 a pound. It can be used in veal and peppers or blanquette de veau. The meats once considered economy cuts, such as veal shank used for osso buco, sell for \$8.50 or more per pound; it is mostly bones.

If you enjoy fresh calves liver, you will find that for less than \$8 per pound.

Flavorful cuts of beef at reasonable prices include skirt steak, hangar steak or shoulder clod, Bush suggests. Skirt or flap steaks are served at Brazilian and Argentine restaurants. It may be grilled whole or cut into several pieces. It is slightly chewy and full of flavor.

The French use hangar steaks for steak frites. Cook these cuts over a very hot fire; they are excellent for barbecues. Cook them rare or medium-rare. You will find various cuts of steak on sale at your local supermarket, often \$3 or \$4 per pound off the regular price. Lamb also is an excellent value. A bone-in leg of fresh lamb from Australia runs about \$5 per pound. Leg of lamb is extremely flavorful when cooked on the bone. When processed, the large hip bone is removed, so it is practically boneless. A 5- to 6-pound leg will feed six to eight.

**Produce**

Every fruit or vegetable you can imagine grows somewhere in Florida or the surrounding states. You will find fresh Florida produce at your local greengrocer or gourmet market. They purchase smaller quantities of seasonal fruits and vegetables and turn them over faster.

Supermarkets buy produce by the truckload and often transport it across the country. Every day fresh produce is away from the field results in a loss of flavor. But locally grown produce is full of flavor.

**Wine**

Several exciting things are happening in the wine world. Consumption is increasing each year and many prices are dropping. In addition, many wines that were only available to restaurants are suddenly appearing on your neighborhood wine merchant's shelves.

The best values now seem to be in French, Italian and Spanish wines. For example, Louis Jadot rose, 2007, was selling a few weeks ago in the \$11 range. The price has dropped to less than \$9.

The same is true for many French village wines. Pouilly Fuisses are running less than \$12 a bottle. Campo Viejo Crianza, 2005, was selling for \$10 a few weeks ago and has dropped to just over \$8. The wine scene is changing daily, so check out several stores. More than 90 percent of wine produced is ready to drink when bottled.

**Beer**

Beer sales are flat, but you will find case specials throughout the coming months. New flavorful beers are coming into the market.

Fruit-flavored beers have long been summer favorites in Europe. Now some American producers are adding a bit of citrus flavor to old standbys.

**RECIPES****Dover Sole in White Wine**

\* 2 whole Dover sole, about 1 pound each

\* 6 tablespoons unsalted butter

\* 2 tablespoons minced shallots

\* Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

\* 1 cup dry white wine

Gut the sole and remove the white skin. Place the fish in a baking dish. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Dot the fish with 2 tablespoons of butter and sprinkle with the shallots. Season with salt and pepper and add the white wine.

Cover the dish with foil and bake for 20 to 30 minutes. Serve immediately.

Makes 2 servings.

\*

**Dover Sole in Marsala Sauce**

\* 2 pounds Dover sole fillets (about 12 small fillets)

\* Flour for dredging

\* 4 tablespoons unsalted butter

\* 6 egg yolks

\* 1 cup Marsala wine or dry sherry

\* Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

Pat the sole fillets dry with paper towels. Dredge the fillets in the flour, coating them lightly but evenly on both sides. Heat the butter in a large skillet over medium heat; when the foam subsides, carefully add the fillets to the pan and

cook them until they are lightly golden brown on one side.

Beat the egg yolks together with the wine and pinches of salt and pepper, until well blended. Turn the filets and cook for about 1 minute, then lower the heat and pour the egg mixture over. Cook for 3 minutes and serve immediately.

Makes 4 servings.

\*

#### **Fegato alla Veneziana (Sautéed Calf's Liver with Onions)**

- \* 4 tablespoons olive oil
- \* 1 cup thinly sliced onions
- \* 1/4 teaspoon dried sage leaves
- \* 1 pound calf's liver, cut crosswise into 1/4-inch strips
- \* Salt and freshly ground pepper
- \* 1 tablespoon white wine vinegar
- \* 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley

Heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a heavy skillet. Add the onions and cook over moderate heat, stirring frequently for 7 or 8 minutes. Then stir in the sage and cook 2 or 3 minutes longer or until the onions are limp and lightly colored. Set the skillet aside, off the heat.

Pat the liver strips dry with paper towels and season them with salt and a few grindings of pepper. In another large heavy skillet, heat the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil until a light haze forms over it.

Drop in the liver strips and saute them, turning them frequently, for 2 or 3 minutes, or until they are lightly browned on all sides. Stir in the onions and cook with the liver for 1 or 2 minutes. Transfer the liver and onions to a heated platter.

Pour the wine vinegar into the skillet and boil this mixture briskly for a minute or two, meanwhile scraping in any browned bits clinging to the pan. Stir in the chopped parsley and pour the sauce over the liver and onions. Serve immediately.

Makes 4 servings.

\*

#### **Broiled Shrimp with Garlic Butter**

- \* 2 pounds large fresh shrimp in their shells
- \* 8 tablespoons unsalted butter
- \* 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- \* 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- \* 1/4 cup finely chopped shallots
- \* 1 tablespoon finely chopped garlic
- \* 1/2 teaspoon salt
- \* 4 tablespoons finely chopped flat-leaf parsley
- \* Lemon quarter, for garnish

Shell the shrimp. With a small sharp knife, slit each shrimp down the back and lift out the black or white intestinal vein. Wash the shrimp quickly under cold running water and pat them thoroughly dry with paper towels.

Preheat the broiler to its highest temperature. In a shallow flameproof baking dish just large enough to hold the shrimp in one layer, melt the butter over low heat, and be careful not to let it brown.

Stir in the 1/2 cup olive oil, lemon juice, shallots, garlic and salt. Add the shrimp and turn them in the butter and oil until they glisten on all sides. Broil them 3 to 4 inches from the heat for 5 minutes, then turn the shrimp over and broil them for 5 minutes longer or until they are lightly browned and firm to the touch. Be careful not to overcook them.

With tongs, transfer the shrimp to a heated serving platter, pour the sauce from the pan over them and sprinkle with the chopped parsley. Garnish with the lemon quarters and serve.

Makes 6 servings.

\*

#### **Flap or Skirt Steak with Soy Marinade**

- \* 2- to 3-pound flap steak
- \* 1/2 cup dry red or white wine
- \* 1/3 cup soy sauce
- \* 1 garlic clove, chopped
- \* 1/2 onion, chopped
- \* 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- \* 2 tablespoons brown sugar

\* 1 1/2 teaspoons salt

Make a marinade of the wine, soy sauce, garlic, onion, lemon juice, brown sugar and salt. Pour the marinade over the meat and refrigerate for 24 hours.

Drain the meat, reserve the marinade. Grill the meat quickly over hot coals, turning once. Allow 2 minutes for each side. Baste the meat often with the marinade.

Makes 4 servings.

\*

*In Argentina, flap or skirt steak is served with this classic condiment. You may replace the marinade above with this one and follow the same directions for grilling.*

**Chimichurri**

\* 1 1/2 cup flat-leaf Italian parsley

\* 8 peeled garlic cloves

\* 1/2 cup extra-virgin olive oil

\* 1/4 cup red wine vinegar

\* 2 teaspoons salt

\* 1 teaspoon black pepper

Combine all of the ingredients in a blender or food processor until well-blended but not smooth. Pour half into a glass bowl and set aside. Pour the other half over the meat, cover and refrigerate for from 2 to 4 hours. Let the meat come to room temperature before grilling.

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