



# TAILORED TASTE TIDBITS

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## FLAX SEED

This time last year I began to cook for a client in the midst of treatment for cancer. In preparation, I researched many food items considered beneficial in fighting and/or preventing cancer. One item mentioned repeatedly in the literature was flax seed.

This humble seed is loaded with fiber, lignans, & alpha linolenic acid which converts into omega 3 fatty acids in the body. Omega 3s are also found in fish such as salmon. These acids help maintain flexibility in cell walls, which is important for the absorption of nutrients & elimination of waste at the cellular level.

Lignans are antioxidants that have demonstrated a possible cancer-fighting ability as they are thought to bind to estrogen receptors in the body thus assisting the fight against estrogen-fed breast cancer.

The fiber provided by flax seed is both soluble & insoluble. Soluble fiber reduces inflammation in the body & may assist in lowering cholesterol levels as well. Insoluble fiber helps maintain regularity. And lastly, flax seed oil has been reported to reduce inflammation in the intestinal tract which may alleviate some of the symptoms associated with Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS).

From a cook's standpoint, flax seed has a nutty flavor & can be added to both sweet & savory dishes. I've created a coating of flax seeds, oats & herbs for oven-baked fish and/or chicken (see recipe on reverse). I sprinkle flax seeds on salads, stir them into yogurt & smoothies, & incorporate them into baked goods such as muffins & crumb cakes. I mix them with grated parmesan cheese, spread that mixture onto a baking sheet & heat in the oven to create cheese crisps that go nicely with breakfast, lunch and/or dinner. Flax seeds can be added to pizza dough or strewn on the crust before baking & topping. The possibilities seem endless for using this healthy seed.

Be sure to store flax seed & flax seed oil in the refrigerator to prevent the oils from going rancid. This is also a good tip for most tree nut or seed oils whereas olive & canola oils are fine stored on the shelf.

Sources: *One Bite at a Time* by Rebecca Katz, [www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org), [www.healthcastle.com](http://www.healthcastle.com), [www.flaxcouncil.ca](http://www.flaxcouncil.ca), [www.about.com](http://www.about.com).



## FARMERS' MARKETS

You'd have to be living under a rock *not* to have heard about the movement to eat "locally" for personal health & that of the environment. The new buzzword "Locavore," defined as one who only consumes items grown/raised within 100 miles of home, was added to the American English Dictionary in 2007.

As with most of life, there are exceptions to this somewhat difficult task. One, the Marco Polo Exemption, allows non-local items that have been traded for ages to be included in a Locavore's diet, provided they are purchased from a local vendor. In this way you support area businesses & still have olive oil in your pantry!

One easy, tasty baby-step toward this lofty goal is to frequent local farmers' markets. There are many in the DC area, some of which are open year-round giving us access to truly seasonal items.

Another way is joining the Community Supported Agriculture system known as CSA. For a seasonal fee paid to the farmer, you share his risk & his yield. "Grab-bags" of the week's harvest are delivered to your pick-up spot once a week. Then it's time to hit the kitchen & experiment (or have your personal chef do it for you)!

Even if you aren't interested in becoming a full-time Locavore, stopping by a farmers' market still promises some delicious meals.

[http://splendidtable.publicradio.org/locavore\\_nation/](http://splendidtable.publicradio.org/locavore_nation/)

**April** – Cherry Blossom Parade (12<sup>th</sup> in DC), Earth Day (22<sup>nd</sup>)

**May** – Lewis & Clark departed STL (14<sup>th</sup>), Lindbergh's solo flight across Atlantic (20-21), National Windmill Day (10<sup>th</sup> in Holland)

**June** – Donald Duck's birthday (13<sup>th</sup>), Flag Day (14<sup>th</sup>)

## Recipe

### Healthy Baked Chicken Fingers

*Oatmeal & flax seeds coupled with avocado oil, freshly grated hard cheese & fresh herbs dress up the traditional kids' favorite*

1 cup old-fashioned oatmeal  
1/3 cup flax seeds  
1/2 cup asiago cheese, grated  
1 Tablespoon fresh thyme or rosemary  
3 Tablespoons avocado oil, divided  
1 egg white  
1 lb. chicken tenders

In a mini food processor, blend oatmeal, flax seeds, asiago & fresh herb 'til oats are well-chopped. Drizzle in 2 T of avocado oil, process again 'til oil is well-distributed & the crumbs appear damp. Put crumbs into a shallow dish.

In a bowl, lightly beat egg white with remaining 1 T avocado oil.

Dip chicken tenders into egg mixture & let excess drip off. Then place into crumb mixture, patting to make sure crumbs stick.

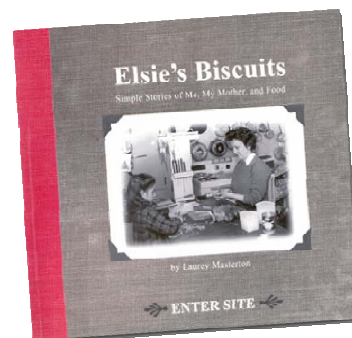
Place tenders on a rack coated with cooking spray & place the rack over a foil-lined baking sheet. Pop into the fridge while you heat oven to 475. When oven is hot, place tenders into oven & bake for 16 minutes. Remove & let rest about 5 minutes. Gently remove chicken tenders from rack with a thin spatula.

Serve & enjoy.

## A BEAUTIFUL BOOK

"My hands now make my mother's biscuits. And when they do, it is as if she is inside me, guiding my hands, making me move. It is a remarkable and comforting thing. I know of course, that they are my hands, but when I look down, they could very well be hers."\*

So opens chapter 39 in a book entitled *Elsie's Biscuits, Simple Stories of Me, My Mother, and Food* by Laurey Masterton.



I had the distinct pleasure of hearing Laurey read this chapter at a Women Chefs & Restaurateurs (WCR) event in February. I was immediately touched & anxious to read the entire book, which I did over the next few evenings.

Laurey's parents, John & Elsie Masterton, owned & operated a Vermont inn named Blueberry Hill. Laurey's mother wrote several cookbooks & also appeared on *To Tell the Truth* during its heyday. Laurey spent her first 12 years watching (and sometimes helping) her parents feed their guests every morning & evening, her early life revolving around hospitality.

This book is a lovely collection of vignettes focused on food memories, through which we learn about Laurey's life. This is not a sequential/chronological story-telling, yet by the book's end, we have a general picture of Laurey's life to date. Despite several other careers, food was where Laurey came from & where she currently finds happiness, running a café & catering business in Asheville, NC.

The book also includes some recipes from Blueberry Hill as well as several from Laurey's staff at her business in Asheville. I've added a few of these to my own collection.

This book is a wonderful Mother's Day present & I plan to give my copy to my mother-in-law who is named Elsie. This is what Laurey wrote inside the book for her:

"For Monica's Elsie –  
Enjoy the tales of my Elsie."

I'm sure *my* Elsie will.

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