



Counting Vegetables at Hollyhock

BY DEBBRA MIKAELSEN

We wouldn't normally send you off on an adventure that requires three ferries and the better part of a day's travel, but this is one experience you can't get to by cycling across town. Hollyhock on Cortes Island offers an extensive range of programs, and when planning my trip I was tempted to sign up for something enlightening, empowering, or emboldening.

In the end I decided that what I most needed was a few days of unscheduled activity. So I went just to chill out, explore, and *be*. And I'm so glad I did. Because even if you don't enrol in a program, Hollyhock is a magical place that can change the way you think—and eat. Highlights included a moonlit kayaking tour into the bioluminescence, scooping handfuls of marine fairy dust out of the sea. I also spent time sitting quietly in the charming cob-house sanctuary, listening to a gentle rain tickle the skylight above. One evening we kicked off happy hour by grilling fresh oysters on the beach over a wood fire (easily the best oysters I've ever had). The 44-acre property is stunning: a long stretch of waterfront, an

ancient orchard, rambling forest, and utterly breathtaking gardens.

Let me explain that pre-Hollyhock, I had been in the habit of counting my fruits and vegetables. My theory is that if I aim for eight to ten of these virtuous servings a day, my body will forgive my vices. (Sadly, wine does *not* count as a fruit serving.) Now I'm not a professional nutritionist—or even an unprofessional nutritionist—but counting vegetables makes some sort of sense to me, so that's what I do.

I should also say that in my regular life, achieving eight to ten daily servings of virtue is far from easy. (Some days I barely manage two.) But in my Hollyhock life, I stopped counting. Most days I'd consumed the magic number by lunchtime without even being conscious of the effort. Their vegetables were seductive: enormous salads garnished with gorgeous edible blooms; platters of herb-roasted zucchini, peppers, and eggplant. This is a great place to visit if you're thinking about reducing your meat intake or transitioning to a vegetarian diet. The menu includes lots of pulses and unusual grains, and accommodations are made for vegans and gluten-free diets.

The menu is predominantly vegetarian with a weekly seafood feast. One articulate guest called it "joyful" food. More than that, it's food that inspires. The holiday left me craving healthy ingredients and eager to experiment more in my own kitchen. I call that a successful edible adventure. The day after I got home I made the Hollyhock Bread and Hollyhock Yeast Dressing. Pour this over steamed broccoli to convert the non-believers in your midst:

HOLLYHOCK YEAST DRESSING

Moreka Jolar

(From *Hollyhock Cooks*, with Linda Solomon and Moreka Jolar, reprinted with the permission of New Society Publishers.)

Here it is—the long-awaited secret of Hollyhock's most popular salad dressing. Dark and intensely flavoured, this dressing is versatile and rich in B vitamins. It tastes delicious on cooked grains as well as on fresh greens.

Makes 2½ cups (625mL)

½ cup (125mL) nutritional flake yeast

½ cup (75mL) water

½ cup (75mL) soy sauce or tamari

½ cup (75mL) apple cider vinegar

2 Tbsp (30mL) crushed garlic

1½ cups (375mL) sunflower oil

Combine the first 5 ingredients in a blender until they are thoroughly mixed. While still mixing on high, pour the oil in a slow, steady stream. Add all the oil or stop when a desired consistency is reached. When refrigerated, this dressing will keep for up to 2 weeks.

Photo: Philip Solomon