

FOOD



DATA

75 The percent of this year's pumpkin crop that could be lost to mold and rot caused by wet weather, according to some Northeast farmers. Despite lower yields in some areas, pumpkins harvested from Canada and Ohio should prevent a pumpkin shortage this Halloween.



KIWI ON THE RISE California has its eye on the international kiwi market, increasing production of the fuzzy fruit. To compete with New Zealand and China, the California Farm Bureau is promoting a sweeter, smooth-skinned kiwi variety known as the Zespri Gold. California's production of the golden kiwi has doubled since its first harvest five years ago.

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Wine moonshine

Make your own vintage merlot in the living room

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BEING A WINEMAKER is a sexy fantasy: Fancy looking out at your grapes from across the veranda while rolling around a mouthful of homemade wine. Sure, we tell ourselves, "once I retire," but the realities of making wine — monitoring the grapes, sterilizing the equipment, bottling the damn thing — is as headache-inducing as a bottle of Arbor Mist.

I'D RATHER BE MAKING WINE

How prevalent is the wine-making bug? According to a Business Week poll of dissatisfied senior level business executives, 30 percent dreamed of owning a brewery or vineyard. That's only a little less than the 33 percent who dream of being entertainers.

At least that was the case until the invention of the WinePod, a sleek \$3,000 stainless steel home appliance that creates four to five cases of wine in as little as four months. The device is wirelessly hooked up to your computer, and comes with software that measures the chemical components (pH levels, temperature ... all the boring stuff).

Automatic wine

"We automated the drudgery," says Greg Snell, the inventor of the WinePod. "If you talk to a winemaker, what they don't like is all the time spent cleaning things," he explains. "If we can get the computer to automate things people don't like, they can focus instead on smelling and tasting."

Currently, the WinePod can make shiraz, zinfandel, cabernet sauvignon and merlot, and Snell plans to offer vintage grapes next year. (Snell's company currently sells high quality grapes at \$2 per

pound.) Human senses are pivotal to the wine making process; smell and taste help determine how long the grapes should be in contact with the wine, when they need to be pressed, and a number of other factors that assure the quality of the batch. To aid those who don't have the highly developed palate of a professional, the WinePod software comes with a pull-down menu of smells and tastes that teaches the amateur what to look for. For those still



AT A DIMINUTIVE three feet, the WinePod is smaller than a wine cellar.

attached to that veranda fantasy, the Web site also allows new winemakers to watch their grapes ripen on a Vineyard-Cam.

'Kind of nerdy'

"People get intimidated by wine making primarily because of how wine is marketed," says Snell. "There's this perception that wine makers are like rock stars, and they have this magical ability to turn grapes into wine. In truth, it isn't this mystical thing. There are scientific principles behind making wine: high quality grapes and a very good process."

Just as winemakers in Napa Valley exchange techniques, so too can the community of WinePod owners. Snell's company Web site has a forum where WinePod users can exchange their own techniques, and even upload videos a la YouTube.

"If you wanted, you could show people your yeast multiplying," says Snell, but as the words escape his lips he reconsiders. "That would be kind of a nerdy thing."

The Provina WinePod has a six-month waiting list, so secure your spot now at www.mywinepod.com.



ON **page 99**

Macaroni & Cheese

Author Marlena Spieler
Price \$16.95
On Page 99 Gratin of Penne with Artichokes and Four Cheeses



This is the second recipe from Marlena Spieler's "Macaroni & Cheese" that I've tried. Two chances are all it's going to get.

In her introduction, Spieler writes, "Those who love macaroni and cheese probably loved it as children, too." She writes on about how, since her own childhood, her tastes have grown more complex. I'll guess that they're too complex for most people.

Page 99 of the gorgeously designed "Macaroni & Cheese" finds us on "Gratin of Penne with Artichokes and Four Cheeses." Four is probably two too many. Despite the occasional tart intervention of the artichokes, this dish is too greasy.

COOKBOOK REVIEW: Metro tries the recipe on page 99

After smashing (I don't chop garlic — I pulverize it) four cloves of garlic, grating three cheeses, crumbling a very stinky Stilton and finally settling on heavy whipping cream as a substitute for crème fraîche, I was anticipating something that would knock my mother's doctored Betty Crocker recipe on its ass. The only thing that got knocked on its ass was my stomach. Too many heavy cheeses make this mac a chore to get through. Macaroni and cheese is supposed to be a comfort food — not punishment.

I'm glad there's a book out there that takes macaroni and cheese seriously, and I'm glad it's as well designed, illustration-heavy and user-friendly as Spieler's book is. Unfortunately, I don't think I'll be using it again.

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IN **season**
BUTTERNUT SQUASH



GOURDS make good fall centerpieces, but even better ravioli

IT'S GOURD TIME — butternut squash, perfect for sweet soups and breads, are fall's quintessential food. Their sweet and nutty taste is a

perfect complement to the season's apples and pears. Resembling the shape of a vase, butternut squash weigh from one to four pounds and are light beige in color. You want to look for squash without dark dents, moldy spots or wrinkly skin. They should also not be too light for their size.

"Squash comes in to fill that void" left by summer tomatoes and fruits, says Providence farmer Chris Ackley. Their bright orange insides are tasty stuffed inside ravioli or, as Ackley recommends, stuffed with garlic, butter and spices.

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