

# Classifieds (Continued from previous page)

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## Forest Service Gives Oak Wilt Prevention Guidelines

The Texas Forest Service (TFS) is encouraging Texans to be careful when collecting firewood at this time of year.

Transporting and storing diseased wood is a known means of spreading the devastating oak wilt fungus to previously uninfected neighborhoods. Firewood cut from oak wilt-infected red oaks can harbor spores of the fungus *Ceratocystis fagacearum*. Insects may then carry these spores to fresh wounds of nearby oak trees, possibly creating a new group of diseased trees.

Measures used to safeguard against disease spread from firewood include:

- Select well-seasoned firewood. Wood that was cut to length prior to the onset of the previous summer will typically have loose bark and cracked ends. Avoid oak wood that appears unseasoned, that may have tight bark and cut ends which show no cracks or signs of aging. The extreme heat and drying of a full Texas summer effectively destroys the fungus in cut firewood.

- Destroy diseased red oaks. A knowledgeable arborist or forester should diagnose red oaks (i.e., Spanish, Texas red, blackjack or shumard oak) that die rapidly (2-3 weeks) or in groups (2 or more trees over several years) for oak wilt. Trees suspected to have died recently from oak wilt should be destroyed by burning, burying or chipping. The heat of a fire destroys the fungus and the

smoke emitted poses no threat to healthy trees. When red oaks die of oak wilt they may produce fungal mats.

These spore-producing structures, which have never been detected on diseased live oaks, emit a fruity aroma that attracts insects. Sap feeding beetles, known as nitidulids, are the principal carriers of the disease-causing spores.

- Safely store unknown sources of firewood. If the oak wood comes from an unknown source and it is not well seasoned, cover the woodpile with a clear piece

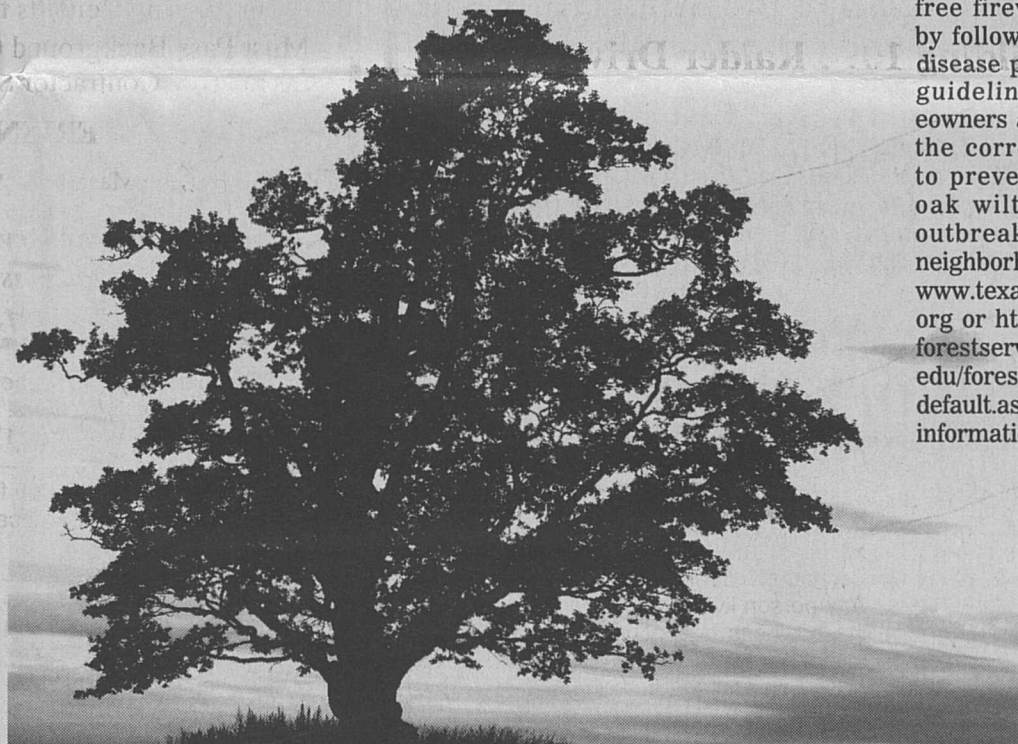
of plastic. Burying the edges of the plastic will prevent the entry or exit of insects that might have been attracted to diseased wood and fungal mats.

- Avoid wounding oaks during vulnerable seasons. The general recommendation is to avoid injuries to oaks from February through June. The best times for pruning of oaks are during the heat of summer (minimal spore production) or the cold of winter (minimal insect activity).

- Paint all oak wounds including pruning cuts. Throughout the year, immediately apply a thin

coat of paint to all fresh pruning wounds and other injuries that expose the inner bark or sapwood of oaks. This prevents contaminated sap beetles from infecting the wound with oak wilt spores. Acceptable products for this job include pruning and latex paints, often available from hardware and discount stores in an easily applied aerosol form.

Oak firewood is an important commodity to Texans, whether it's used for firing up the barbecue pit or for warming up the home on a cold winter's day. By selecting well-seasoned, disease-free firewood and by following other disease prevention guidelines, homeowners are taking the correct steps to prevent a new oak wilt disease outbreak in their neighborhood. Visit [www.texasoakwilt.org](http://www.texasoakwilt.org) or <http://texas-forests.tamu.edu/forest/oakwilt/default.asp> for more information.



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## Italian Boneless Pork Chop Recipe

(MS) - Experiencing other cultures is a big reason many people love to travel.

Going to exotic locales or returning to where your ancestors lived is a great way to gain a new perspective on life.

But one needn't travel to the ends of the earth to experience other cultures.

In fact, in places such as North America, where the term "melting pot" can be used to describe many large cities, you can explore different heritages on a single city block.

Part of the joy of visiting such cities is the cuisine. In Chicago, for instance, famed Italian restaurant Spiaggia offers some of the country's best Italian dining.

But thanks to Tony Mantuano, the award-winning Executive Chef at Spiaggia, some of Chicago's finest cuisine can now be enjoyed in the comfort of your own home.

With "The Spiaggia Cookbook: Eleganza Italiana In Cucina" (Chronicle), food fans don't need to travel to the Second City to enjoy its best cuisine. Instead, they can cook up the following recipe for "Boneless Pork Chop with White Corn Polenta and Broccoli Rabe" right in their own kitchens.

Boneless Pork Chop with White Corn Polenta and Broccoli Rabe

Serves 4  
4 cups water

- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup salt
- 4 boneless pork loin chops, 5 ounces each
- 1 bunch broccoli rabe, about 1 pound
- 4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for drizzling
- 2 cups chicken stock or prepared broth
- 1 large sprig fresh rosemary
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 clove garlic, thinly sliced
- Sea salt
- White Corn Polenta (see box)
- Freshly ground pepper
- In a large saucepan over medium heat, combine the water, sugar and 1/4 cup salt. Heat the brine, stirring until the sugar and salt dissolve.

Let cool. Arrange the chops in a baking pan in a single layer and pour the cool brine over. Cover and refrigerate for 24 hours.

Preheat the oven to 425 F. Trim the broccoli rabe just below the leaves and discard the bottom inch of the stems. Have ready a bowl of ice water.

Bring a saucepan of lightly salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the broccoli rabe and blanch for one minute.

Drain and plunge the broccoli rabe into the ice water to stop the cooking. Drain and chop into 1-inch pieces. Set aside.

Remove the chops from the brine and pat dry. In a large, ovenproof, nonstick saute pan, heat 2 tablespoons of the olive oil over medium heat.

Season the chops with pepper. When the pan and oil are hot, add the chops and cook for five minutes on one side.

Turn them over, transfer to the oven and bake until an instant-read thermometer registers 160 F when inserted into the thickest part, 10 to 15 minutes.

Transfer the chops to a platter. Tent with aluminum foil and keep warm.

Pour off any excess fat from the pan and place over medium-high heat.

Add the stock and scrape any browned bits off the bottom of the pan. Add the rosemary, bring to a simmer, and cook until reduced by half, about 8 minutes.

Remove from the heat, discard the rosemary, and whisk in the butter. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Set the sauce aside and keep warm.

In a saute pan over medium-high heat, heat the remaining two tablespoons olive oil. Add the garlic and saute until lightly browned.

Add the blanched broccoli rabe and cook until crisp tender, about 2 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

To serve, place 1/2 cup of the polenta in the center of each of

four warmed plates.

Slice a chop on the diagonal and arrange over the polenta. Arrange one-fourth of the broccoli rabe around the plate and drizzle with olive oil.

Drizzle sauce around the polenta and on the plate in front of the meat. Repeat to make the three remaining servings. Serve immediately.

SIDEBAR: White Corn Polenta

- Makes 2 Cups
- 2 cups water
- 1/2 cup white polenta
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 6 tablespoons heavy cream
- 3 tablespoons grated Parmigiano-Reggiano or Parmesan cheese
- Sea salt
- Freshly ground white pepper
- In a large saucepan over medium heat, bring the water to a boil. Add a pinch of salt and slowly pour in the polenta, stirring constantly to avoid any lumps.

Stir vigorously as the polenta thickens. Continue to cook the polenta, stirring often, until it loses its grainy texture and becomes smooth, about 30 minutes.

Add the butter, cream, and Parmesan and stir until well incorporated. Season to taste with salt and white pepper. Serve immediately.

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