Spring is on its way, and as we welcome the longer days and warmer weather, we also take a look at the popular Japanese shitshui pepper. They will pack a flavorful punch at your next get-together. Flying high for a healthy ride, with AirMedCare and Nebraska Golf Courses that are off-the-beaten-path.

Our cover story (pages 4 & 5) features the Schwarz Family Farms and how they offer organic quality and variety in Nebraska produce. In addition to growing fresh produce, our recipe section (page 6) features a look at “Pork the Other White Meat”.

If you are planning to entertain outdoors this spring, and you want your yard to look just right, check out the savings from our member benefit partners for all of your lawn and garden needs.

Finally, don’t forget that Earth Day falls in April and Every Day is Earth Day for farmers and ranchers. The Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation reminds us that farmers and ranchers work the land and grow our food with daily attention to care for our planet, our soil, and our water resources. (page 13)

I hope you enjoy this Spring issue of Nebraska Living Magazine. I received several comments about this publication and I continue to want your feedback. Contact me at tinah@nefb.org or (402) 421-4446.

Thanks for reading and happy spring!

By Tina Henderson
Since 1998 Tom and Linda Schwarz of rural Smithfield, Nebraska (a town near Bertrand) have successfully embraced organic farming, growing organic grains and vegetables. They are members of the Phelps/Gosper County Farm Bureau. They have created innovative ways to increase the value of their produce and improve their return on investment.

“We grow a lot of traditional vegetables such as tomatoes and peppers, but we also try to experiment with different vegetables. Back in 2010 we grew Asian greens and customers in rural Nebraska were unimpressed. We either needed to open up new markets or grow more common produce,” says Tom Schwarz. Since that time, the Schwarzes have developed markets for their produce, and their customers really like the exotic and interesting new varieties of vegetables they offer.

“Right now, we are starting to plant shishito peppers, but we have to figure out how to present them and sell them in Nebraska. They are very big on the east and west coasts,” Tom says. There is a tremendous market in Nebraska for organic vegetables. As a farmer, Tom says farmers need to charge their mindset.

“If a customer wants a product we need to connect with that customer and give them what they want. Farmers who farm 10 or 20 thousand acres can be the ‘Walmart’ of agriculture, but if you are small like us, we have to figure out where we fit in the food system, so we have to specialize,” Tom said. One of the advantages organic farmers enjoy compared to their conventional counterpart is the demand for a wider variety of products than you see in conventional agriculture. “People who want organic food tend to be ‘foodies’ and are often looking for new and different types of produce to try,” says Tom. For example, shishito peppers are small thin-skinned Japanese peppers that are generally sweet and very mild (although about 1 in every 10 are said to be moderately hot). They are available year-round.

“The average Nebraskan may not know how to cook with this type of pepper. So, part of what we do on our farm is experiment with different produce to market it right here in Nebraska. This is a very flavorful pepper that is low on heat. We plan on marketing it to restaurants in the area, when we get it just right,” Tom said.

The demand for organically-grown Schwarz Family Farm produce continues to increase. They have delivered to grocery stores and restaurants in Kearney, Grand Island, Lincoln, and Omaha.

“We know we can sell more of our produce to grocers and restaurants in Omaha and Lincoln, but we must have the capacity before we commit to more customers. Our location in Nebraska is complicated. Schwarz Farm is midway between Denver on the west and Omaha on the east, making transportation costs a concern. “There’s a huge demand for local produce right now, but some of our Omaha stores didn’t even consider us local based on their definition. It’s been a challenge,” he adds.

Last year was a difficult one for the Schwarz farm, three of the four high tunnel greenhouses were damaged by straight line winds. The Schwarzes plan to rebuild.

“Being successful at organic farming is all about learning ways to fine-tune the operation to improve the quality of the products you grow and have a good rate of return. Organic farming is labor intensive and requires careful thought and planning. Maintaining organic certification also comes with a cost. But we already have a great summer staff and are ready to expand our market and grow more produce,” Tom said.

So, after nearly 20 years, the Schwarz family has dealt with many challenges, but they have proven that they have what it takes to face the future and be successful.

For more information about Schwarz Family Farm go to www.schwarzfamilyfarm.com.
PORK CHOP AND RICE CASSEROLE

INGREDIENTS:
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/4 cup parmesan cheese
- pepper
- salt
- 1 cup ricotta cheese
- 1 cup cheddar cheese
- 2 cups frozen mixed vegetables
- 2 cups white rice
- 4 New York pork chops

EasyCheesy
(possibly)
• 1 tablespoon flat leaf parsley
(grated)
• cottage cheese
(thawed)
• cooked long-grain

When you get in the kitchen with pork, you’ll find yourself thinking about all the possibilities. Whether it’s a super-quick weeknight dinner or a Saturday cookout, pork lets you put your own spin on delicious.

EasyCheesy
(possibly)

NUTRITION:
- Sodium 23%|
- Fat 37%|
- Carbs 28%|
- Protein 47%|
- Fiber 12%|
- Calories 60

DIRECTIONS:
1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Oil a 2-quart casserole dish and set aside.
2. In a large bowl, combine the rice, vegetables, cheddar, ricotta or cottage cheese, and salt and pepper to taste. Transfer to the prepared casserole dish, sprinkle the Parmesan on top, and set aside.
3. Season the pork chops with salt and pepper. In a large skillet over medium-high heat, warm the oil. Add the chops and cook until browned on one side, 3 to 4 minutes. Arrange the chops, browned side up, on top of the rice mixture and bake until the rice mixture is hot and the chops are cooked to 145 degrees F., about 30 minutes. Let stand at room temperature for 3 minutes.
4. Serve the chops over the rice mixture, sprinkled with the parsley, if using.

Check out our recipes to get your creative juices going. https://www.yummly.com/page/pork.

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UNEXPECTED ACCIDENT HIGHLIGHTS PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN AIRMEDCARE AND NEBRASKA FARM BUREAU

It happened to Dave Petersen of Bayard, an unexpected accident that placed him on an AirLink air ambulance helicopter.

In early January, Dave, a member of the Morrill County Farm Bureau, was on his horse, Lil’ Bit. The horse thought she should go home and made a sudden move in a different direction, catching him off guard and throwing him from his horse. He landed on his right side, breaking four ribs, his collar bone, and puncturing his right lung.

His wife, Nancy, called for a rescue unit and a neighbor, Thomas Blackstone, drove by and stopped to help. When the rescue unit arrived, they thought the roads were too rough to transport him safely, so they called in the AirLink helicopter, which flew Dave eight minutes to Regional West Medical Center in Scottsbluff. “Everyone involved has been wonderful and treated me with the utmost respect and compassion. My neighbor, Thomas, was first on the scene and my wife has saved my life. Ryan Dalbey, Paul Safford, Jessica Green, Monte Betancur, and Ashley Shultz; volunteers with Bayard Fire Department, knew exactly what needed to be done, and were the ones who called for the AirLink helicopter. I have to say I’m doing great now because the Air Link staff is the best in the world,” Dave said.

Dave signed up for an AirMedCare Network (AMCN) membership about a year ago through Nebraska Farm Bureau. “It was $65 a year and if you are a Farm Bureau member it was only $55. The cost of that eight-minute flight would have been $34,907. Because I was a member, I never got a bill. It was the best $55 I’ve ever spent,” he said.

I would like to offer some advice, get a membership to your local County Farm Bureau and get a membership to AirMedCare Network, Petersen said. “What this means is, if you are a member of Farm Bureau, AirMedCare membership is discounted. If you are a member of AirMedCare, you won’t see a medical transport bill if you use this service for a medical emergency. And you will never know when you need this service. Thanks Farm Bureau for offering this member benefit,” Dave said.

HERE ARE THE MEMBERSHIP DISCOUNTS:

- One year: $55 (reg. $65)
- Three years: $165 (reg. $185)
- Five years: $275 (reg. $300)
- Ten years: $550 (reg. $575)

For more information go to www.nefb.org/articles/member-benefits or contact Michelle Beeney at AirMedCare Network at (308) 641-7833 or michelle.beeney@amgh.us.
1. **SAND HILLS**
   Mullen, NE (1) •

2. **DISMAL RIVER**
   Mullen, NE (2) •

3. **THE PRAIRIE CLUB (DUNES)**
   Valentine, NE (3) ≈

4. **OMAHA COUNTRY CLUB**
   Omaha, NE (4)

5. **DISMAL RIVER CLUB**
   Mullen, NE (5)

6. **WILD HORSE**
   Gothenburg, NE (7) ^

7. **THE PRAIRIE CLUB (PINES)**
   Valentine, NE (6) ^

8. **ARBORLINKS**
   Nebraska City, NE (9)

9. **FIRETHORN**
   Lincoln, NE (8)

10. **TATANKA**
    Niobrara, NE †

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**KEY TO SYMBOLS**

(2015-2016 ranking in parentheses)

• America’s 100 Greatest Course

≈ America’s Second 100 Greatest

^ America’s 100 Greatest Public Course

† America’s 100 Greatest Public Course

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**THE BEST GOLF COURSES IN NEBRASKA 2017-2018**

BY GOLF DIGEST

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**LET’S TALK PUBLIC POWER**

Affordability is only one of the benefits of being a cost-of-service-based, public power utility. Nebraskans pay only what it costs to produce and deliver electricity. Every dollar is invested in the operation of power plants, transmission lines and facilities to ensure the state’s electric utilities meet your energy needs at the most affordable cost.

Nebraska’s public power system delivers electricity as a nonprofit service.

The average Nebraska homeowner pays about $3.61 per day for electricity.

A drive-thru meal costs more than a day’s worth of electricity for an average Nebraska homeowner.

In the U.S., homeowners served electrically by public power pay about 15% less than those served by investor-owned utilities.

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IS A TERM USED BY MANY, BUT FOR THIS FARMER, IT’S A TERM HE LIVES BY EVERY DAY.

We farmers like to say, “If you don’t take care of the land, it won’t be here for the next generation.”

John C. Martin, Pleasanton, NE

ENVIRONMENTALIST

EARTH DAY

Earth day is April 22. For Nebraska Farm and ranch families, every day is earth day. Farm families have a connection to the land, perhaps passed on through generations. They work the land and grow our food with daily attention to care for our planet, our soil, and our water resources.

NEBRASKA FARM AND RANCH FAMILIES PROVIDE FOR NEBRASKANS IN MANY WAYS – GROWING OUR FOOD, CARING FOR OUR NATURAL RESOURCES, AND FUELING OUR ECONOMY. THE NEBRASKA FARM BUREAU FOUNDATION’S MISSION IS TO ENGAGE YOUTH, EDUCATORS, AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC TO PROMOTE AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF AGRICULTURE IN THE LIVES OF ALL NEBRASKANS.

LEARN MORE AT www.nefbfoundation.org.

CARE FOR THE SOIL

Farmers know it takes thousands of years to create an inch of topsoil, and they protect it with cover crops and erosion control practices such as buffer strips, grass waterways, and crop rotations.

PROTECT THE WATER

On cattle ranches, farmers know water is a source of life for everyone, including the cattle, the wildlife, and the family. Everyday water conservation efforts include conducting water quality tests, fencing off streams to protect fish and waterways, and creating man-made irrigation ponds.

PROVIDE MORE WHILE USING LESS

Modern practices help farmers be successful while caring for the earth. Farmers use crops that need less tilling to control weeds. Their no-till farming also locks carbon in the soil and requires less tractor fuel. Prudent management enables them to produce more without needing additional land.

Nebro anxiety and ranch families provide for Nebraskans in many ways – growing our food, caring for our natural resources, and fueling our economy. The Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation’s mission is to engage youth, educators, and the general public to promote an understanding of the vital importance of agriculture in the lives of all Nebraskans.

LEARN MORE AT www.nefbfoundation.org.
Before you break out those gardening gloves, get inspired by some of our favorite 2018 landscaping trends! Read on to find out what you’ll see sprouting up everywhere this spring.

Plant an Edible Landscape
With sustainability becoming a household trend, more families are turning to their own gardens for fresh produce. In fact, backyard gardening has become so popular that these plants have finally broken into the decorative gardening space — especially for people with small yards or garden beds.

Restore a Habitat in Your Yard
While you create your beautiful landscape, you could consider making a few adjustments, such as growing seed-producing and berry producing plants, to help better support your local wildlife.

Bring the Indoors Outside
Create a permanent living space outdoors with comfortable fabrics and furniture. Create the ultimate outdoor dining destination by surrounding the space with in-ground and container plants and include entertainment spaces, such as a fire pit.

Surround Yourself with Plants
Get creative! Look for plants that can be used as home accessories and easily added to the overall design of your furniture. Plants and greenery should no longer be limited to the outdoors — surround yourself!

A Bedhead Garden
Looking for low-maintenance? Low on time? Look no further, consider a bedhead garden — an informal planting method that relies on easy-care and native plants that will look great without all the extra time and effort. Ornamental grasses and wildflowers are hardy, low-maintenance choices.

Add a Water Feature
Landscape water features have long been popular, but in 2018 you’ll see a shift toward highlighting water features as a landscape focal point, not an afterthought. Bubbling creeks and splashing fountains can do great things for your backyard!

2018 LANDSCAPING TRENDS TO CONSIDER

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