

# INSIDE ARDEN

August 2009  
Arden Park  
Arcade  
Sierra Oaks  
Wilhaggin  
Campus Commons  
Del Paso Manor  
Carmichael



Lunch on the Terrace by Cara Brown

INSIDE PUBLICATIONS 3104 O STREET SACRAMENTO CA 95816

GET INTO THE NEIGHBORHOOD



# As Fresh As It Gets

Gönül grows ingredients for her restaurant in her own garden

By Anita Clevenger

**G**önül Blum has found a way to combine her love of gardening with her passion for fresh, healthy cuisine. Every day, she goes into her garden to clip herbs and pick whatever fruits or vegetables are ripe, then takes them to her restaurant. At Gönül's J Street Cafe, the menu features seasonal fruits and vegetables, many of which are grown at her Arden Park home. She is inspired by her childhood in Turkey, where her family grew most of what they ate.

Although Blum gardens on a much smaller scale than her family did, she grows a lot of food on her nearly 1-acre property. It takes ingenuity to tuck planting areas in sunny patches between mature trees, a swimming pool, a patio and a trampoline. She removed ivy and turf and cut down a few trees to make space. "It's all scattered," she says. "I have little things going on everywhere. Everything is edible, even the roses. The petals make rosewater, which is wonderful for desserts."

Herbs grow by the front door, in a large raised planter in the backyard, in containers and throughout her garden beds. The mint plants are confined to containers because of their aggressive roots, but Blum sows much better-behaved basil directly into the ground. Most of the herbs are perennials, including chives, edible lavender, rosemary, sage and oregano. Blum is especially fond of lemon



Gönül Blum is an avid gardener and grows many of the vegetables and herbs served in her restaurant in her own backyard

verbena and lemon balm, which she combines with other herbs and spices to make a variety of aromatic teas. Regular harvesting keeps the herbs compact and covered with fresh growth. Lemon verbena usually gets awkwardly big and gangly, but in Blum's garden, it forms a tidy mound.

Herbs not used immediately are dried for later use. Blum usually hangs bundles of herbs to dry, but she says that if you spread herbs onto a clean sheet on the ground, they will

dry thoroughly within a couple of days.

Blum moved to Arden Park from Carmichael in 2003, the same year that she opened her restaurant. She brought the table grapes and wine grapes along, since the buyer of the Carmichael house didn't want them. Her Merlot and Chardonnay vines don't yield enough grapes to warrant making wine, but she uses them for cooking and for making jams and jellies. The grapes dry well, too.

In Turkish and other Mediterranean and Middle Eastern cuisines, fruit is often paired with meat. Blum loves using apricots, dates, raisins and other fruits in her cooking. She's planted raspberry bushes in the back corner and placed fruit trees all over her property. She grows just about every fruit that you can think of and a few that might not occur to you at all, including lemons, grapefruit, blood oranges, peaches, nectarines, pomegranates,

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persimmons, pears, apples and apricots. "In four or five years," she says, "we will have so much fruit!"

Blum's tomatoes are lagging this year, but she will fill in with fresh, local produce from the farmers markets. The farmers call her to report on what they have, and they often deliver right to the restaurant. When Blum's own tomatoes ripen, she will roast them in the pizza oven after she shuts it down in the evening. "The oven gets very hot, up to 500 degrees, and the bricks hold the heat for a long, long time," she explains. The tomatoes develop a rich, deep flavor, and it's a great way to save energy.

In the winter, Blum's garden still supplies the restaurant and her family. She grows large amounts of arugula and spinach and uses dried fruits and herbs in her cooking and teas.

There's a lot of talk these days about eating food that is fresh and locally produced. Blum puts the talk into action. "It can't get any

healthier," she says. "I like what I'm doing now."

*Anita Clevenger is a Sacramento County UC Cooperative Extension Master Gardener. Cooperative Extension has survived the recent budget cuts, although the office is now open to the public on a more limited schedule. You can still call the Master Gardeners at 875-6913 for answers to your gardening questions Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. Harvest Day will be held at the Fair Oaks Horticulture Center in Fair Oaks Park on August 1 from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Information about the fruit and tomato tastings, exhibits and speakers can be found at [http://groups.ucanr.org/sactomg/Harvest\\_Day/](http://groups.ucanr.org/sactomg/Harvest_Day/)*

*Gönül's J Street Cafe is at 3839 J Street. Go to [jstreetcafe.com](http://jstreetcafe.com) to sign up for a monthly update, with upcoming events, coupons and a monthly recipe. Blum is also publishing a cookbook that should be available soon. ●*

## SACRAMENTO COMMUNITY CONCERTS

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### Sports continued from page 63

workout on Saturday. It's quality versus quantity." The program alternates running with walk breaks, he notes, "because it preserves your body and allows for better recovery. I want people to have running a component in their life for the long haul, for the rest of their lives, rather than five or 10 years of running for one Olympic moment and then fading away with a chronic injury that ends their career."

**On top of  
shepherding  
runners and  
organizing races,  
Press himself is a  
marathoner.**

On top of shepherding runners and organizing races, Press himself is a marathoner. He does a 50-mile race from Guy West Bridge to Auburn every April and a number of marathons, including the California International Marathon.

He reveals what makes his work worthwhile.

"When I get a phone call or that e-mail from somebody who tells me they had diabetes before joining Sacfit and now their diabetes is gone or someone calls to say their doctor just told them they have the blood work of an athlete, that empowers me," says Press. "And then to see that this is registering in their lives and helping the parkway at the same time is amazing. I get back way more than anyone would ever know."

*For more information, visit [sacfit.com](http://sacfit.com). ●*