

Bez práce nejsou koláče (Without work, there are no koláče).

Having just enjoyed my mom's superb homemade poppy seed kolaches this past Easter weekend, in this column I would like to address a question that I had received on the subject of planting and harvesting poppy seed.



Poppy seed on the left, apricot on the right, lightly browned, dough soft and moist throughout!

Q: Mark Jerabek asks:

“Tony: My name is Mark Jerabek, and my grandmother lived in Silver Lake and grew poppies every year for seed to make kolaches. I would like to do the same, and have planted poppy seed both indoors and out with zero success. Maybe the seed I got(local food co-op, and Penzeys in Milwaukee) was heat treated or something, but I got no sprouts at all, and I'm pretty sure my grandmother just left a few plants in the row to self seed each year, and then thinned the plants the next spring when they came up. I called Jerabek's store in Silver Lake a couple weeks ago to see if they knew any Czech ladies who still grew poppies, thinking I might be able to buy some seed (viable seed) from them, but they didn't know anyone who was still doing it. They suggested I contact you because you might know someone I could get seed from. Do you? If so I would really appreciate hearing from you. Thanking you in advance,.....Mark Jerabek

PS: My grandparents were John and Julia Jerabek. They lived during the early 1950's in a house in Silver Lake that was near railroad tracks and a hatchery. My grandmother's brother was Frank Bren, who was a local contractor who built some very nice homes in Silver Lake and surrounding area. He and my grandfather were partners for years in a sawmill on the shore of Silver Lake. My grandmother died in 1955, and my grandfather in 1959, and they are buried in a cemetery in Silver Lake. When I was a little boy helping my grandmother process poppy seeds, the lady next door to her was a Mrs. Dudek, and she did poppies too, and kept chickens which she butchered and dressed and sold to local folks. (I used to "help" her do this when I

visited my grandma). I'm also related by marriage to Hakls and Jukls who lived around Silver Lake."

A: If there are any readers with some great suggestions for buying, planting, harvesting, and/or processing poppy seeds, please let me know and I'll post your responses here.

In my family's August 2008 trip back to our home village of Velké Tresné, Czech Republic, we found the practice of growing poppy seed to be very much alive and well, from small garden patches to large fields scattered throughout the Czech-Moravian Highlands (Vysočina). My mother, Judy Kadlec, has subsequently revived the practice of growing and harvesting poppy seeds in her gardens at the Kadlec farm, near Swan Lake in Hale Township, McLeod County.



Verá Petrová and Judy Kadlec in exchanging tips on how to grow poppy seed, in Verá's garden, Velké Tresné, CZ.

How to Grow Poppies

(from: <http://www.poppies.ws/articles/grow-opium-poppies.html>)

Poppies are otherwise known as papaver poppies. *Papaver somniferum var. album* is the species of plant from which opium and poppy seeds are extracted. If you enjoy gardening and you like this poppy, you can grow opium poppies either indoors or outdoors. Opium poppies prefer freezing climates and are frost tolerant. In fact, the opium poppy seeds can be planted in late fall (e.g. October), just before the first frosts of winter and the seeds will eventually

germinate in the spring. If you haven't already planted your poppy seed this past fall, now is the perfect time for you to order your seeds in time for planting this late April, before the frost leaves the ground.

Here is a good online source for purchasing your first batch of poppy seeds for planting: <http://www.opiumpoppyseeds.com> . At this website you can order seeds and have them mailed to you. If you do not have access to the Internet, ask your kid or grandkid to do it for you.

To sow your poppy seeds, spread them on the ground and cover them with a thin layer of soil. The germination usually takes about 9 to 16 days to occur. And the seeds do best when the soil temperature is cool, between 60-65 degrees Fahrenheit or when the air temperature is not above 55 degrees Fahrenheit. They will not grow if the climate is too warm. For example, if you live in a more temperate climate, they will not germinate unless you place the seeds into the refrigerator so the germination process can occur.

Poppies prefer full sun to partial shade. They will grow well in many types of soils and tolerate dry spells well. Final spacing of plants should be 8" - 18", depending upon variety. It is important that you do not crowd your plants, as they need ample space to grow and flourish.

The plants will grow 2- 2.5 feet tall. Poppies look superb planted together in big beds. Poppy will grow quickly and will bloom in early to mid summer. Fertilize them once a month to promote steady growth. Mulching around the plants will help to keep weeds down and make the bed more attractive. (<http://www.gardenersnet.com/flower/poppy.htm>)

To grow opium poppies you need to be patient and positive all the time it takes to germinate; at the end the award will be very satisfactory. Once the poppies are about one inch tall, the thin opium poppy seedlings accelerate their growth. Opium poppies are annual, which means that an opium poppy grows, flourishes, and fruits in the same season, and then it dies.

Pavučiny Výzvou (Pavučina Challenge)

If any readers would like to try their hand at growing poppies this season, please mail or email a photo of your poppy garden to me and I will include in a future column. Thanks!

Mluvíte Česky? Do You Speak Czech?

mák ('MAHK') – seed from the poppy plant

mákovice ('MAHK-oh-vitz-seh') – poppy seed plant with the head still on it

zahrada ('ZAH-rah-dah') – garden

koláč ('KOH-lawch') – pastry (singular)

koláče ('KOH-lawch-eh') – pastries (plural in Czech, but McLeod County Czechs are known to say 'KOH-law-chéz' for plural)

As a rule, you should always stress the first syllable of a Czech word!

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