



Sarment Louamba is from Congo-Brazzaville where he worked as a taxi driver. He left the Congo because of the war and fled to Gabon where he lived with his family for 10 years as a refugee. In Gabon he was told that he could not drive a taxi because he was not a citizen. Refugees in Gabon are not allowed work permits, making resettlement more of a challenge.

The United Nations gave Sarment a generator and a piece of land to farm. He hired three people to help him and grew tomatoes, eggplants, peppers, cucumbers, sorrel, and roselle (*hibiscus*) to sell in the market. Sarment managed the farm and his employees.

Shamefully, the military took exception to Sarment's success and informed him that he could no longer work on the farm. The military threatened that if he continued to manage the farm that he would be killed.

After the threat, the United Nations said it was not safe for

him in Gabon and he and his family were granted asylum in America. They arrived in Houston on February 22, 2010.



Sarment, his wife and oldest daughter came to the Plant It Forward introductory meeting in April 2012 and enrolled in the first farmer training class. He worked hard for a year and successfully graduated in May 2013. He is currently building out, planting and harvesting from his one acre farm in Westbury, in Southwest Houston. He is also taking ESL classes, and has been practicing his English with his Farm Stand and Farm Share customers. Sarment recently transitioned to become an independent farmer, which means that he is earning his full income from his farm.

When asked about his hopes for the future Sarment says "I'd like to stay in America. I'd like for my project with farming to grow. For me – I need my family and my farm. Today this work is small like this and tomorrow (he grins and opens his arms up wide) – it will be big."



Check out the recent [Houston Chronicle article](#) by Plant It Forward Farm Manager Ray Sher highlighting Sarment and the Westbury Community Garden.

Source: "[Gabon and its refugees](#)", [International Catholic Migration Commission](#)

RECIPES

This week's bountiful vegetable is the cucumber!

Chilled Cucumber Soup

5 lbs cucumbers, peeled & cut into 2-in pieces
(about 8 cups)
4 medium scallions, dark green parts only,
chopped coarse
(about 1/2 cup)
1 cup plain whole-milk yogurt
1/4 tsp. sugar
1 Tbsp. lemon juice
1 tsp. salt
Pinch ground black pepper
Cucumber-Dill Garnish
1 large cucumber (about 1 lb), peeled & cut into
1/2 inch cubes
(about 2 cups)
1 1/2 tsp. fresh dill, chopped
1/2 tsp. lemon juice
1/4 tsp. salt

For the Soup:

Toss the cucumbers with the scallions in a medium bowl.
Puree half the cucumber-scallion mixture in a blender with
1 1/4 cups cold water until smooth, about 1 minute.
Transfer the puree to a large nonreactive bowl.
Puree the remaining cucumber-scallion mixture with 1 1/4
cups cold water and transfer it to the bowl with the first
batch.
Whisk in the yogurt, sugar, lemon juice, salt and pepper.
Cover tightly and refrigerate until chilled, at least 1 hour
or up to 12 hours.

For the Garnish:

Dry the cucumber cubes between layers of paper towels.
Toss cucumbers with dill, lemon juice and salt in a small
bowl.
To serve, divide the chilled soup among individual bowls.
Sprinkle some of the cucumber and dill mixture over each
bowl and serve immediately.

Cucumber Mint Tea Sandwiches

1/4 cup loosely packed mint leaves rinsed, dried, and
finely chopped
2 Tbsp. unsalted butter, softened
2 Tbsp. cream cheese
6 slices of whole-wheat bread
3 in length of cucumber, cut into thin slices

In a small bowl, combine the mint, butter, and cream
cheese and stir until combined well.
Spread the bread slices with the butter mixture, top
three with cucumber, season with salt, and top with the
remaining bread slices.
Cut each sandwich into quarters.
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Fennel

Arugula Salad with Grapes, Fennel, Gorgonzola and Pecans

4 teaspoons apricot jam
3 Tablespoons white wine vinegar
3 Tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 small shallot, very finely minced (about 1 tablespoon)
Table salt and ground black pepper
1/2 small bulb fennel, cored, trimmed of stalks, and sliced very thin (about 1 cup); fronds chopped coarse (about 1/4 cup)
5 ounces lightly packed stemmed arugula (about 8 cups)
6 ounces red seedless grapes, halved lengthwise (about 1 cup)
3 ounces Gorgonzola cheese, crumbled (3/4 cup)
1/2 cup chopped pecans, toasted

Whisk jam, vinegar, oil, shallot, 1/4 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper in large bowl.
Toss fennel with vinaigrette; let stand 15 minutes.
Add arugula, fennel fronds, and grapes; toss and adjust seasonings with salt and pepper.
Divide salad among individual plates; top each with portion of Gorgonzola and pecans.
Serve immediately