



August 25, 2004

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Fair Share Farm CSA Newsletter

This Week's Share:

Full Share:

Tomatoes
Sweet peppers
Melon
Cucumbers
French fingerling potatoes
Eggplant
Hot peppers or tomatillos
Onions
Rosemary

Partial Share:

Sweet peppers
French fingerling potatoes
Eggplant or okra
Hot peppers or tomatillos
Onions
Rosemary

Next week: look for more sweet peppers, okra and baby leeks.

Calendar

September 1st — CSA Distribution, Crossroads Market

September 4th — CSA Distribution, Fair Share Farm

Back to School

This week we attended an all-day session on the timely topic of "Pests, Diseases, and Weeds". Late August finds most vegetable farms, ours included, with many examples of all three. The workshop was sponsored by the Growing Growers Program, a joint effort between state agencies and non-profits to "grow" more sustainable farmers in the K.C. area.

Our knowledge of the issues facing organic growers in our area definitely grew as a result of attending the workshop. We learned that we weren't alone in our struggles to grow certain crops. The squash family of vegetables (Cucurbitae) which includes melons, cucumbers, pumpkins, summer and winter squash came up throughout the day. The whole family is a magnet for several diseases, insects that spread disease as well as destroy the crop, and weeds that sprout up amongst their vines frustrating the farmer with hoe in hand.

Conventional vegetable farmers use insecticides that kill feisty squash bugs and

cucumber beetles, fungicides that control microbial diseases, and herbicides that kill those pesky weeds. Your typical vegetable in the squash family is often sprayed every three days with such a "cocktail" of chemicals. After harvest, the standard treatment for cucumbers, squash, and many other vegetables is to fumigate them with fungicides to prevent spoilage.

We oppose contaminating our food and environment with those nasty chemicals, even though we are frustrated with the lack of options we have as organic growers. One statistic from the workshop that stays in my mind is only 1% of insects are considered pests. The other 99% either don't do any damage or actually help by eating pests. Such beneficial insects are the organic farmer's best ally in the fight against damaging bugs. We encourage beneficials in our fields by leaving wild areas nearby, sowing clover in our grass strips, and planting lots of small flowering plants. This year we have seen an increase in beneficials including wheel bugs, robber flies, lady bug larvae, many spiders, as well as a huge population of toads and frogs.

Unfortunately, most insecticides kill

the 99% along with the 1% as well as affecting the food chain down stream. For organic growers these "broad spectrum" chemicals are not only prohibited, but undesirable.

One farmer at the workshop actually has resorted to growing her pumpkins on her neighbors property so that she can spray them with conventional insecticides. While we have no interest in going this route, it is a good example of how difficult growing the squash family is in our area.

With no easy solutions, we currently have several tactics to keep those cucumbers, squash, and company coming. With quick yielding plants like cucumbers and summer squash our strategy has been to plant successive crops throughout the season so that as one planting is dying off another is beginning. Next year we plan to do even more succession crops. For slower maturing crops like winter squash and pumpkins we are testing disease resistant varieties this year with some success. And long-term as the health of our soil improves through the addition of compost and cover crops, so will the health of our plants and in the end, all of us.

Recipes

Rosemary Oil

A good way to savor the flavor of this herb, and have a nice dipping or cooking oil. Add one teaspoon of chopped rosemary leaves to 1/2 cup of olive oil. Let sit for an hour. Great many different ways:

- ◆ Brush it on bread and toast it for a nice snack or dinner accompaniment
- ◆ Mix with 1/4 cup of vinegar and some salt & pepper for a nice salad dressing
- ◆ Add to steamed potatoes, beans or other vegetables

Baba Ganoosh

One goal of ours is to get people to become familiar with, and enjoy eggplant. One way to look at it is as a mushroom substitute. If you cook it until its texture is like a cooked mushroom, you may be able to begin to appreciate it more.

It is also good when cooked/roasted to a soft, puree consistency, mixed with herbs or maybe a little rosemary oil, and used as a bread or snack spread. A classic recipe for eggplant puree is Baba Ganoosh.

- ◆ 2 to 3 medium eggplant
- ◆ 1 to 2 tablespoons olive oil
- ◆ 4 tablespoons Tahini (available at Middle Eastern markets)
- ◆ 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- ◆ 2 to 3 cloves garlic, crushed

Cut ends off eggplant. Slice long eggplant lengthwise, round ones into 1/2 inch thick rounds. Brush with olive oil roast in oven for about 25 minutes at 450°F, until

The CSA Cook

We hope that so far this season you have been enjoying your produce and know more about vegetables than you did at the start. We are glad to be able to provide both food and a little advice.

As a rookie food writer and amateur cook, it has been a nice exercise to put together a useful page of recipes and general information. I started cooking seriously about 20 years ago, when I decided that, since I'll have to eat every day for the rest of my life, I should get good enough at it that it's enjoyable. The logical extension of that was to focus on using the freshest ingredients I could find—first from my garden, then from my CSA, and now from our farm.

I didn't really know about a great variety of food until I joined the CSA. It was there that I was properly introduced to such items as Swiss chard, kohlrabi, eggplant, mizuna and Chinese cabbage. My job is to carry on the effort of expanding people's appreciation and enjoyment of food.

The CSA is a great way to do this.

eggplant is very soft. Scrape eggplant pulp from skin into a bowl and add remaining ingredients.

Depending on your preference, you can either mash and mix with a fork, or puree the ingredients in a food processor. Serve with garnish of chives, parsley and olive oil.

Great as a snack on crackers, loaf bread, or pita bread, especially when toasted.

Our plan is to provide weekly information and recipes in this newsletter, and have a broader resource for you on our website. Part of this will depend on you. As with any group of people, there are a large number of experiences to draw on in our CSA. One way we hope to capture as much of this as possible is to create a website recipe index that members can easily add to. While we don't expect this to happen this year, it will be on-line before the start of the 2005 season.

In the meantime, we look forward to accumulating recipes that you would like to share with everyone, especially those ones that are true favorites as far as personal tradition, taste, preparation ease, and/or novelty. If you can send them electronically, to minimize the need for us to re-type them, so much the better.

The recipes that I provide most often are the result of cooking with what is at hand, and creating something that fits the shares. I also try to focus on keeping things simple to allow the basic flavors to come through (so you can really see what an unfamiliar item is like) and to keep your cooking time down.

However, there are many other ways to approach this. One thing that this method may or may not do, is get kids to eat their vegetables. While we can't do much about the "they just won't eat xyz" we would love to get some advice that can be shared, either with specific recipes, or techniques (eg, hiding things, covering them in peanut butter.) While this may also be an issue with adults, we hope that you at least try things once, as our varieties and their freshness may not resemble those veges you never liked.

Your Share Items

Rosemary

One nice thing about the fresh culinary herbs that we grow at the farm is cutting and bunching them for the shares. With its sweet, piney fragrance, rosemary is no exception.

A native of the Mediterranean, the folklore of this herb associates it with love and fidelity. It was woven in bridal bouquets, and placed under nuptial mattresses to encourage faithfulness. Twined into the hair, it is said to improve memory and cure baldness.

I am lucky enough to have had the opportunity to travel to Southern France, and see it growing wild in the rocky hill-sides along with thyme, oregano and lavender—the so called Herbes de Provence.

From a culinary standpoint, it is indispensable in the kitchen. To flavor soups, stews or stocks, throw in a couple fresh sprigs and then remove it when done cooking. Otherwise, strip the leaves and chop them before adding to butters, oils, salad dressings, potatoes, pasta sauce, meats (especially lamb) or bread dough. To keep it fresh, store it in a bag in the fridge. If you don't use it fresh, simply hang it to dry and then strip the leave and store in a jar or other airtight container. Make sure to crush or finely chop the dried leaves before using, as they don't soften much during cooking.

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