



June 15, 2005

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Fair Share Farm CSA Newsletter

This Week's Share:

Full Share:

Lettuce
Bok choy
Summer squash
Broccoli
Cabbage or Mizuna
Sugar Snap or Shelling Peas
Green onions
Radishes or turnips
Rosemary, tarragon, oregano or mint

Partial Share:

Lettuce
Bok choy
Broccoli
Cabbage
Sugar Snap or Shelling Peas
Rosemary, tarragon, oregano or mint

Next week: Summer squash, Bok choy, Mizuna, Swiss chard.

Calendar

June 22nd — Distribution, Wednesdays

June 25th — Distribution, Weekend

Today marks a new season in our climate. With the dry weather making a comeback, we have entered into what the meteorologists call “the summer pattern”. The hot, dry, winds from the Southwest are just in time. The last 2 weeks have been very wet and we welcome the winds that will dry out our soils to a more healthy consistency.

We were beginning to feel a little *deja vu* of the rains of last year after the farm got over seven inches of rain in the last 12 days. In a perfect climate, most vegetables want an inch of rain each week, so 7 inches was a bit much. We are learning, however, that this is common in our part of the country. Rain comes in fits and starts and usually accompanied by thunderstorms and high winds, not the gentle inch per week common in the Northeast where we apprenticed. Out here on the edge of the prairie our weather tends toward the climactic—tornadoes, hail storms, and 70 mph winds. My father likes to remind us that once we got 10 inches of rain in one day.

So, with too much rain comes potential problems. Any kind of rot,

fungus, mildew, blight, etc. loves hot and wet conditions. Mildew will be taking out the peas in another few weeks. We are growing a new “mildew-resistant” variety of sugar snaps this year. So far they are holding up, but we cannot imagine any pea surviving the heat much longer. We haven’t seen much evidence of any other rots yet, although our last planting of sweet corn has come up poorly which may be due to the soggy conditions.

You can also see a general lack of vigor in the plants in certain areas. The ends of our beds are sometimes the wettest with standing water still. The beans are in beds where the middle dips a bit and the standing water there has stunted the plants. When the soil is this wet the only thing you can do is pull weeds by hand, which is exactly what we and our brave intern, Amy, have been doing lately.

Crawling down the bed pulling weeds by hand is not the most efficient use of time. Walking down a dry bed pulling a sharp hoe does the job quicker. But when it's this wet you are at least amused by the lovely “slurp” the ground makes as you pull the weed up, followed by a nice “plop” as

the weed and its blob of muddy root drops from your hand.

The deer fence is proceeding at a similar pace. A few hearty souls braved the rain on Sunday and we succeeded in raising 23 posts. After some frustrations with the post hole digger, most of the 160 odd post holes are dug, although many are now full of water. With a clear weather forecast, we hope that we can get a lot more done in these next 2 weeks. A sincere thanks goes out to Bob Kennedy, Jan Kohl, D’arcy Lewitzke, and Barbara Smart who slopped thru the mud with us on Sunday. For those of you who missed the mud bath, opportunities to help with the deer fence abound. We have set aside Thursday and Saturday afternoons to work on the fence until further notice. Just call or email us to let us know you are interested in getting in on the action.

This week will be the final week of broccoli and lettuce until fall. Enjoy the tastes of Spring while they last. Summer squash introduces the next season’s fare this week. Don’t worry partial shares, you will be getting it next week and for many weeks hence. Mark your calendars: the first day of summer is the 21st!

Recipes

Stir Fry 101

It is always good to understand the basics of something. For stir frying, it is the basic *technique* you want to know. Then you can always make something quick with what you have at hand.

1. Vegetables will need to be chopped into small, thin slices, so that they cook quickly. It is perhaps the most energy efficient method of cooking.
2. Chop everything ahead, as you will only have time to stir once you start cooking.
3. Heat oil in a wok or wide skillet on high heat. Add some garlic and/or fresh ginger and cook 1 minute, stirring the whole time. You can also add a dried pepper at this stage.
4. Add thick ingredients such as Bok choy stems, mushrooms, eggplant and cook/stir for 1 minute.
5. Add leafy or quickly cooked vegetables and cook/stir 2 more minutes.
6. Add sauces/oils like soy, hot sauce, fish sauce or sesame oil and cook/stir for a minute. You may also add a little corn starch in water to thicken the sauce.
7. Garnish with scallions, cilantro, sesame seeds, crushed peanuts, or items to your liking.

This Week's Stir Fry

So, once you know the basics, the dish can make itself. Chop the following ingredients.

- ◇ 2 clove garlic, or the white part of 2 garlic greens, or 3 garlic scapes, chopped
- ◇ 1 tablespoon chopped fresh ginger
- ◇ 1/2 Bok choy (chop the top leaves separate from the stems)
- ◇ 1/4 bunch Mizuna
- ◇ 1 cup chopped broccoli or fresh peas
- ◇ 1 cup chopped mushrooms
- ◇ 1 scallion, chopped or 2 tbsp cilantro
- ◇ 2 tbsp sesame vegetable oil, salt, pepper, 2 tbsp soy sauce
- ◇ Cooked rice

Add 1 tbsp oil to the wok and heat on high. Add the garlic and ginger and cook and stir for 1 minute. Add Bok choy stems, broccoli/peas and mushrooms and cook/ stir for 1 minute. Add the Bok choy leafs and Mizuna, cook/stir for 1 minute. Add the remaining oil, soy sauce and a pinch of salt to taste. Serve over rice, garnished with scallions/ cilantro. Sesame seeds or crushed peanuts make a nice finish, giving you protein, minerals, vitamins and starch in one delicious dish.

Petits Pois Braisés (Braised Young Peas)—from *Saveur*, Number 85

Sounds fancy, but you don't have to look any farther than your share to enjoy this spring dish. It is also a nice way to do something different with some of your lettuce. We had it Monday night, and it was a true seasonal treat. Don't pass this up!

1/2 small head of lettuce

2 small spring onions, or scallions, trimmed

2 to 3 cups fresh shelled peas

1 tbsp sugar

Salt

2 tbsp butter

1 sprig of rosemary (optional)

1. Remove outer leaves from head of lettuce and wash both the heart and the loose leaves, leaving the water clinging.
2. Put the heart of lettuce, peas and onions into a heavy medium pot with a tight-fitting lid, Sprinkle with sugar (using more or less depending on sweetness of peas), season to taste with salt, dot with butter, and add the sprig of rosemary. Press loose lettuce leaves over peas, cover pot, and gently cook (medium low) until peas are soft, about 30 minutes. Discard loose lettuce leaves and rosemary sprig before serving.

Your Share Items

Bok choy

An old Chinese vegetable, you need to cook Bok choy soon after getting it, as the leaves will wilt quicker than other greens. Store it in the crisper in a ventilated bag.

It is the beautiful white stemmed vegetable with dark green leaves. It has a mild cabbage taste, and a nice crunchy texture—great in a stir fry, or with peanut butter as a snack.

Herbs

You've been getting some new herbs the last few weeks, and you may or may not be familiar with. **Tarragon** is the anise/licorice flavored herb with the long, flat, tender leaves. It goes good in omelets, vinegars, and with chicken. The **oregano**, has rounded leaves and a square stem (characteristic of the mint family.) It is great dried (as is tarragon), and is a good seasoning for meat or beans.

We are trying something new this year with the herbs, in that we will simply spend the year harvesting whatever mix of herbs are at their peak, and letting you select which one you want. They will usually be available for 2 to 3 weeks, so you will have more than one chance to try each one.

Fair Share Farm

18613 Downing Road

Kearney, Missouri 64060

(816) 320-3763

www.fairsharefarm.com