



Big Leaf Farm Newsletter Week #21

October 18-24, 2009

Farm News

Things are good here on the farm. We are really enjoying this wonderful fall weather, and the fall colors are especially spectacular this year. We've had some nice colorful sunrises and sunsets to accent all this wonderful fall foliage.

We are starting to shift into winter mode here, which means splitting our time mostly between harvesting and thinking about off-season projects. We've started a task we have been considering for some time – a small walk-in cooler in our barn. As we increase the size of our CSA program we'll need to keep much larger amounts of produce cool. This summer we've been harvesting everything in the hours before we deliver them to pick-up points. More sensitive items we kept in a freezer, retrofitted to work as a fridge. Next year, working alone, I probably won't be able to harvest all the produce the same day of delivery – some of the hardier items will have to be picked the evening before and stored in the cooler. We'll cool this small insulated space with an ordinary wall air conditioning unit. A special thermostat allows the unit to cool down to 35° degrees or so. More immediately, we'll use this insulated rodent proof storage room to store much of our potato crop. Here I'm insulating underneath the floor – I'll pour the concrete flour into this form once I add a little more insulation.



A reminder – if you'd like to sign up for our winter shares this is your last chance. I'll be giving away slots to people on our waiting list starting friday. We've had a great interest in winter shares and it looks like we will fill up quickly. If you still want a spot and forgot to pay, give me a call ASAP.

Cast of characters

- **Carrots:**
- **Lettuce:**
- **Tomatoes:**
- **Potatoes:** This week's potatoes are a mixture of 'Carola' and 'All Red'. You've seen them both before.
- **Broccoli –or- Cauliflower:** Your choice of these two vegetables that are developing flowers. Did you know that broccoli and Cauliflower are the same species? They're basically the same plant, just different. Kind of like a miniature poodle and a blood hound.
- **Butternut squash:** Butternut is my favorite winter squash. Make a stellar soup by roasting peeled squash chunks and onion chunks, sprinkled with curry powder in a baking dish that has a couple inches of vegetable stock in it. When the squash and onions are brown and soft puree them to a soup along with additional stock if necessary. Tasty!
- **Leeks:** Leeks are like giant scallions, but they are used like storage onions. Just chop up the white blanched portion of the stem and as much of the light greenish part as you wish. The leaves are usually discarded, but they can be used in stocks. These are a great winter staple – the hardy ones will stand in the garden all winter, unperturbed by weeks of wet weather and very cold freezes; they are the quintessential hardy vegetable for the winter garden in the maritime NW.
- **Cabbage:** Here is the first of our fall cabbage. This is called a 'savoy' cabbage, because of the crinkly leaves. Savoy cabbage is much milder and not as flavorful as regular cabbage. It is great raw in slaws or cooked into stir fries or soup. This variety is called "Famosa"
- **Arugula:** Try our arugula pesto recipe given below. Arugula is also great as a cooked green in stir fry or soups. It is quick-cooking, about like spinach.



Recipes

Pasta with Roasted Vegetables

Here's a great way to feature broccoli or cauliflower in a main dish. The roasting softens the flower buds and makes them very tasty, whether you use one or the other. This recipe is a real winner, and don't be afraid of all the garlic. Roasting it removes almost all of the 'bite'.

2 Heads garlic, papery skins removed, top quarter of heads cut off, and discarded.

6 T plus 1 t extra-virgin olive oil

1 head cauliflower

Table salt and pepper

¼ tsp sugar

1 pound pasta. The recipe calls for short molded pasta like fusilli. We've used spaghetti, which worked fine.
 ¼ t red pepper flakes
 2-3 T juice from a lemon
 1 T chopped parsley leaves, substitute with dried
 2 ounces parmesan cheese
 ¼ cup chopped walnuts

Place a large baking sheet on a rack in the middle of the oven and preheat to 500 degrees. Place the garlic heads cut side up, drizzle ½ t oil over each head, wrap them up, and place on the rack to cook until soft, about 40 minutes.

While the garlic is roasting, trim the cauliflower leaves, remove the stem flush with the bottom and cut into eight wedges (like you are cutting a pizza). Place the cauliflower in a large bowl and toss with 2 T oil, 1 t salt, pepper to taste and the ¼ t sugar.

Remove the hot sheet from the oven, transfer the cauliflower to it and spread out the pieces with the cut sides down if you can. Cook it in the oven until well browned for 20-25 minutes, then remove and cool. Once cool, chop into roughly ½ inch pieces. While the cauliflower is roasting, bring 4 quarts of water to a boil, add some salt and pasta and cook until al dente. Squeeze the roasted garlic from the bulbs into a small bowl, mash, and stir in the pepper flakes and 2 T lemon juice. Then whisk in ¼ cup of olive oil.

Drain the pasta, reserving 1 cup of the liquid, and return the pasta to the pot. Stir in the garlic sauce, add ¼ cup of the cooking water, the parsley, and ½ cup of the cheese. Adjust the consistency with the remaining cooking water and season with salt, pepper, and lemon juice to taste. Serve immediately, sprinkling with the remaining ½ cup of cheese and the toasted chopped walnuts.

Alternative with broccoli: Trim stems and cut them into 2-3 inch lengths that are ½ inch thick. Cut the crowns into 4-6 wedges, depending upon size, and following the above recipe, except only cook the broccoli for 10-15 minutes.

From "Cooks Illustrated" Sept-Oct 2009.

Arugula Pesto

Great on pasta, try it as a pizza topping.

4 packed cups of arugula
 1 small clove garlic
 1 cup chopped pecans or walnuts, toasting them is optional.
 ¼ t salt
 1-2 t lemon juice
 1-2 T golden raisins
 5-6 T extra-virgin olive oil.

Wash the arugula and dry in a salad spinner. Place the arugula, garlic, nuts and salt in a food processor and process until smooth, adding the raisins and lemon juice as

you puree. Then run the processor while drizzling in the oil until it reaches the desired smoothness, transfer it to a container with a tight fitting lid, and adjust to taste with lemon and salt. If you want to store in the fridge or freezer, smooth the surface of the pesto with the back of a spoon and add a thin layer of oil to cover. This keeps air from getting to the pesto and makes it last longer.

From "Vegetable Dishes I Can't Live Without" by Mollie Katzen



Fall colors. On the left is a blueberry leaf turning color before it drops. On the right, our namesake, a big leaf maple leaf, already on the ground.

Cauliflower and Potatoes Cooked with Fenugreek and Fennel Seeds

Here's another great vegetable recipe with asian flavors. It's worth seeking out the spices for this recipe.

1-2 lbs cauliflower
 2 medium potatoes
 6 T vegetable oil
 ¼ t whole fenugreek seeds
 1 t whole fennel seeds
 1 t whole cumin seeds
 1-2 whole dried red hot chile peppers
 ¾ t ground tumeric
 1 t ground coriander seeds
 1 t salt
 1/8 t black pepper
 1 t garam masala

Cut the cauliflower head into individual florets, then slice these lengthwise so they aren't wider than ½ inch. Soak in cold water for ½ hour. Peel the potatoes, dice them into ½ inch cubes. Soak in water for ½ hour. Drain the vegetables and dry with a dish towel. Heat oil in a large skillet over high heat – when it is smoking add the fenugreek, fennel, and cumin seeds, and the whole chiles. Stir once, then add the vegetables, stirring, then turn the heat to medium. Sprinkle with the turmeric, coriander, salt and peppers, and sauté for 8-10 minutes. Then add ¼ cup water and steam covered for 7-10 minutes, until the veggies are tender. Sprinkle with the garam masala, stir once, and serve.