

Big Leaf Farm Newsletter Week #3: June 14-June 20, 2009

Farm News

It's been a busy week here at the farm, but we feel like we are 'over the hump' with our spring planting. Almost everything that you'll be receiving in your shares for the next 3-4 months is now in the ground and growing rapidly. Now we are focusing on vegetables for the coming fall, winter and spring. The celeriac we are planting in the below picture will go out in shares from November through next April.



In the weeks to come, we'll be seeding dozens of flats of cauliflower, broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts in the greenhouse, and root crops like beets and carrots outside. Other crops, such as leeks, potatoes, and onions were started as early as February. You'll get some of them in your shares this fall, but the bulk of these crops will be held in storage for the winter and spring. As we plan for the future, we realize that to be economically viable our farm will have to produce shares for a longer season than we've done this year. So we're starting planting now for shares that will be available early next spring.

Cast of characters

- **Pac choi:** This Asian green puts up a flower stalk during the long days of summer. As a result, you may see a young flower stalk in the center of the plant. This is edible and can be chopped along with the leaves and stems in stir-fry.
- **Sugar snap peas:** Our pea beds are going strong. We can't get enough of them here at the

farm, because we know they won't last long. We hope you are enjoying them too.

- **Mesclun mix:** Several of you remarked on the green leaves with reddish freckles in the first week's salad mix. This is a European heirloom romaine lettuce called "Forellenschluse," German for "trout tail" (indicating that it is speckled like a trout's tail). This variety was cultivated as early as 1660 in Holland. There's plenty more in this week's mix, along with chard, beet, and mizuna leaves.
- **Radishes:** These are the last of the radishes for a while. Enjoy them with your salad or add them to stir fry.
- **Head Lettuce:** We didn't wash the head lettuce because we have a hard time getting it dry afterwards, and wet lettuce quickly goes bad when bagged in the refrigerator. Please wash before using. The best way is to submerge the head in a vessel of water for 10-15 minutes. Or, wash individual leaves as you use them. Store in a plastic bag in the refrigerator.
- **Braising mix:** Like the mesclun mix, but for your stir-fry pan. A mixture of spinach and spicy mustards that mellow when you cook them, this offering can be added to almost any dish. Eggs with braising mix anyone? See the recipe section for other creative ways to use greens.
- **Baby beets and greens:** We enjoy baby beets cooked with their greens like nothing else. Their preparation is simple: Remove the greens by cutting the leaves 1/2 inch above the crown of the root. Leaving the tail intact, place the roots in boiling water and simmer until they can be pierced easily with a knife. You might want to remove the smaller ones from the water first. After cooking, remove the tail and crown, and slice or cut the roots into chunks. In a frying pan, melt 1-2 T butter and briefly fry the sliced skinned beets for 3-5 minutes, then add the coarsely chopped greens and cook until they are just wilted. Add salt and pepper and enjoy! Alternatively, you can use olive oil instead of butter and add a splash of vinegar just before removing the beets and greens from the heat.
- **Kohlrabi:** This is the mystery vegetable from last week's newsletter. We recently heard this described as "The vegetable that doesn't know what it wants to be when it grows up". It can be eaten raw or cooked like a turnip (peel first). We enjoy it cut into juliennes and tossed with salad. See the recipe section for two recipes that highlight kohlrabi.

Recipes

Still overwhelmed by all these greens? We came across these creative uses suggested by Deborah Madison in her book “Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone” and thought they were worth sharing.

Five ideas for cooked greens:

- Toss with chickpeas, pasta, diced tomatoes, and freshly grated Parmesan.
- Toss with boiled diced potatoes, and mix in a little grated cheese. Or stir them into mashed potatoes.
- Mix finely chopped greens with cooked rice, barley, quinoa or pasta.
- Add them, chopped, to potatoes, lentil, or bean soups at the end of cooking.
- Chop and combine greens with feta, ricotta, or Gruyere cheese, black olives and capers, and spread them over toast.

Punjabi Greens

There is no better way to experience the intense flavor of greens than in this Indian recipe.

1 ½ lb mixed pot greens (mustard, spinach, broccoli raab, turnip, chard, kale, beet, etc).

½ inch cube of ginger

½ fresh hot green chili like jalapeño (or substitute crushed red pepper)

4 T unsalted butter

2 T cornmeal

1 t salt.

Trim and wash greens. A mix provides a more-rounded flavor, but you could do this with only one type. Chop the greens coarsely and place in a large pot. Add 1 cup of water and bring to a boil. Cover, turn heat to medium low, and cook for about 15 minutes or until greens are tender. Put ginger and chili into the container of an electric blender or food processor and pulse (or mash by hand in a larger mortar and pestle). Remove cooked greens for the pot with a slotted spoon (do not squeeze out water) and blend with the ginger and chili. Blend or mash to a smooth paste.

In a heavy pot or skillet, heat butter over medium-low heat, add cornmeal and cook about 2 min, stirring constantly. Do not allow it to brown. Add ¼ cup of water and stir another half minute. Add puréed greens and salt. Cook on medium-low heat, stirring often, for about 10 minutes. Serve in a warm dish, topped with more butter if desired.

Adapted from “World of the East Vegetarian Cooking” by Madhur Jaffrey.

Grated Kohlrabi and Celery with Mustard Vinaigrette

Thickly peel 12 ounces kohlrabi and cut into fine julienne strips. Thinly slice or grate 3 or 4 inner celery ribs. Toss with a prepared mustard vinaigrette or prepare the following:

Mustard vinaigrette

2 T Red wine vinegar, sherry vinegar, or lemon juice.

2 Shallots or ¼ cup onion, finely chopped.

1 garlic clove, minced.

1 T Dijon mustard

1/3 cup olive oil

1 T chopped fresh parsley, or 1 t dried.

3 T capers, rinsed and chopped.

2 T chives (optional)

Salt and pepper to taste

Kohlrabi with Horseradish

Kohlrabi, about 1 lb.

2-4 T sour cream

Prepared horseradish, you decide how much

2 tsp chopped dill, or ½ tsp dried dill

Salt and pepper to taste.

Slice the kohlrabi into julienned strips or wedges, and steam until tender 5-8 minutes. Remove to a bowl and toss with the remaining ingredients. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Kohlrabi recipes adapted from “Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone” by Deborah Madison.

Coming soon to a table near you...

- **Baby carrots:** We experimentally seeded some carrots in February and they are almost ready as baby carrots. This will just be a taste; carrots will be a weekly staple in your share starting in early-mid July.



The baby killdeer are growing quickly. On Saturday they looked like this, right out of the egg. Several hours later they were running around with their parents.