

Big Leaf Farm Newsletter Week #6: July 5 – July 11 2009

Farm News

With last week's warm weather, it really feels like summer is here, and when we walk through the fields we also notice the season. We've been tasting tomatoes for a couple of weeks, and we had our first taste of summer squash and green beans this last week. We're hoping to have enough to distribute soon. Eggplants are sizing up nicely, and cucumbers are blooming profusely; their tiny prickly fruit are a sight to behold. We're excited by the diversity of vegetables that are coming into season and anxious to start sending them out to all of you.



Despite the fact that so many vegetables are almost ready, we find that we're not sending out quite the quantity we would like to this week. Most of our spring vegetables are finished. All of our spring greens and roots are finished and the last of the kohlrabi is going out this week to be followed by fennel bulb next week. We knew we would have this gap between spring and summer vegetables when we were planning last winter, and we planned on filling this opening with members of the cabbage family- cabbages, broccoli, and cauliflower. Due to pest pressure combined with cold spring weather, at least one of our sowings of cauliflower is too stunted to produce much. But we do still have cabbages and additional sowings of cauliflower. They're just taking longer than we had planned on for some reason. So we're asking for your patience for a week or two until things pick up again. Cabbages like this one here should be ready in a few weeks.



As most of you know by now this is our first season producing for CSA members, and while we knew that it would be physically demanding work, we didn't foresee the level of psychological stress involved. We find ourselves checking the weather reports obsessively and constantly checking on the status of crops in the fields as we try to predict when they will be

ready to harvest. We are learning that in order to maintain our sanity we have to give in to the unpredictable nature of growing conditions and trust in the extensive planning we did last winter. Only time will tell how good our planning was!

We're encouraged by the enthusiasm and excitement of the folks we meet picking up their shares each Tuesday and Thursday, and while we enjoy the appreciation for the vegetables we are growing we want to remind everyone that we are also open to criticism and suggestions. Later in the fall we'll give everyone an opportunity to make suggestions formally in a questionnaire we'll send out, but in the meantime feel free to make suggestions or share and concerns with us.

Cast of characters

- **Sweet Onions:** More Walla Walla sweet onions this week. We've cropped the greens a bit because they are starting to dry down, but you can still use the neck and lower leaves as you would a scallion.
- **Leaf Lettuce:** We have more red leaf lettuce this week. Look for green lettuce to return in weeks to come.
- **Kohlrabi:** This is the last of the kohlrabi for a while. We've been pleasantly surprised by how much everyone has been enjoying this offering. If you don't care for it, you can rest in the knowledge that this is the last of it for a while. If you can't get enough, console yourself that we'll have at least two weeks of kohlrabi in the fall. We're taking a break from it because it doesn't like the heat of summer. Do you enjoy raw kohlrabi the best? Check out a simple peanut sauce for dipping, below.
- **Tomatoes:** We're giving out a taste of our first tomatoes for everyone. While not enough to make anything substantial out of, these are great on a tossed salad. Your tomatoes are from two hybrid varieties known as "Glacier" and "Beaverlodge". We find the Glaciers are pretty tasty (the smaller sized ones), especially for an early season hybrid. Varieties like this aren't really bred for flavor, they are selected for earliest fruit production. This means they produce fruit when the plant is still small with few leaves. Since the leaves feed the fruit, early season tomatoes often aren't the tastiest. But we like these... especially as they are all we've got right now. We grow them to fill the gap before our larger indeterminate tomatoes, including several heirloom varieties, which will start producing in a couple of more weeks.

- **Potatoes:** Potatoes in your share this week are “Yukon Gold”. These are nearing full size and will make great potato salad. Look for a very simple potato salad recipe below.

Recipes

Warm potato salad with garlic mayonnaise

Garlic mayonnaise is a nice condiment for all manner of vegetables. You could also try it on steamed or braised kohlrabi.

1-2 lbs boiling or waxy potatoes
 1/3-1/2 cup garlic mayonnaise
 1 cup chopped parsley (optional- could substitute any number of dried herbs).

Garlic mayonnaise

Coarsely chop 4-6 garlic cloves, put them in a mortar with a pinch of salt, and pound until a paste forms. If you don't have a mortar, sprinkle the garlic with salt and mince until very fine. Stir this paste into 1 cup of prepared mayonnaise and add a splash or two of lemon juice to taste. You may thin this mixture with some hot water to achieve the desired consistency.

Chop the potatoes into large cubes (you may peel first if you wish), and boil them on the stove-top. Watch them carefully, as they tend to fall apart when overdone. While still warm, toss with the mayonnaise and herbs, if using.

Adapted from 'Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone' by Deborah Madison

Quick peanut sauce

A great sauce for dipping raw kohlrabi spears. You could also use this to dress steamed or braised vegetables.

3 T unsweetened peanut butter
 2 T rice wine vinegar (substitute with plain white vinegar)
 1 T chopped cilantro (could substitute dried)
 1 garlic clove, minced or put through a press
 2 t soy sauce
 1 t light brown sugar
 salt to taste.

Combine all the above, except the salt. Taste, and salt if necessary, adding 2-4 T warm water to taste.

Adapted from 'Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone' by Deborah Madison

Indian potatoes and onions

This recipe puts a new twist on two common ingredients. The ginger, chili, and mustard seeds help make this a very savory side dish. If you don't stock mustard seeds in your kitchen, it's worth seeking some out for this dish. Black mustard seeds are different in flavor from yellow ones, but yellow could be substituted here.

1 lb potatoes
 3/4 inch cube fresh ginger, peeled and cut into 3-4 pieces.
 1 fresh hot chili or 1-2 t red pepper flakes
 1/4 cup vegetable oil
 1 T whole black mustard seeds
 2 medium sized onions, coarsely chopped
 1/4 t ground turmeric
 1 t salt

Boil the potatoes until just tender and cut them into 3/4 inch pieces. Place the ginger and chili (or pepper flakes) into a food processor or blender (or into a mortar) along with 1/4 cup of water and blend to a coarse paste. Heat the oil in a skillet over medium heat and add the mustard seeds. As soon as they begin to pop, put in the onions and sauté for 5 minutes, or until they turn translucent, but before they turn brown. Add the paste from the food processor and the turmeric and cook for 1 minute, then add the potatoes, 1 cup of water, and the salt. Cover and simmer for about 3 minutes. Now break the potatoes into smaller pieces with a spoon and cook very low for 3-4 minutes. Enjoy!

From 'World of the East Vegetarian Cooking' by Madhur Jaffrey.

Coming soon to a table near you...



Squash plants are overtaking our garden. These yellow summer squash should be ready for your plate next week. We are also looking forward to the arrival of eggplant and cucumbers, although it will probably be two more weeks for those items.