



Big Leaf Farm Newsletter Week #9

July 26– August 1, 2009

Farm News

How about this heat? As I write this week's newsletter the mercury has reached 101° at the farm and I'm parked in front of a large box fan. We've spent the last few days trying to stay in the shade and keep plants from drying out. New plantings are especially susceptible to this heat; because their roots don't extend beyond the small soil block they were planted in they dry out very quickly. But we've been able to keep everything alive so far.

It seems that the chickens suffer the most in the heat and they have been spending the hot afternoons lounging under the apple tree, water can near at hand. They like taking dust baths in the cool earth.

Some business items: 1) Several of you have noticed that we post the newsletter on the website (at www.bigleafaffarm.com/newsrecipes.html) before the Tuesday pickup in Oregon City. This allows you to anticipate what is going to be in the share that week. If you'd rather download the newsletter and not receive a paper copy, just let us know and we'll try to save a little paper. A great bonus to downloading the PDF from the website is the ability to see the pictures in color. Sometimes they don't make it through the process of printing and then photocopying very legibly. We are very happy to continue printing and distributing paper copies to those that would like them. 2) If you or a friend won't be picking up your share, and it's convenient, drop us a line and let us know. If we know in advance it will be easier to donate your share. 3) Finally, one or two of you have mentioned that you just missed me at the pickup point because you were a couple of minutes late. If you are running late and you have a cell phone don't hesitate to call me at 503-367-8124.

Cast of characters

- **Summer squash:** We're seeing lots of summer squash, and patty-pan types are starting to show themselves in some of the shares. We've found the patty-pan types to be quite different from the yellow squash (they are firmer and have a different flavor).
- **Sweet onion:** We tried these on the grill the other night, and boy were they tasty. If you have a grill we recommend cooking up some onion, squash, and eggplant slices. Just brush with a little oil and the vegetable taste comes through beautifully.
- **Green beans:** Our bed of Dragon's Tongue beans are really producing now. These should yield for

another week or two, then we'll transition to green pole beans which are just starting to flower now.

- **Lettuce:** This week's lettuce is Waldmann's dark green (leaf lettuce) and Buttercrunch a butter-head type.
- **Carrots:** We've gotten good feedback on the carrots. We agree that carrots grown without chemicals are superior to grocery store carrots. However, it seems that their flavor is lacking something when compared to fall and winter carrots. You'll get a chance to make the comparison, as we're planning on sending out carrots most weeks between now and the end of the season in November.
- **Eggplant (rotation):** We still owe globe eggplant to SE Portland folks. So here they are. These are wonderful sliced and then marinated or simply brushed with a little oil and grilled until they are soft. Or try the dip recipe below.
- **Tomatoes:** Larger hybrids and heirlooms are starting to crank out the ripe red fruit. You'll see quite a diversity in your share in the weeks to come. There is a new one this week, Japanese black triefel. They are identified by their green shoulders. On some fruits these green portions aren't so tasty and are best removed.
- **Cherry tomatoes:** Our cherry tomato vines are now producing enough yellow and purple fruit for everyone at once.
- **Cucumbers:** There's nothing like ice cold cucumber slices to make you feel a little bit cooler. Our vines have slowed down a little bit in the heat, but there's still plenty to go around. The heat seems to impart bitterness to the skins, so they are best peeled.
- **Tomatillos:** Are people enjoying these? We were surprised at the response they elicited when folks were picking up their shares last week. As our plants are loaded with fruit we're sending them out again. Let us know if you love them, or if you could leave them.
- **Swiss chard (O.C) or beets (SE pdx):** We've had a tough time with chard this year- it's been attacked by spinach leaf miners and then aphids, due probably to slow growth related to low soil pH. We've been nursing it along, however and have enough to give out to half of our members. The Portland folks will get beets, with whatever greens haven't been destroyed by the same leaf miners. Chard is the quintessential summer green. It falls somewhere between spinach and kale in its texture, so cook accordingly. We'll make sure



Portland folks get chard and O.C. folks get beets in 1-2 weeks once the chard plants regrow.

- **Scallions:** We thinned out some small specialty onions. The thinnings make fine scallions (if a bit on the small side).

Recipes

If you have a house like ours that swelters on these hot summer days, the last thing you want to do is fire up the stove or oven and heat up the kitchen even more. Here are some ideas that have minimal cooking (or can be cooked on the grill) and can be served cool for summertime refreshment.

Greek Eggplant dip/dressing

A member tested recipe, this eggplant-based dip is similar to baba ghanoush. If you can cook it on a grill you won't heat up your house. Thanks Jennifer!

Cut eggplant in half, remove seeds, coat with olive oil, salt & pepper. Lay flesh side down on medium grill (can also be done under a broiler but way better on the BBQ) and cook until soft (15 minutes or so). Cool, remove skin, put in food processor with 1/2 cup olive oil, 2 tablespoons of fresh lemon juice or vinegar, 1/2 cup chopped onion, and salt & pepper to taste. Blend until smooth. You can add a bit more olive oil and vinegar to make it a dressing consistency.

This is great for dipping bread or veggies, topping for chicken or shrimp, and great on sandwiches or salad as a dressing. Enjoy!

Veggie pasta salad.

We think that the best meals are thrown together with fresh vegetables and whatever staples you have on hand in the pantry. Here's something we came up with last weekend. We ate it lukewarm for dinner, and then had the leftovers cold for lunch the next day with the curry dressing. A great meal, this paired with a salad will use up a lot of fresh summer produce and keep you from sweating too much over a hot stove.

Pasta, about 1 lb, your choice of shape and flavor. Shells or rotini are nice.

1-2 small summer squash, diced into 3/4 inch pieces.

1/4 - 1/2 lb green beans, cut into 1-2 inch pieces

Fresh herbs, shredded (optional). Basil or parsley is nice.

You could substitute dried herbs.

1-3 fresh tomatoes, diced.

Parmesan cheese, finely grated, to taste.

Cook the pasta, adding the diced squash and green beans for the last few minutes. We like the veggies with some crunch, but if you prefer throw them in sooner and they'll be softer. Drain in a colander, and cool with running water if you want a cool salad. Add the shredded fresh herbs (or dried), and throw in the diced tomatoes. Top with some shavings of parmesan cheese. If you wish you can also dress this with just about any prepared or made from scratch dressing and turn it into a cold pasta salad. Here's a dressing we tried this weekend:

Curry Vinaigrette

1 garlic clove

Salt

2 Tbs yoghurt, mayonnaise, or sour cream

2 tsp curry powder

1 1/2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

5 Tbsp light olive oil

2 Tbsp finely chopped cilantro

Pound or mince the garlic with 1/4 tsp salt in a mortar until smooth, or put it through a press. Combine this with the yogurt and curry in a small bowl or glass and stir in the lemon juice and whisk in the oil. Let stand for 15 minutes then stir in the cilantro. Add more lemon and salt to taste.

From Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone by Deborah Madison

Summer Gazpacho

Here's a great way to use up lots of produce and stay cool. Cold gazpacho made with veggies fresh from the garden can't be beat, and if you refrigerate for an hour or two after you make it the flavors meld, it cools down, and it is quite refreshing. We've been eating this for dinner several times a week as of late. The most traditional preparation is given here, but don't be afraid to experiment with different ingredients.

2 lbs tomatoes, roughly chopped

1 medium cucumber, peeled

2-3 slices of bread, a day or two old is best, with the crust removed and torn into pieces. We've found this to be optional, but it help thicken the soup.

1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil

1-2 Tbsp sherry vinegar or red wine vinegar, or more to taste.

1 tsp minced garlic.

Salt and pepper to taste.

Combine the vegetables with oil, vinegar and bread in a blender and process until smooth. If it seems too thick you can blend it with water. Serve immediately or refrigerate for up to two hours. You can garnish it with a drizzle of olive oil.



This recipe is really just a starting point. We've enjoyed this with other

additions – green beans (in moderation) a green or red sweet pepper or jalapeño, cilantro or basil, sweet onions, even lettuce leaves (up to a whole head) can go in the blender if you have room! If you want to make a large amount you can blend several batches and mix them in a large bowl. We've found that we like the taste of this better without the vinegar, so you might taste it first.