



Tucson Community Supported Agriculture Newsletter

June 13, 2006 – Issue 40

Summer 06
Week 2 of 13

This Week's Share

Sweetie 82 sweet corn
Heirloom tomatoes
Texas 1015Y sweet onions
Sugar Baby watermelon
Squash blossoms
Anna apples or red or green okra
Swiss chard
Purslane

Recipes in this Issue

Fried Okra
Crispy Okra Salad
Curried Okra Stir-Fry
Stuffed Squash Blossom Sauté
Sautéed Purslane



Unloading the truck:
Danielle and Farmer Frank.

Farmer Frank has invited us to **tour the farm on Saturday morning, June 24**. We will start the tour early morning, before it gets too hot, so he is also inviting us to come up on Friday evening and spend the night in his home, with an evening of grilled corn around a bonfire. More details to follow, but in the meantime, mark your calendars! June 24 is the Feast of San Juan, the time of the Corn Dance, an intricate Native American dance to ensure the timely fall of rain.

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In Season: Okra

Okra, along with watermelon, came to the New World in association with the slave trade. The word “okra” derives from a Ghanaian language. It was eaten year-round in the past. During the summer it was prepared fresh, often stewed with tomatoes, dipped in batter and fried like a fritter, or added to gumbos. For winter use the young pods were pickled or sliced and dried like fruit. The seeds were roasted and ground to make coffee.



Besides green okra, Farmer Frank also grows an heirloom variety known as Texas Hill Country Red. It is drought-tolerant and an excellent pickling variety, but it can also be sliced and eaten raw in salads. Many people dislike okra for its sliminess, but cooked over high heat with enough room for it to brown instead of stew, okra loses the juices that cause the slimy texture. For crisp okra, fry or stir-fry it; for soft, moist okra, stew it.

Squash Blossoms

These sunny blooms are more than mere flowers: they are flavorful, fleshy vegetables that can play a substantial role at the summer table, not just a decorative walk-on. Squash blossom soups exist throughout Mexico, and squash blossoms are also unique natural envelopes. Throughout the Greek islands, squash blossoms are stuffed with bulgur, rice, nuts, ground meat and a variety of other ingredients, including feta and mint. Stuff them with soft cheese, seasoned ground meat, a morsel of seafood, cooked grain, sautéed vegetable dice or purees, or a combination. Or just add them to your salad. There is really no presentation quite like a plumped squash blossom.



Purslane (Verdolaga)

“I learned that a man may use as simple a diet as the animals, and yet retain health and strength. I have made a satisfactory dinner off a dish of **purslane** which I gathered in my corn field,” wrote Henry David Thoreau in *Walden*, “yet men have come to such a pass that they frequently starve, not for want of necessities, but for want of luxuries.”



Purslane was one of the most important wild plant foods for the Ancestral Puebloans at Salmon Run on the San Juan River, Chaco Canyon, Mesa Verde, and Canyon de Chelly, according to William Dunmire and Gail Tierny in *Wild Plants and Native Peoples of the Four Corners*. Cooked purslane is still a familiar vegetable throughout Mexico, where it is called *verdolagas*. Sprigs of purslane are perfect for salads or tucked into sandwiches or tacos. Chop purslane to fold, as you would celery, into mayonnaise-based salads such as egg, tuna, or potato.

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Fried Okra

Adapted from *Everyday Food*, July/August 2004
(www.everydayfoodmag.com)

5 cups vegetable shortening or
1 quart vegetable oil
4 large eggs
2 tablespoons milk
2 cups all-purpose flour
2 cups cornmeal
1-1/2 teaspoons salt
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1 pound fresh okra, stems trimmed
Hot sauce, for serving (optional)
Lemon wedges, for serving (optional)



1. Melt shortening in a 12-inch cast-iron or heavy-bottomed skillet over medium heat until a frying thermometer registers 375°.
2. Meanwhile, whisk together eggs and milk in a bowl. Place flour, cornmeal, salt, and pepper in another bowl; whisk to combine.
3. Place 8 pieces of okra in egg mixture to coat, then dredge in flour mixture. Fry until golden brown, turning as necessary, 3 to 4 minutes. Drain on paper towels. Repeat coating and frying okra; serve warm. Season with salt, and serve with hot sauce and/or lemon wedges, if desired.

Crispy Okra Salad

Adapted from *Food and Wine*, July 2006 (www.foodandwine.com)

This salad, composed of very thinly sliced fried okra mixed with onions, tomatoes, and seasoning, is called *Kararee Bhindi* in Hindu.



1-1/4 teaspoons garam masala
Vegetable oil, for frying
1 pound young okra, stemmed and halved lengthwise and cut into long, thin strips, or cut crosswise
Salt
1/2 small red onion, thinly sliced
2 small or 1 medium tomato, cored, seeded, and sliced into thin strips
1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

1. In a large, deep skillet, heat 1 inch of vegetable oil to 350°. Working in batches, fry the okra strips, stirring a few times, until golden and crisp, about 4 minutes per batch. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the fried okra to a large paper-towel-lined plate to drain. Sprinkle with some of the garam masala and salt.
2. In a large bowl, gently toss the fried okra with the red onion, tomato, cilantro and lemon juice. Season the salad with more of the garam masala and salt and serve immediately.

Curried Okra Stir-Fry

Heidi DeCosmo, TCSA member

2 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 medium onion, chopped
1 garlic clove, minced
1 teaspoon minced ginger
1 tablespoon finely chopped jalapeno
2 tablespoons curry powder
1 pound fresh okra, whole, trimmed leaving tops intact
3/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper

Heat oil in a heavy skillet over medium heat. Add onion and cook until golden, about 3 minutes. Add garlic, ginger, pepper, curry powder, and okra. Stir-fry about 5 minutes. Stir in the salt and pepper.

Stuffed Squash Blossom Sauté

Open the blossoms wide and check for bugs. Inside each blossom place a piece of **mozzarella cheese** about the size of your thumb and a pinch of chopped **herbs** (basil, parsley, marjoram, etc.). Close the petals snug around the stuffing, twisting the ends together. Quickly dip each blossom, one by one, first in beaten **egg**, and then into fine **corn flour**, or masa harina. Fry the blossoms in hot **olive oil**, without crowding, in a cast-iron or heavy-bottomed pan, turning them over as they brown. Drain on towels and serve hot sprinkled with a little salt.

Sautéed Purslane

Philippe

Chop the purslane coarsely. Sauté some chopped onion and garlic, then add the chopped purslane, and cook for 10 minutes. Sprinkle with some herbs—I particularly like thyme, basil or oregano—along with some salt and pepper. To make really special, towards the end of cooking, add one-half of a goat cheese log and stir gently until melted and mixed: this makes it deliciously creamy. Toss in the squash blossoms and serve.