



Tucson Community Supported Agriculture

Newsletter 192 ~ June 8, 2009 ~ Online at www.TucsonCSA.org

Summer '09 Week 2 of 13

Harvest list is online

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More recipes online

Beets

We may still occasionally get beets in our shares, both the Chioggia and the Bull's Blood varieties. There are still beets in the fields, which is actually the best place to store them. While the beets themselves are still fresh and delicious, the beet greens have likely suffered from the June heat and may no longer be good to eat.



Chioggia beets (pron. kee-o-dja)

Switching e-mail lists

If you changed your pick-up day for the summer session, remember to unsubscribe from your former pick-up day's e-mail list and subscribe to your new one. Just follow the links at the bottom of the weekly e-mails.

If you're not on the e-mail list yet, get on it now so that you won't be missing out on things. You can subscribe to it from our home page (left column).

Newsletter Editor

Philippe Waterinckx

AMAZING ARMENIAN CUCUMBERS

We're going to get a lot of Armenian cucumbers this summer. If you're new to the Tucson CSA, you may be a bit puzzled by those large and strange-looking cukes. They certainly don't look like the tame, unobtrusive cucumbers you're used to seeing in the supermarket! And their striped varieties seem to go limp so quickly in the refrigerator! But not true! Appearances can be deceiving!



Lori and cukes, photo courtesy of Nick Bessie

This drought-tolerant cucumber originates from the eastern Mediterranean region. It is in fact a variety of melon (melons and cucumbers are closely related). It comes in two varieties: the pale green ribbed hard variety and the darker green, striped, crooked, fuzzy and sometimes limp, variety. Not surprisingly, the latter is also known as snake melon. The online Cook's Thesaurus (www.foodsubs.com) notes they are "hard to find, but one of the best-regarded slicing cucumbers." Not hard to find at the Tucson CSA!

According to a report by the Environmental Working Group, commercial cucumbers are one of the top twelve most pesticide-laden produce items. The wax applied to commercial cucumbers, apples, and many other produce items is made of petroleum oils. Not only does it seal in moisture, prolonging shelf life, it also seals in pesticides.

Crooked Sky Farm's organically-grown Armenian cucumbers don't need to be peeled or seeded, and despite their naturally limp appearance, they are crisp and juicy on the inside when sliced. As soon as you slice one, the wonderful smell begs you to take a bite. And when you do, you won't be disappointed. You'll be amazed at how little it resembles the flavorless, tough-skinned varieties you're used to. You could use slices of this cucumber to perfume and brighten mixed drinks, lemonade, or even plain water, or simply eat it with a light sprinkling of salt and vinegar.

SWEET CORN AND CORN BORERS



Organically-grown corn is naturally subject to infestation by corn borers, the small caterpillars of the corn borer moth. That's a fact of life. Corn borers eat the corn kernels located near the top of the ear and make that part of the ear unsightly.

The good news is that, to control the corn borer, Farmer Frank uses biological pest control in the form of the Trichogramma wasp, a tiny wasp that eats the eggs of the corn borer moth. Farmer Frank has used Trichogramma for years and so they are now naturally present in his fields, ready to act whenever they are needed. However, it takes Trichogramma a few weeks to catch up after corn borers first appear in early summer, the same way that it takes ladybugs a few weeks to catch up when aphids first appear on other plants in the spring. Once the Trichogramma population is large enough, the corn borers disappear and we'll get beautiful corn once again. Until then, if these small caterpillars disturb you, we recommend that you systematically chop off the top inch or two of the ears of corn before using them. Corn borers do not affect the quality of the rest of the ear.

As CSA members, we share the risk of farming with the farmer. It's not unlike growing our own vegetables: we get fabulous-looking ones and some that don't meet our expectations. Yet we eat them all. It's the same at the CSA. We ask that you please do not rummage through the corn bins, looking for the perfect ears or prying them open. Doing so damages the ears and dries them out.

Agua Fresca de Pepino

Amy Schwemm, Tucson CSA

Our gigantic Armenian cucumbers are ideal for this most refreshing summer drink. Easy to make and to drink! It will use up your CSA cucumbers faster than you can get them.

1 large Armenian cucumber, unpeeled (equivalent to 3 English cucumbers)
1/2 to 1 cup lime juice
1-2 cups water
1/4 cup sugar, agave syrup, or other sweetener

Juice the whole cucumber (with skin and seeds), or blend and strain it. Add lime juice, water, and sugar.

Serve chilled. For added zest, sprinkle with chopped mint or Stevia leaf.

Substitution: instead of lime juice and sugar, you can use 2 tablespoons of frozen concentrated lime juice per pint of cucumber juice.

Nopalito Salsa

Paula Borchardt, Tucson CSA

This fruity salsa is made primarily with CSA produce and is great with tortilla chips, lentil cakes, veggie burgers, or lentil stew.

1 nopalito pad, despined (note: CSA nopalitos are already despined)
1/2 cup peeled, diced apples
1/2 cup diced chiles
1/2 cup diced citrus (CSA grapefruit works well)
1/2 cup diced tomatoes
1 tablespoon diced chives
2 tablespoons diced onions
1 teaspoon diced elephant garlic
juice of 1 lemon or 2 limes
2 tablespoons olive oil

Steam the nopalito pad for 10-15 minutes and dice. Mix all ingredients together.

Beet, Nopalito and Citrus Salad

Philippe, Tucson CSA

1 portion CSA beets
1 nopalito pad (despined)
2 grapefruit or oranges, peeled and diced.
juice of 1 grapefruit or orange
1 small onion, chopped
1/4 cup cilantro or parsley, chopped
1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
1/4 teaspoon ground coriander
1 dash vinegar
Salt and pepper to taste

Steam or boil the beets until tender (approximately 30 minutes). Peel and dice.

Steam or boil the nopalito pad for 10-15 minutes. Dice.

Mix with other ingredients. Cool and serve as side dish or with tortilla chips.

Grilled Nopales

Adapted from azcentral.com

With a sharp knife, make shallow parallel incisions on each side of the pads, about 1/3-inch apart.

Brush each pad lightly with olive oil. Season with salt and freshly ground black pepper. In a grill pan or a cast-iron frying pan over medium-high heat, or on an outdoor grill, sear the pads, allowing three to four minutes per side, until they are yellowish green with charred spots.

Press down on the pads with a potato masher, if necessary, to keep them in contact with the surface of the pan.

When tender, remove from grill. Serve whole or sliced in strips. Add to salad or serve as side dish.

Cold Squash and Corn Chowder

Philippe, Tucson CSA

A very refreshing Southwestern soup, wonderful on for warm summer evenings. Great for using up your excess squash.

2 pounds or more of summer squash
kernels of 2 ears of corn
1 onion, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon oil
1 jalapeno
2 roasted chiles, fresh or roasted, or 1 tablespoon of chile powder
salt to taste

Garnish: 1 tablespoon oregano and some chile powder

Cube the squash. It does not need to be peeled. If the squash are large, scoop out the seeds first. Sauté all ingredients in oil until the squash is tender (about 20 minutes). Add 4 cups cold water or vegetable stock. Blend. Add more water if necessary to achieve creamy texture.

Refrigerate for 4 hours. Serve in bowls. Garnish with some chile powder and some fresh oregano, basil or mint before serving.

Citrus Sorbet

Paul Durham, Tucson CSA

1 quart citrus juice (approx. 4 grapefruit or 8 oranges)
1 rounded tablespoon zest, finely grated (option: increase the amount of zest for a stronger citrus flavor and more tartness)
1/2 cup agave nectar*
1/4 cup vodka (optional)

Simmer zests in agave nectar for a couple minutes and let it sit. Juice citrus and add juice to nectar. Add vodka.

Refrigerate until cold. Stir thoroughly, then pour into an ice cream maker and freeze according to the manufacturer's instructions. Transfer to a container and freeze until firm. Serve in martini glasses and garnish with sprigs of mint or fennel.

If you do not have an ice cream maker: pour into 9-inch square metal baking pan; cover and freeze, stirring occasionally, until partially frozen, about 4 hours. In a food processor with knife blade attached, process sorbet until smooth but still frozen.