



Tucson Community Supported Agriculture

Newsletter 236 ~ April 26, 2010 ~ Online at www.TucsonCSA.org

Spring '10 - Week 9 of 13

Harvest list is online

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Did you know that fennel has been used as a vegetable, an herb, and as a medicinal plant since ancient times? Fennel was much valued by the Romans. Warriors took it to keep good health, while their ladies took it to stave off obesity. In medieval times the seeds were chewed to stop gastric rumblings during church services. Fennel was also used in conjunction with St. John's wort to keep away witchcraft and other evil things. This practice may have originated from fennel's use as an insect repellent.



Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*)

Are you leaving town soon?

If you're leaving town before the end of the spring session and wish to sell the remainder of your spring share, try posting on our page on Facebook. Some prospective members may be interested in trying a share for a few weeks before jumping in for a full session.

Newsletter Editor

Philippe Waterinckx

REGISTRATIONS FOR SUMMER SESSION OPEN MAY 1

Summer session runs June, July and August.

Produce shares: \$247. Goat cheese shares: \$40.

Contract forms are available at the CSA, or online under *Join > Subscriptions & Cost*. You can place your contract and payment in our drop-box at the CSA during pickup hours, slip them under our door whenever the courtyard is accessible but the CSA is closed, or mail them to us. We will process contracts in the order received - except between May 1 and May 15 when we will process current members' contracts only. We will e-mail you a confirmation when we process your subscription.

Current members: Registration is from May 1 to May 28 (or until we fill up, whichever comes first), with priority registration until May 15. We recommend that current members re-subscribe before May 15 when we open registration to former and new members.

Former and new members: Registration is from May 15 to May 28 (or until we fill up, whichever comes first).

Summer Harvests: To get an idea of what produce we receive during summer, go to our "Harvests" archive on our website and scroll down to past summers.

F IS FOR FENNEL, FABULOUS AND FLAVORFUL

Last time we had fennel, it filled up our trading baskets in no time. This was rather puzzling to the CSA crew since it is one of our favorite vegetables. We might get more fennel before the spring is over, so we figured we'd better talk a bit about it.

Fennel is native to southern Europe and southwestern Asia. It is a highly aromatic vegetable and herb, with erect, grayish or bluish green fronds, and it grows up to 7 ft tall. The finely dissected leaves grow up to 2 ft long. Fennel is widely cultivated for its edible, anise-flavored bulbs, leaves and seeds. Fennel is sweet, refreshing, delectable and incredibly versatile. It may be used raw or cooked. Because a fennel bulb has a well-defined shape, it can assume a strong role on the plate, especially when cooked in halves. Fennel bulb is a key ingredient in some Italian and German salads, often tossed with chicory and avocado, or it can be braised and served as a warm side dish. It is delicious braised, baked, steamed, sautéed, or grilled. It can be substituted for celery in almost any recipe.

Baby fennel is perfect for salads. Good partners for baby fennel include olive oil, butter, thyme, bay parsley, fennel seeds, orange, lemon, saffron, tomatoes, potatoes, olives, garlic, Parmesan, Gruyere, and goat cheese.

Fennel leaves are widely used in Greek cooking both as an herb and as a green. They are used to flavor meat (especially pork), seafood, and vegetable dishes, and they are also an ingredient in delicious savory pies. Large quantities are added to stews and ragouts, as well as fricassee dishes and fritters. Many egg, fish, and other dishes employ fresh or dried fennel leaves. One may also blanch and/or marinate the leaves, or cook them in risotto. In all cases, the leaves lend their characteristically mild, anise-like flavor.

Fennel is an excellent source of potassium. It contains vitamin C, folic acid, magnesium, calcium, and phosphorous. Fennel is thought to be a diuretic, an antispasmodic, and a stimulant. It is also said to soothe gastric pain, to aid the digestion of fatty foods, to stimulate the appetite, and to cleanse the body.

Spicy Grapefruit and Fennel Salad-new

Sara Jones, Tucson CSA

Regular canned olives won't work well in this recipe. If you don't have good quality, oil cured black olives, just omit them. The salad will still be delicious. For a more substantial salad, add slices of ripe avocado, too.

2 grapefruit, peeled, segmented and chopped into bite size pieces

1 large bulb fennel, very thinly sliced

1/4 small yellow onion, thinly sliced

6-8 oil cured black olives, pitted and roughly chopped

Red chile flakes, to taste

Olive oil, drizzle

Salt and fresh cracked pepper, to taste

Feta cheese, to taste

Toss together grapefruit, fennel, onion and olives. Dress with chile flakes, salt and pepper and a drizzle of olive oil. Let sit for at least 30 minutes. Garnish with crumbled feta cheese before serving.

Caramelized Fennel and Onion Pasta-new

Sara Jones, Tucson CSA

This is the recipe from the CSA cooking demo a couple weeks ago. If you want to add protein to the dish, Italian sausage or sardines are great options to compliment the fennel. The fennel and onion mixture caramelizes in the time it takes to bring water to a boil and cook the pasta al dente.

1 medium yellow onion, thinly sliced

1 large or 2 medium bulbs fennel, thinly sliced

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 lb pasta, preferably penne

Zest from one lemon, plus juice of 1/2 lemon

Salt and pepper to taste

Fennel fronds, roughly chopped, to garnish

Put large pot of salted water on to boil, for pasta. In a large skillet, heat oil over medium high heat. Stir in onion and fennel and reduce heat to medium. Continue cooking, stirring occasionally. When pasta is almost cooked through, fennel mixture should be turning a nice golden brown. Drain al dente pasta, reserving 1/2 cup of pasta water. Add pasta and water to skillet with fennel mixture. Add lemon zest and juice. Stir well. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Toss together with fennel fronds and serve.

Spanish Egg Drop Soup version #3

Sara Jones, Tucson CSA

1 bag sorrel, cleaned and cut into thin strip

3/4-1 whole bulb of green garlic, finely chopped

2 teaspoons olive oil

2 eggs

1 teaspoon each of salt and pepper

1 tablespoon flour

5 cups soup stock

1/2 lemon

In a soup pot, sauté garlic in olive oil until fragrant, add stock and bring liquid to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer about 10 minutes. Mix together eggs, salt and pepper and flour. Pour

egg mixture through a colander and into boiling broth, stirring gently. Add the lemon juice and sorrel. Stir briefly. Serve, garnished with chopped green onion and lemon slices.

Baked Greens "Chips"

Nicole Baugh, Tucson CSA member. Adapted from 28 Cooks food blog

For people like me who really don't like stewed or sautéed greens, here's a different (and crunchy!) way to prepare a lot of greens. All amounts are adjustable to taste, and you can use your favorite seasonings instead of salt and pepper, or replace the oil and vinegar with (non-creamy) salad dressing.

3-4 cups greens

2-3 teaspoon olive oil

1 teaspoon apple cider vinegar

salt and pepper to taste

Preheat the oven to 325 F. Wash and dry the greens. If the leaves are large, de-stem and tear into 2 or 3 pieces. Place in a bowl or plastic bag and add the other ingredients, tossing to coat thoroughly. On a non-stick cookie sheet (or one lined with parchment), spread the greens into a single layer. If desired, you can wait to add the seasonings until this stage instead. Bake for 10-20 minutes, checking often after the first 10 minutes to ensure that they don't burn. You may want to stir the leaves a little halfway through to keep them from sticking, but it shouldn't be necessary to turn them. The leaves should be crisp but not thoroughly browned, as they will become bitter if overcooked.

Grapefruit-poppy-seed dressing

Lorraine Glazar, Tucson CSA

1/2 cup grapefruit juice

2 tablespoons rice wine vinegar

1 egg yolk

1 tablespoon honey (optional)

1 tablespoon sugar (optional)

1/2 cup olive oil + 1/2 cup corn oil

1 tablespoon poppy seeds

1/2 grapefruit

Salt and pepper to taste

In a food processor, blend the grapefruit juice, vinegar, egg yolk, honey and sugar until smooth. With the motor running, gradually add the oils until emulsified. Stir in the poppy seeds. Cut the grapefruit into segments, mince them, stir them in, and season to taste.

This is an original recipe given to me by Doug Levy of Feast restaurant. Used by permission.

More Fennel Ideas

Serve thin wedges of raw fennel sprinkled with crumbles of Parmesan cheese. Or make a bed of paper-thin slices, then top with prosciutto or smoked salmon. A bit of freshly ground pepper plus some fennel seeds, and you have a healthy, fresh and easy dish.

In Italy there is a long tradition of serving sliced fennel at the end of a meal, perhaps with some sliced apples or oranges, as it is thought to aid digestion.