



Tucson Community Supported Agriculture

Newsletter 295 ~ June 27, 2011 ~ Online at www.TucsonCSA.org

Summer 2011

Harvest list is online

The Back Page

Cool Summer Salad

Freezer Tomatoes

Heavenly Grilled Corn-on-the-Cob

Ginger Mashed Potatoes with Yogurt

Agua Fresca de Pepino (Cucumber-Lime Drink)

Many more recipes in our online recipe archive

Eat, Drink and Be Merry!

Sara and Lori, whose food you have enjoyed at CSA cooking demo's and special events, invite you to share their cooking adventures by attending a Supper Club Dinner. The first dinner will be Friday, July 8th and will highlight our amazing summer produce. The cost for the dinner is \$35 and includes drinks and musical entertainment. Talk to Lori or Sara for more info. Follow their exploits on www.andbemerry.com or 'like' them on Facebook. And be merry!

River Road Gardens CSA

The River Road Gardens CSA has shares available for their summer season, which starts July 6th. Shares are \$325 for 13 weeks. For more info, go to www.riverroadgardens.com or see the flyer on our bulletin board.

Support Your Local Theater

The Historic Y, home to the CSA, is also home to two excellent community theater groups, ZUZI and Borderlands. Due to budget cuts by grant providers, Borderlands Theater is under financial pressure and has issued an urgent call for donations. More info is at www.borderlandstheater.org. Borderlands rents facilities from ZUZI, and so is also important to ZUZI's financial health, and both are significant tenants at the Historic Y. If you're inclined to support the Borderlands Theater with a donation, please consider doing so now.

TIME FOR MESQUITE!

It's time! The mesquite pods are ready for the picking! You've seen the yellow or yellowish purple pods hanging from the trees. The pods, ground up, turn into a highly nutritious, gluten-free flour with a very low glycemic load. With practice and proper cooking and care, mesquite flour can be used in everything from pancakes to beer!

You can harvest from any of the native Sonoran Desert mesquites: Velvet Mesquite (*Prosopis Velutina*), Screwbean Mesquite (*Prosopis pubescens*), and Honey Mesquite (*Prosopis juliflora*). The Velvet is the most common around here, aside from the Chilean Mesquite (which has thicker, wider, curlier pods that tend to taste chalky.) You probably don't want to pick those!

While the season for picking stretches into September, it's usually better to pick before the monsoons, as the pods will be fresher and drier. You can find quality pods in washes, small drainages, city parks, backyards, and along low-traffic neighborhood streets. Often, city trees are the most abundant producers because they receive supplemental water or runoff from nearby rooftops, patios and streets.

Pick ripe pods directly from the tree, tasting one first to judge its sweetness. Pods should come right off. If you have to pull hard, they're not ready yet! Pick only clean, good-tasting, and nice-looking pods. It is best NOT to harvest from areas that are polluted or contaminated, such as the ground (where animal poop and mold can be a problem), highway corridors, areas where pesticides have been sprayed, near telephone poles (which are treated with toxic wood preservatives), and areas with polluted runoff (auto oils and fluid and/or pesticides). Also DO NOT gather any pods that have black mold, as it can be toxic.

If you like, you can rinse pods by dunking them in a pail of water, swishing them around and then dry them by laying them out on a cloth or a screen or the hood of your car in the sun for two to three days. When dry, they should snap easily in two when you bend them. Store dry pods in clean garbage cans, buckets, or paper or cloth bags in a cool, dry place. NOTE: Bruchid beetles may hatch out of the pods during storage (making small holes in pods). They are harmless! Let the bruchid beetles escape, and most will leave on their own accord. To avoid beetles, store pods in paper bags and let them "sunbathe" regularly. Or freeze them. (Be sure to dry them out until they snap when bent in two before milling.)

Come fall, you can have your pods ground into flour at very low cost at one of the milling events put on by Desert Harvesters. This local organization is dedicated to educating the public about harvesting native and wild foods in the Sonoran Desert.

For more on how to eat mesquite, check out *Eat Mesquite! A Cookbook*, with nearly 50 recipes using mesquite flour, published by Desert Harvesters and available through their web site. We also have some copies for sale at the CSA.

For more information about harvesting, storing, and milling mesquite, go to www.DesertHarvesters.org.

(Source: "Eat Mesquite" Pocket Guide, Published by Desert Harvesters and available for download on their web site).

Cool Summer Salad

Sara Jones, Tucson CSA

This recipe calls for a small dice, about 1/4" for the ingredients. This helps the flavors meld and produces a nicer texture. If you have the time, it is really worth the extra work. If not, roughly chopped ingredients will work fine. If you have an extra large Armenian cucumber, cut it into several 2 inch tall pieces, scoop out most of the seeds and fill with the salad for a fancy, fun presentation.

1/2 medium-size melon, peeled, seeded and diced small
1 small sweet onion, finely diced
1 small or 1/2 large cucumber, diced small
2 medium tomatoes, diced small
1-2 tablespoon red wine vinegar to taste
2 teaspoons good quality olive oil
Small handful crumbles goat cheese
Salt and pepper to taste

Mix together all ingredients, except goat cheese. Let salad sit at least 30 minutes in refrigerator. Before serving, sprinkle with cheese. Serve in cucumber cups or small bowls.

Freezer Tomatoes-new

Sara Jones, Tucson CSA

We are lucky to have such an abundant tomato crop this year from Farmer Frank. The heirloom varieties have been tasty and beautiful! We do receive these tomatoes at their peak of ripeness, which means they should be used right away. If you aren't able to eat all your tomatoes that soon, don't let them go to waste. You can freeze them, to be used in sauces later. The easiest way to do this is to cut the tomatoes in half, removing any hard core (squeezing out the majority of the seeds, if desired) and grating the cut side of the tomato on the large holes of a hand held grater. The juicy flesh will grate through, while the skin will remain whole in your hand. (Discard the skin or save it to use with corn stalks in a delicious summer vegetable broth.) Freeze the tomato sauce in ice cube trays, transferring to a freezer bag once frozen. The tomatoes will add a delicious flavor to soups and sauces; just keep in mind that they are much juicier than canned sauce when using them in recipes.

If you're short of time, you can simply put whole tomatoes in freezer bags and then in the freezer. When they thaw, they're only good for sauce, of course, but this is a quick and easy way to save them.

Heavenly Grilled Corn-on-the-Cob

Heidi DeCosmo, TCSA

This is a great way to enjoy fresh corn. The kernels will steam in the husks and foil, and the grill adds a smoky flavor. Try adding chili spice, thyme, or curry powder in place of paprika.

4 ears corn
2 teaspoons paprika
4 teaspoons butter
1 teaspoon ground pepper
2 tablespoons honey
1 teaspoon sea salt

Heat the grill to medium-high. Carefully peel back the husks and remove the silk from each ear. Rub 1 teaspoon butter on each ear of corn. Drizzle the honey on the corn and sprinkle with the paprika, pepper and salt. Wrap the husks back around the corn. Cover each ear of corn with aluminum foil. Place the corn on the grill. Close the lid and cook for 5 minutes. Turn the ears over with tongs and cook 5 minutes more. Turn corn one more time and finish cooking another 5 minutes. Carefully remove foil and pull back husks to serve.

Ginger Mashed Potatoes with Yogurt-new

Rachel Yaseen, The Organic Kitchen

1 1/2 lbs. potatoes
1 cup plain yogurt (I like Strauss)
1/4 cup cilantro, finely chopped
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh mint
1-3 fresh chile peppers, minced
2 cloves garlic, chopped very fine
1 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons oil (I like coconut oil or olive oil)
1/2 teaspoon cardamom
1 cinnamon stick, broken into pieces
1 teaspoon cumin seeds
1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
2 tablespoons peeled minced fresh ginger
2 tablespoons finely chopped chives (optional)

Boil potatoes in water until tender. Drain, peel, coarsely mash. With fork, lightly mix in yogurt, cilantro, mint, chile peppers, garlic, and salt. Heat oil and add cardamom, cinnamon, cumin, and black pepper. Stir 1 minute, add ginger and cook another minute. Pour over potatoes and garnish with chives.

Agua Fresca de Pepino (Cucumber-Lime Drink)

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. Makes approximately 2 quarts.

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