



Tucson Community Supported Agriculture

Newsletter 297 ~ July 11, 2011 ~ Online at www.TucsonCSA.org

Summer 2011

Harvest list is online

The Back Page

Eggplant Frites

Coconut Basil Pesto

Cucumber Coconut Milk Curry

Easy CSA Gazpacho

Quick Melon Sorbet

Many more recipes in
our online recipe archive

Le Bœuf et Arrivé!

Sorry, couldn't help stealing the phrase used each year in November to announce that the beaujolais nouveau has arrived. Yes, the beef has arrived! (Sounds so much better in French, doesn't it?) Please come to the front desk to pick up your beef share. We have extras, so you can get a beef share (first come, first served) even if you didn't put down a deposit.



It's Almost Tuna Season!

"Tuna" is the Spanish word for the fruit of the prickly pear. Interesting that Spanish has a single word to replace the three English words, "prickly pear fruit". Soon, these desert "diamonds-in-the-rough" will turn purple and be ready to harvest. Watch this space – we'll have an article next week about what to do with them.

Industrial "Killer" Tomatoes

"Why can't, or won't, modern agribusiness deliver a decent-tasting tomato?" asked Terry Gross, host of the NPR show "Fresh Air" in a broadcast on June 28th. That day she was interviewing Barry Estabrook, author of a new book that attempts to answer that question. The book is *Tomatoland: How Modern Industrial Agriculture Destroyed Our Most Alluring Fruit*.

We get vine-ripened, tasty heirloom tomatoes in our weekly share, so maybe this question isn't so relevant to us. But we're CSA members, which means we care a great deal about the quality of the food we eat, and it also means that we're rebels – rebels against what modern agribusiness is doing to our food supply. So the question Estabrook asks is indeed relevant to us.

Why, outside of a CSA, your own garden or maybe a farmers' market, is it so hard to find a good tomato?

Estabrook blames tasteless industrial tomatoes, in part, on us as consumers. For a long time, consumers have demanded tomatoes year round, even in winter. In Tucson many of the winter supermarket tomatoes come from Mexico. Elsewhere in the U.S., they are trucked in from Florida, which grows a third of all U.S. tomatoes and supplies the country with almost all its fall and winter crop.

But neither the soil nor the high-humidity climate in Florida are all that suitable for growing tomatoes, which means farmers there rely excessively on fertilizers and pesticides. According to Estabrook, the pesticide/herbicide quantity that Florida farmers apply to fields is eight times what farmers use in California, the next-leading U.S. tomato-growing state.

Industrial tomatoes are also bred to be tough and are picked when they're green. You knew that already, right? But do you have any idea how tough they really are? Estabrook told an illuminating story to Terry Gross of driving behind a tomato truck in Florida. The truck hit a bump at freeway speed, some tomatoes bounced out and hit the pavement. When they rolled to a stop by the side of the road, they were perfectly intact. Those are tough tomatoes! So tough that Estabrook called them "killer tomatoes". This toughness ensures that when they're finally on display in the supermarket, they're pretty. They're dosed with ethylene gas to turn them red (that's the same substance the tomato plant produces for this purpose) and when we walk into a supermarket at any time of year, we find a pile of pretty red tomatoes.

Make that pretty *tasteless* red tomatoes.

As Estabrook points out, industrial tomatoes are favored not for their flavor but for their yield and their ability to withstand long distance travel, staying intact without cracking or bruising along the way. That means they're bred for durability, not for taste.

Thankfully, for many of us, when it comes to tomatoes, "looks aren't everything."

We are fortunate to support flavorful tomato alternatives through the CSA and other local producers and vendors. As a consumer, we can continue to put our money where our mouth is and buy and eat tomatoes only when they're in season – which is NOW! So, hurry, enjoy these delicate, lumpy, spotted, multi-colored and DELICIOUS heirloom tomatoes while they last!

Note: Author Barry Estabrook was featured on National Public Radio's "Fresh Air" on June 28 and "All Things Considered" on July 9, 2011. Visit www.NPR.org (type "tomatoland" into the search box on that page) to hear the stories.

Eggplant Frites-new

Sara Jones, Tucson CSA

These are a fun take on eggplant and could be used as a base for an eggplant parmesan-style dish. You can either cut long French fry-size strips or make round coins, depending on the size and variety of your eggplant. Serve with the following pesto recipe and chopped tomatoes and onions for a really tasty meal.

1 large eggplant, or several smaller eggplants, peeled and cut
1 egg, beaten
¼ cup flour
Italian herb mix, paprika or other spices, to taste
Salt and pepper, to taste
About 2 teaspoons oil

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Mix any spices you like into the flour and season with some salt and pepper. Oil a baking sheet well. Dip slices of eggplant into egg wash then dredge in flour mixture. Tap off any excess and place on baking sheet. Bake about 10 minutes, then turn eggplant over and bake another 5-8 minutes, until browned outside and tender inside. Sprinkle with more salt, if needed and serve.

Coconut Basil Pesto

www.theorganickitchentucson.com

Rachel has served this at CSA cooking demos. It's a great variation on a traditional pesto. Serve alongside rice dishes or over cooked eggplant or squash.

2 cups organic basil leaves (chopped)
3 tablespoons organic olive oil (to taste)
¼ cup dried organic coconut (available in the bulk section at the co-op or Whole Foods)
5 walnut halves
2 cloves garlic
¼ to ½ teaspoon salt
¼ cup lemon juice

You can also use mint or cilantro instead of the basil – any of the three produce a delicious pesto.

Place all the ingredients in a blender and pulse until it is a desired consistency (you can puree entirely or leave it a little chunky). (Also, if you find that you pureed too much, just add some finely chopped basil).

Cucumber Coconut Milk Curry (from Bangladesh)

Tony, Tucson CSA

Yes, cucumber can make a great cooked dish. This one is perfect for our oversize Armenian cucumbers.

½ teaspoon whole cumin seeds
1 teaspoon ground turmeric
1 teaspoon ground coriander

1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon chile powder
1 tablespoon ghee or butter
1 onion, chopped
1 or 2 cucumbers, seeds removed, and scooped out in little balls (or cubed)
1 16-ounce can coconut milk
1 cardamom pod
1 1-inch cinnamon segment
1 bay leaf
2 cups water
salt

Heat ghee or butter in large skillet and saute cumin seeds and onion in it until onion is slightly caramelized. Make a curry powder by mixing together the ground spices (turmeric, coriander, cumin and chile powder) and add to the onion mix. Fry the curry powder in the onion mix for 5 minutes or so. Add 1 cup of water. Reduce until mixture develops a pasty texture. Add cucumber and sauté for 5 more minutes. Add the coconut milk, 1 cup of water, the cardamom, cinnamon segment and bay leaf. Reduce further until the mixture thickens to creamy consistency (10 to 20 minutes). Add salt to taste.

Easy CSA Gazpacho

Amy Schwemm, Tucson CSA

1 large Armenian cucumber
5 or more (or less!) small tomatoes
1 to 2 slices of onion, to taste
1 or 2 cloves of garlic, to taste
1 green chile, any kind, or ½ bell pepper (optional)
2 tablespoons olive oil, or to taste
3 tablespoons red wine vinegar, or to taste
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Trim ends off of cucumber and chop coarsely. Trim bruised spots and stem ends off tomatoes. Remove seeds and stems from green chile or bell pepper, if using. Purée all vegetables in a Vita-mix, blender, or food processor, first by adding the garlic, onion, and chile, following with the tomatoes and then the cucumber. Season to taste with oil, vinegar, salt, and pepper. Chill before serving.

Quick Melon Sorbet

Sara Jones, Tucson CSA

Cut up and freeze your melon and you can have this easy sorbet any time you like.

4 cups frozen melon
1 to 2 cups Apple Juice
1 handful fresh mint (optional)
Sugar, as desired

Using the pulse button, mix melon and 1 cup juice in food processor or blender. Add more liquid as needed to make a soft sorbet. Add sugar, if needed and serve immediately.