



Tucson Community Supported Agriculture

Newsletter 345 ~ July 2, 2012 ~ Online at www.TucsonCSA.org

Summer 2012
Harvest list is online

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Reminder: Don, Your Baker, Will Be Away For The Next Two Weeks

Don Guerra will be away for the 2nd and 3rd week of July (July 10, 11, 17 & 18). There will no fresh bread available during that time. However, we've asked Don to send us some extra loaves this week, so there will be some extra bread available for sale at the bread line. Whatever is left at the end of the day will be frozen and be for sale the following week(s).

Bulk Tomatoes

This year, like every year from early June to mid-July, you can order tomatoes in bulk at the CSA. They are the same tomatoes from Crooked Sky Farms that we are getting in our shares.

They cost \$25 per flat, and a flat contains about 15 pounds of tomatoes. Pretty good deal!

You have a choice of 3 types of flats:

1. Classic Reds: only red tomatoes (open-pollinated, heirlooms and hybrids)

2. Heirlooms: all colors and sizes

3. Romas: good for canning because less they are fleshier and less juicy.

All orders must be pre-paid at the front desk for pickup the following week.

CROOKED SKY FARMS TOMATOES: THE REAL DEAL!

You have no doubt by now experienced and enjoyed the wonderful flavor of Crooked Sky Farms' tomatoes. We've been lucky to get them in our shares every week for awhile. Enjoy them while they last. The first tomato season is almost over!

I haven't bought commercial tomatoes in a long time: I either grow them myself or get them from the CSA. But I do eat other tomatoes from time to time: when I find tomatoes in my salad in a restaurant, I usually comment to myself how insipid they are. And crunchy, as opposed to soft and juicy.

Of course, we all know why that is. Commercial tomatoes are picked green, way before they are ripe. Because green tomatoes are very firm they can be harvested, sorted and packed by machinery, and then shipped long distance, without getting bruised. They can even fall off a truck and remain intact! These tomatoes don't go from field to table directly: they travel extensively, sometimes from coast to coast and back. Farmer Frank told me the story of tomatoes from Florida being harvested and shipped to California for sorting and packing, then being shipped nationwide, including back to Florida, for distribution! In addition, and this is according to the MyDietPower webzine (http://my.dietpower.com/features/good_tomato.php), because tomatoes are still green by the time they are ready to be sold, they also get gassed with ethylene to make them ripen artificially. The ethylene triggers the creation of enzymes which break down cell walls and turn starches into sugar. The tomatoes then begin softening and turning red. While ethylene may occur naturally in a tomato when it is ready to turn red, gassing tomatoes prematurely may contribute to their lack of flavor.

Another reason for the lack of flavor of commercial tomatoes is that they are stored in refrigerators while in transit. If you have ever placed even an heirloom tomato in the refrigerator for over 12 hours, you will have observed that it loses a lot of its flavor and texture. Green tomatoes store better in a refrigerator, but the cold prevents flavor enzymes from taking effect.

The New York Times recently (June 29) ran an article that illustrated another reason why commercial tomatoes have become tasteless. It seems that tomato breeders were successful in introducing a mutation in tomato plants that caused tomatoes to redden uniformly, as opposed to ripening and reddening at different rates. However, an unintended consequence of that mutation was that it also disabled genes that contributed to flavor as the tomatoes ripened.



So, out with commercial tomatoes! The good news is that not all tomatoes have been affected by that mutation. Heirloom, open-pollinated and some hybrid varieties are still intact, and those are the ones we get at the CSA. And they are free of both pesticides and fertilizers too!

A few tips though: avoid storing your CSA tomatoes in your fridge, it will diminish their flavor and render them watery and mealy. It is best to eat them right away if they are ripe. And if they are not quite ripe, let them mature naturally on your kitchen counter. If you want an unripe tomato to ripen faster, just place it in a brown paper bag: the bag will trap the naturally-produced ethylene and accelerate its ripening.

Melon Cucumber Salsa

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1 cup melon (diced small)
1 small cucumber, peeled, seeded, and diced small
Grated zest and juice of 1 lime
1 tablespoon minced basil
1 tablespoon chopped mint leaves
1 jalapeno, seeded and finely diced
1 small knob of ginger, peeled and grated
Salt, to taste

Mix all the ingredients. For best results, let sit for 30 minutes before serving.

Baba Ganoush

Sara Jones, Tucson CSA

This dish, which is reminiscent of hummus, is popular even with those who generally dislike eggplant. Roasting the garlic with the eggplant makes it milder and smoother, so don't be afraid to use the full quantity. If you don't want to turn the oven on, this dish can be prepared on the grill. Cut 1/2 inch slices of eggplant, brush with oil and cook like a steak till tender. Or cook whole eggplant and garlic (covered) over the lingering heat of coals, or over the low flame of a gas grill for up to an hour, or until meltingly tender. The smoky char will add a great flavor.

2 medium or 1 large eggplant
1/2 head garlic
2 tablespoons tahini
1 tablespoon olive oil
Juice of half of one lemon (editor's note: in the absence of lemon, I have successfully used the juice of half a grapefruit)
Salt to taste
Add to taste any of the following: ground cumin, paprika, red chile, mint.

If using round globe eggplant, cut in half, oil cut sides and lay cut side down on baking sheet. Oil garlic, with skin on and place on baking sheet. Cook in a 350-degree oven for 30-45 minutes, until eggplant is meltingly tender. Once cooled, scrape flesh from skin using a spoon. Cut off tops of garlic and squeeze out roasted flesh. Put garlic and eggplant in blender or food processor along with other ingredients and blend until smooth. Serve with raw vegetable slices or pita bread.

Ratatouille comes again!

From the French verb 'touiller' or 'ratouiller' which are slang for 'stirring together.'

After Bettina's remarkable ratatouille recipe in last week's newsletter, here comes another ratatouille recipe contributed by one of our brand new members. It seemed too delicious to pass up on at a time when our shares have the perfect ingredients to make this wonderful southern French summer dish: tomatoes, eggplant, summer squash and onions. No two ratatouilles are ever the same, and this one creatively includes sweet potatoes!

Ratatouille Roast -new

Courtesy of Rama Ganesan, Tucson CSA

I asked my cousin Jayashree in London what to do with my first share. She came up this ratatouille recipe for the vegetables. Recipe and photo by Jayashree Sundaresan

110 ml sunflower oil (1/2 cup)
2 small onions diced
4 garlic cloves sliced
1 fresh green chili sliced
2 sweet potatoes cut into bigger dice
Half large eggplant diced
2 tomatoes diced
Half of the squash diced
1 tablespoon tomato puree
Salt, pepper
1 teaspoon sugar
Chopped cilantro
200g French green beans (1/2 lb) (if you have some)
1 red pepper (if you have it)

Put 2/3rd of oil in large heavy-based pot and place on med-high heat, add onions sauté for 5 min; then stir in garlic, chili and red pepper, sauté for 5 min; add squash sauté for another 5 min, transfer vegetables to a bowl leaving behind as much oil in the pot as possible.

Add remaining oil, sauté green beans and eggplant for 5 min, return other vegetables to the pot at this point, add sweet potato, tomatoes, sugar and tomato puree and plenty of salt and pepper.

Stir, and then add enough water to half submerge the vegetables, cover and simmer gently for 30 min.

Heat oven to 400 deg.

Pour vegetables from pot into a roasting tin or baking pan in which they make a layer 2-3 cm thick (1/2 to 1 inch) and bake for 30 minutes. Note: putting in the oven intensifies the flavours hundred fold.

At this point the vegetables should be very soft and most of liquid evaporated. Garnish with coriander and serve with steamed rice. Can also be served with pasta/spaghetti.

'Overcooking' the vegetable is the whole point here but stick to instructions.

