



Tucson Community Supported Agriculture

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Winter 2012-13

Harvest list is online

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Desert Ashram Pecans

Last week!

Over the past few weeks the ladies at Desert Ashram have been busy harvesting, processing and selling fresh organic pecans from their orchard.

This week is the last week where they will be selling pecans and pecan butters in the courtyard. They will have roasted pecan butter, chocolate pecan butter, chocolate chipotle pecan butter and honey roasted pecans for sale.

That will be the end of Desert Ashram's pecan adventure for this year. Please support Desert Ashram by buying from them if you can. As you know, pecans have a short shelf life (though they freeze well), and it's hard to find truly freshly harvested pecans. Desert Ashram pecans are among the best that we've ever tasted.



EASY FENNEL

There are many ways to prepare fennel. It can be eaten raw or cooked. When raw, it is wonderful just sliced very thinly with a lemon vinaigrette. Remove the stalks, cut the bulbs in quarters and remove the hard core, then slice as thin as you can. Add some sliced celery and/or apples and sprinkle with some chili flakes if you have any, and toss with the lemon vinaigrette.



One of the easiest ways to cook fennel is to just steam it. First remove the stalks and outer layer of the bulbs, cut the bulbs in quarters, boil or steam them for 10 or so minutes (or until tender). Drain them, and sprinkle some salt, ground black pepper and lemon juice on them. Serve as a side dish with fish or meat or just eat the fennel by itself.

HOW TO GET THE MOST OF JOSH'S CHICKENS

Josh's chickens a bit pricy compared to conventionally (read industrially) raised chickens. But that is because it costs more to raise chickens humanely and without cutting corners or cutting costs: you know with absolute certainty that Josh raises his chickens in a true free-range manner, on pastures, and without hormones and antibiotics. We go to Josh's farm every other week to pick up eggs and chickens and we see it with our own eyes.

I don't eat chicken very often but when I do, I usually get one of Josh's stewing chickens. Josh used to only sell meat birds, i.e. young chickens raised for their meat, called frying, or roasting, chickens. But in the last year Josh has also started selling his retired laying hens. They are a few years old, and lower in price. They are called stewing chickens because they must be stewed a long time (basically, boiled) to make them tender. But they are, oh so flavorful!

Because Josh's chickens are more expensive, I like to keep them for special occasions. And on those occasions, I make sure to get as much as possible out of my Josh's chicken. This is how.

Step 1. I usually stew the chicken in a crockpot. I cover it half with water. I add salt, pepper, some herbs such as thyme or oregano, one onion cut in quarters and one carrot if I have one. I then stew it for 6 to 8 hours, depending on its size.

Step 2. When it's cooked, I take it out of the crockpot and use it for whatever recipe I intend it for (chicken in chocolate mole, i.e. mole dulce, anyone?). I strain the stewing liquid and let it cool, preferably in the fridge. After it is cooled, I scoop out the floating and hardened chicken fat, i.e. the schmaltz, place it in a jar, to use as cooking grease for future dishes or as a spread for sandwiches. The remaining chicken stock is great for cooking rice or making soups. You can freeze the stock or consume it within a week. The schmaltz will keep in the fridge for a couple months in an airtight jar.

Step 3. When all the chicken meat has been consumed, I put bones, carcass and skins in a stock pot or large pot. I add a gallon of water and any old or wilted veggies that may be lingering in the fridge. I cover the pot, boil it for a couple hours, and then go through the same processes of straining, cooling and fat separation as in step 2, to obtain more chicken stock and schmaltz. The second batch of stock is not as clear as the first one, but it is just as good.

Step 4. Wait, there's more! You can save the cooked chicken skins, cut them in small pieces and sauté them in a little oil of chicken fat until they are bacon-crisp: this is great as a topping for salads or sandwiches!

If you use a frying chicken instead of a stewing chicken, simply omit steps 1 and 2 and roast it instead. Try roasting it in a moist way, like in a Dutch oven, so it doesn't come out dry. You can still do steps 3 and 4 to obtain the stock, schmaltz and chicken skin bacon.

Fennel Parmesan

Philippe, Tucson CSA

2 large or 4 small fennel bulbs, trimmed and halved (if small) or quartered (if big)
2 tablespoons olive oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Preheat oven to 400°. Cook the fennel in salted water until tender but not limp (8-10 minutes). Drain. Oil an oven dish. Arrange the fennel quarters in the oven dish. Season with salt and black pepper. Sprinkle with cheese. Bake for 30 minutes or until cheese is golden brown.

Haluski (Cabbage and Noodles)

Amanda Shauger, Tucson CSA

Haluski is a Polish dish consisting of noodles and cabbage that I learned from a roommate from central Pennsylvania. When I saw those cabbages in my share, I knew I needed to make this recipe again. It's extremely simple and delicious as it is, but can also be varied. It's great comfort food for a recession.

1 cabbage, cut into ribbons
1 onion, chopped
1 stick butter (4 ounces or 8 tablespoons) - I know, it sounds like a lot on paper, but it's really yummy, and I cabbage is a lot of vegetables!
Salt to taste
1 pound noodles, cooked and drained (I prefer to use fettucine, but egg noodles or home made noodles are traditional)

Sauté the chopped onion in butter in a large skillet. I prefer to use cast iron. When the onion is translucent, add the cabbage ribbons and continue to sauté until the cabbage is soft. When the cabbage-onion mixture is soft, toss it in with the already cooked noodles and serve.

Serving Suggestion: I enjoyed my haluski with some powdered chipotle.

Variation: After the onion is sautéed, add one pound of ground beef and brown until cooked (ground pork works great too). Then add cabbage and continue as above.

Stuffed Cabbage (or Chard) Rolls

Lorraine Glazar, Tucson CSA

If you use chard for this recipe, cut the center stalk out of the leaf (keep it for a stir fry or soup). Overlap the cut section slightly so that it will hold the stuffing. Make your own favorite tomato sauce recipe or use a store-bought sauce.

12 outer leaves of green or white cabbage, steamed or boiled until softened
1 ounce dried mushrooms, such as porcini or other type
1 cup boiling water
1 tablespoon oil

1/2 onion, diced
3 cloves garlic, chopped
1/2 cup fresh mushrooms, chopped
1 cup cooked brown rice
1/4 cup pine nuts
1 egg lightly beaten (or egg substitute of your choice)
2 tablespoons fresh dill, finely chopped (or substitute parsley, or fennel fronds)
2 tablespoons fresh mint, finely chopped (optional)
1 teaspoon marjoram
1 teaspoon cumin
Salt and pepper to taste
1 1/2 cups basic marinara sauce

Heat your oven to 325°. Steam or boil the cabbage leaves until softened (they should still have some crisp to them). Pour 1 cup boiling water over the dried mushrooms and let them sit for 15 minutes, or according to package directions. Warm oil in frying pan and add diced onion. Sauté 5 minutes or until onion has softened a bit. Add garlic and chopped fresh mushrooms, and sauté another 5 minutes. Remove from heat. Drain the dried mushrooms and reserve the water. Chop as finely as possible. Combine the chopped dried mushrooms, the cooked onion mixture, the brown rice, nuts, egg and spices. Add salt and pepper. Mix the stuffing well. Open up the cabbage leaves, one at a time. Stuff with 1/12 of the mixture, starting at the stem end and rolling it like a butcher's wrap package. Roll firmly and place, seam side down, in a shallow casserole. Top with the marinara sauce, and bake uncovered for one hour or more, until rolls have absorbed most of the sauce.

Arugula Pasta

Sara Jones, Tucson CSA

Arugula goes really well with a hearty, whole-wheat pasta. Here it is only briefly cooked, added at the last minute to pasta, to retain its peppery bite. You can add more ingredients to this simple recipe, or leave it as is. I like mine best with garbanzo beans or pecans mixed in, plus Parmesan on top. Start the pasta water boiling while you prepare the rest of the dish and it all comes together in the time it takes for the pasta to cook.

1-2 bunches Arugula or other green, washed and chopped
1/2 onion, diced
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon olive oil
Cooked whole wheat pasta for 2-4 people, plus 1/4 cups reserved pasta water
Salt and pepper to taste
Additional olive oil or butter, if desired

While pasta is boiling, cook onion in oil over medium heat, stirring often, until brown and caramelized. Stir in garlic and cook briefly then add greens and cooked al dente pasta and pasta water. Season with salt, pepper and an additional drizzle of oil and cook until water is mostly evaporated and greens are wilted. Serve hot with grated cheese, if desired.