



Tucson Community Supported Agriculture

Newsletter 445 ~ July 7, 2014 ~ Online at www.TucsonCSA.org

Summer 2014

Harvest list is online

THE BACK PAGE

Thai Melon Salad
Garlicky Sauté of Greens and Tomatoes
(ensalada de bledo blanco)
Verdolaga (Purslane) and Walnut Pilaf
Cottage Pie

Many more recipes on our website

CLOSING YOUR CSA ACCOUNT AND GETTING BACK THAT LEFTOVER CASH

When you let your CSA subscription run out and opt not to renew, you may end up with a little extra cash in your CSA account. The best way to reclaim that cash is to ask for it at the front desk on your last pickup day.

BLACK MESA RANCH CHEESES

Let us know if you liked the new cheeses from Black Mesa Ranch. They now have Blue Goat, Emmenthraller and Dutchess, in addition to their Feta, Boules, and fresh chevre logs. We will continue to get them for a while and depending on the feedback we get we will continue to offer them.

THE LATEST EDIBLE BAJA ARIZONA MAGAZINE IS OUT!

And it is a beautiful issue! If you haven't got your free copy yet, make sure to grab one at the CSA!



PURSLANE (VERDOLAGAS) AND QUINOA GREENS (QUELITES)



We don't get classic greens during summer because it's just too hot in the fields to grow them. However, there are two types of greens that not only survive but thrive in our summer heat: verdolagas (purslane) and quelites (quinoa greens and amaranth greens).

We ran an article on purslane in last week's newsletter.

This week, we are also getting quinoa greens in our shares. In the past we've had the very similar amaranth greens: amaranth and quinoa are closely related (in the Amaranthacea family) and some varieties are wild while others are cultivated. Amaranth grows as a weed in our desert gardens and in Farmer Frank's fields. But the quinoa greens are a cultivated variety which Farmer Frank grows intentionally. Their leaves are either bright green or green with various shades of purple.

Use quinoa greens as you would amaranth greens or any mild winter greens. Just make sure to use only the leaves and not the stems (stems can be fibrous and older stems can even be woody). They have a flavor reminiscent of spinach, and you can prepare them as you would spinach. You can toss them raw in a salad and you can cook them, simply steamed or lightly sautéed with olive oil, onions and garlic. They are also great in bean casseroles or wilted in tacos. In the Caribbean they are used to make callaloo.

In the latest issue of Edible Baja Arizona, you will find a great article on summer greens, including great amaranth greens and purslane recipes.

WHY WAS THIS TOMATO SEASON SO SHORT LIVED?

We get two tomato seasons in our desert climate, one in June-July and one in September-November. The same tomato vines produce tomatoes in early summer and then again in early fall. The first tomato season usually lasts until late July. This year, is it coming to an end a little earlier than usual. This is because it got too hot too soon in June – surely you all remember the 108° temperatures we had then.

High temperatures (above 95°) reduce the amount of tomato pollen produced and released per flower and also decrease the pollen's viability. Night temperatures also play an important role in flower pollination: optimal fruit set occurs within a very narrow range of night temperatures (60°-70° F), so night temperatures above 75°F interfere with the pollination process and can either cause blossom drop or prevent flowers from setting fruit. A few degrees can make a big difference and cool nights are especially important to successful pollination. So, because it got hot early this year and because of sustained high day and night temperatures since early June, tomato vines stopped producing more tomatoes at that time.

However, high temperatures only mess with the fruit setting process and do not affect the tomatoes that have already formed. These continued to ripen normally, allowing for the wonderful tomato harvest we've had until now. Farmer Frank said we might not get them for much longer.

Once the temperatures drop with the onset of the monsoon season, tomato vines will resume successful pollination and fruit will start developing again, making tomatoes available once again from about September to the first frost.

Thai Melon Salad

Sara Jones, Tucson CSA

This savory salad takes its inspiration from the classic Thai Green Papaya salad. It is usually a really spicy dish; use less chile if you want it milder.

1 melon (and/or cucumber), peeled, seeded, julienned or cut into thin strips
1 tablespoon dried chile flakes
3-4 cloves garlic
1 tablespoon fish sauce (or soy sauce)
2-3 limes
1 handful mint, finely chopped
1/2 cup roasted peanuts, chopped

Crush chile flakes and garlic together into a paste. Mix paste with fish sauce and the juice from two limes. Pour mixture over melon and stir well to combine. Sprinkle with mint, peanuts and thinly sliced limes to serve.

Garlicky Sauté of Greens and Tomatoes (ensalada de bleado blanco)

Use either verdolagas and or lambsquarter here. The cumin, allspice, and sesame all subtly underscore the greens, so don't omit them.

1 bunch amaranth greens
1-2 tomatoes, seeded and diced if large
2 small red onions, thinly sliced
2 garlic cloves, minced
4 tablespoons olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste
1/4 teaspoon ground allspice
1/4 teaspoon ground cumin
1 to 2 teaspoons balsamic vinegar
1 tablespoon toasted sesame seeds

In a very large skillet, heat 3 tablespoons oil over fairly low heat. Add garlic and stir until light golden. Add onions, tomatoes, salt, pepper, allspice, and cumin. Raise heat to moderately high and sauté until tomatoes are juicy and tender but not soft, about 2 minutes. Add amaranth leaves. With tongs, turn to mix evenly with tomato mixture. Stir and twist leaves constantly until they barely wilt, a minute or two. Turn off heat. Add remaining 1 tablespoon oil and 1 teaspoon vinegar. Taste and add more vinegar and pepper if needed. Scoop into dish. Sprinkle with sesame seeds and serve hot.

Verdolagas (Purslane) and Walnut Pilaf

Lorraine Glazar, Tucson CSA

Adapted from a recipe in Sunset Magazine

1 small to medium onion, chopped
2 teaspoons oil
1 cup rice
2 cups water, stock or broth
1 share verdolagas, washed and chopped
1/2 cup toasted walnuts

Salt and pepper to taste

Sauté the chopped onion in the oil until golden. Toss the rice in the pan until it is coated with oil. Add the liquid of choice and bring to a boil. Cover the pan and cook until all liquid is absorbed, 20 minutes to an hour (brown rice will take longer and may require a little more liquid). When rice is tender, toss in verdolagas and walnuts, season to taste, and serve.

Cottage Pie

Sarah Martin, Tucson CSA

This recipe can be easily altered to accommodate a changing variety of produce. Try adding or substituting green beans, turnips or other seasonal vegetables.

1 1/2 pounds red skinned potatoes, cubed
2-3 ounces shredded farm house cheddar cheese
1/4 cup yogurt
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 pound ground beef
1/2 cup carrots, diced
1/2 cup onion, diced
A couple handfuls of summer greens, roughly chopped
2 cups vegetable stock
1 tablespoon bay leaf
Worcestershire sauce
2 tablespoons all purpose
Flour
Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat your oven to 350°. Combine the potatoes and 1 cup of the vegetable stock in a saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and cover. Simmer 10 minutes or until the potatoes are tender. Set aside. Do not drain. Heat olive oil in a skillet. Add ground beef. Break the beef into chunks as it cooks. When you don't see any more pink, pour off any extra fat and add the carrots, onion and peas. Cook 5 minutes more. Add the Worcestershire sauce, bay leaf and salt and pepper to taste. Stir the flour into the beef mixture making sure to coat all of the ingredients. Cook 2-3 minutes more. Slowly pour the remaining vegetable stock into the beef and bring to a boil. Pour mixture into an 8 or 9-inch casserole. Mash the potatoes in their cooking liquid and stir in the shredded cheese and yogurt. Spread the potatoes over the beef and vegetables. You can sprinkle extra cheese on top of the potatoes if you like things extra cheesy. Bake 30-45 minutes or until bubbly along the edges.