



Tucson Community Supported Agriculture

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Summer 2015

Harvest list is online

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Cool as Cucumbers

On the flip side of the "hot foods on hot days" argument is of course "cool foods on hot days". This idea is particularly favored in Ayurveda - the ancient Indian science of health and well-being.

Ayurveda is based on the seasons and summer is considered a time of high "pitta" - a fiery intense energy that can easily rise out of balance this time of year. To counteract pitta, Ayurveda recommends certain cooling foods with high water content which includes the cucumbers that are a big part of the CSA's summer bounty.

Cilantro and melon is also recommended this time of year, so treat yourself to a cucumber and melon salad liberally sprinkled with lime juice, cilantro and a touch of salt.



Cool Down with Hot Soup?

Say what? In one of the hottest sectors of the country, during its warmest season, I'm going to suggest eating hot soup? Yes, yes, I am. While we clamor for iced coffees and dispense ice cubes as fast as our fridges can freeze them, we might be missing a key factor in keeping cool - by eating hot. Hot as in temperature, hot as in spicy.

It's not that insane when you consider what people in hot climates around the world imbibe: Indians drink hot tea 'round the year, Thailand is renowned for their hot and spicy curries and Thom Kha Ghai (chicken coconut soup) and in Vietnam, pho is consumed even when the temperature lingers around 100. For thousands of years, these cultures have coped with hot weather by serving up equally hot fare.

But why? It seems completely counter-intuitive that drinking hot liquids or foods now would do anything but make you feel as overheated as an egg on a Tucson sidewalk.

There is some science on the subject. One study of cyclists in a lab compared the difference in body heat between those who drank cool or cold water versus those drinking hot tea and found that the hot tea-drinkers actually lost more body heat. One reason may be molecules in the tongue that are particularly sensitive to heat and relay to the brain that "It's hot". The brain's reaction is to employ the body's own cooling system in the form of good, old-fashioned sweat. The effect is similar for food that is hot in terms of spiciness. However, this may work better in an environment where the sweat can evaporate - which causes the cooling effect - meaning low humidity and loose clothing.



Let's face it, there may also be a psychological element. If you bring up this topic at a party, there tends to be a distinct divide between those who agree (who tend to have brought up with the idea from their parents or grandparents) and those who staunchly oppose the very idea. For most of us, especially in the United States, summer and icy-cold beverages and cooling salads go hand in hand. Even if you're open to the idea, you still may just *prefer* something cool and refreshing.

So your mileage may vary, but on our drier summer days you might want to give it a shot. Try some a summer minestrone with the squash, green beans and red potatoes from this week's share:

- Make your soup base by sauteing aromatics (ie, soffrito or mirepoix) of onions, carrots and celery or mild peppers until they're soft and golden brown.
- Chop up your summer veggies and let them sweat in the pan for a few minutes.
- Add veggie or chicken broth, bay leaf, a can or two of white beans, some diced tomatoes and bring to a boil. Then simmer for 45 minutes. For a special treat, include a bit of parmesan rind!
- Taste the soup, season until it's just right, throw on some chopped basil and serve.

Green Beans and Feta Salad

By Philippe, Tucson CSA

1 CSA bag green or purple beans (approx. 1 lb)
1 hard boiled egg, peeled and crumbled
1/4 cup of feta, crumbled
Parsley or chives, chopped
Dressing:
3 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon vinegar
1 small onion
1 teaspoon mustard
Salt and pepper

Place all dressing ingredients in a food processor or chopper and blend until creamy. Blanch the green beans whole for 2-3 minutes or until tender (up to 5 minutes if they are mature – taste a bean from time to time to check for tenderness). Drain and let cool. Cut the beans in 1 inch segments. Toss together beans, hard boiled egg, feta and dressing. Garnish with some chopped parsley or chopped chives if available. Serve cool or at room temperature.

Chile and Cheese Soup

1 bag green chiles, skins and seeds removed, roughly chopped
2 tablespoons butter
2 onions, diced
4 cloves fresh garlic, chopped
5 ripe tomatoes, diced, or half a can of whole tomatoes
6 medium white potatoes, peeled and cut into 1" cubes
4 quarts water
2 pounds Longhorn Colby or Cheddar cheese, shredded
Salt to taste

In a large soup pot, melt butter and saute onions and garlic over medium heat. When onions are soft, add green chilies and tomatoes. Simmer 10 minutes, stirring every minute or so. Add potatoes and water. Cook over medium heat until potatoes are done, 10 to 20 minutes. Add cheese. On very low heat, simmer about 30 minutes. Add salt to taste. For best results, allow to cool overnight and serve the next day.

Potato Tacos (Tacos Dorados)

Sara Jones, Tucson CSA

These are really nice garnished with slices of cucumber and onion. Folding the tortillas is a kind of delicate operation, be patient and don't be frustrated if the first couple end up a bit ugly – they'll still taste fine.

About 1 1/2 cups cooked potatoes, lightly mashed
1 bag roasted green chiles, peeled, seeded and diced
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
2 cloves garlic, minced
Salt and pepper to taste
About 8-10 corn tortillas
2-4 tablespoons vegetable oil
Salsa and garnish for tacos

Mix together potatoes, chiles, cumin, garlic and salt and pepper. In a heavy skillet, heat 1-2 tablespoons of oil over medium high heat. Place one tortilla into oil and flip after a few seconds (this makes the tortilla pliable enough to fold in half without breaking). Place 1 heaping tablespoon of potato mixture on the half of the tortilla closest to you. Gently fold the other half over the filling, towards you. Press the tortilla closed for a few seconds with a fork or tongs to seal, then move the taco to one side to make room for more tacos. Repeat with remaining tortillas. Add more oil as needed to keep skillet covered in a thin layer. Flip tacos when beginning to brown on bottom side. When cooked on both sides, remove to on an old newspaper or paper towels to drain. Serve with salsa and sliced cucumbers.

Zucchini and Olive Breakfast Cake, French-Style

Lorraine Glazar, Tucson CSA

All cakes don't have to be sweet! Mediterraneans, and the French in particular, have a whole tradition of "gateaux salés" (savory cakes). This one is lovely example.

1/3 cup olive oil, plus more for greasing the pan and drizzling
1/2 pound zucchini
1 teaspoon salt
1 large clove garlic, minced
1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
3 large eggs
1/3 cup milk
2 ounces goat cheese, crumbled
1/2 cup Kalamata olives, pitted and sliced
Kosher salt

Heat the oven to 350°F. Lightly grease a 9 by 5 inch loaf pan with olive oil. Grate the zucchini on the coarsest side of a box grater. Place the zucchini in a colander in the sink, and toss with 1 teaspoon of salt. Let drain while preparing the rest of the recipe. In a large bowl, whisk the minced garlic with the flour, baking powder, salt and pepper. In a separate, medium bowl, lightly whisk the eggs, then whisk in the milk and olive oil. Use a rubber spatula to fold the wet ingredients into the dry until barely mixed. Fold in the crumbled goat cheese and the sliced olives. Press firmly on the zucchini in the colander, pressing out as much water as possible. Quickly fold the zucchini into the batter. Spread the batter in the prepared loaf pan, and drizzle lightly with olive oil. Sprinkle the top with kosher salt. Bake loaf for about 45 minutes, or until golden and a knife inserted in center comes out with a few crumbs attached. Transfer to a rack to cool in pan for 5 minutes. Run a knife around edge to release. Turn out loaf onto rack to firm up before slicing, about 30 minutes; using a serrated knife, cut into 3/8-inch slices, then cut into halves or quarters.