



Tucson Community Supported Agriculture

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Summer 2015

Harvest list is online

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**Many more recipes
on our website**

Quelites (kay-LEE-tays)

We didn't get them last week but Farmer Frank said we would get them this week. For the full scoop on them and for recipes, look up last week's newsletter.

Here is an excerpt:

"Use quelites (both leaves and stems, as long as the stems are not too fibrous or woody) as you would use any cooking greens. Quelites have a flavor reminiscent of spinach, so you can prepare them as you would spinach, simply steamed for example, or lightly sautéed with olive oil, onions and garlic. They are also great in bean casseroles or wilted in tacos. When they are young, quelites can be eaten raw in salads."

Prickly Pear Fruit Season

Next week, we'll talk about how to harvest and process prickly pears and turn them into juice and yummy things.



Armenian Cucumbers



If you're new to the Tucson CSA, you may be a bit puzzled by these strange, long and flexible cucumbers that sometimes show up in your share. They certainly don't look like your typical cucumber. And some of them are limp! What's going on?

Yes, those cucumbers are supposed to be limp. They are Armenian cucumbers and they are adapted to our desert conditions. They come in two varieties: the hard, pale green, ribbed variety, and the flexible, crooked, green striped variety. Not surprisingly, the latter is also known as snake melon.

According to a report by the Environmental Working Group, commercial cucumbers are one of the top twelve most pesticide-laden produce items. The wax applied to commercial cucumbers, apples, and many other produce items is made of petroleum oils. The wax seals in moisture, prolonging shelf life, but it also seals in any pesticides that are applied to them. Of course, Crooked Sky Farms doesn't use any pesticides or wax.

Armenian cucumbers don't need to be peeled or seeded, and despite their limp appearance, you'll notice that they're still crisp when sliced. As soon as you slice one, the perfumed aroma begs you to take a bite. And when you do, you won't be disappointed. You'll be amazed at how little it resembles the flavorless, tough-skinned varieties you're used to. You could use slices of this cucumber to perfume and brighten mixed drinks, lemonade, or even plain water, or simply eat it with a light sprinkling of salt.

Meanwhile at Crooked Sky Farms...

Conditions have been hot! Summers are always rough at the farm. Not only is the heat hard on those working in the fields (just imagine spending hours picking vegetables in the full sun), it is also hard on the produce itself: unlike in your back yard vegetable garden where you might harvest a couple of summer squash and bring them indoors right away, a farmer cannot run inside each time he or she gets his/her hands full of something. Produce leaves the field a few flats at a time. While flats are being filled, produce can suffer from what is called "field heat damage" which is the dehydration it suffers from between the time it is harvested and the time it gets placed in cool conditions. While Farmer Frank does everything he can to minimize field heat damage, it is not always entirely avoidable, and some of the veggies you get in your shares may occasionally look a little dehydrated. If you notice this, try to use those items sooner. The same goes for veggies that are harvested periodically instead of weekly, such as potatoes, sweet potatoes and onions: they suffer more while stored than they do in winter months.

So, remember that a CSA is not a grocery store where you can expect picture-perfect produce. At a CSA, you get produce, not from an impersonal corporation, but from a small organic farm not far away which goes through good and bad times. And as a CSA member, you share those good and bad times with the farmer.

Green Chile Enchilada Sauce

Sara Jones, Tucson CSA

Make a big batch of this to freeze for a special treat during the non-chile season.

6 chiles, roasted, skin and seeds removed, chopped
1 can diced tomatoes
1/2 cup veggie stock
2 teaspoons toasted cumin seeds
2 teaspoons dried oregano
2 tablespoons oil
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 onion, diced

In a medium-sized stock pot, heat oil over medium heat. Sauté garlic, onion and cumin. Add the rest of the ingredients and cook over medium heat for about 20 minutes. Freeze in small freezer bags for easy defrosting.

Divine Soup

Alexandra Tracy-Ram, Tucson CSA

Use whatever CSA veggies you have for the veggie portion. Cucumbers, eggplant, broccoli, broccolini, carrots, pak choi and corn all work well!

Broth:

2-3 veggie bullion cubes (or 2 14 ounce cans veggie stock)
1 chili pepper or green pepper, diced
1 small onion or 1 small bunch of scallions or Mexican onions, chopped
1 chunk of ginger, chopped (or 2 teaspoons minced, 1 teaspoon paste)
3 cloves garlic, minced (3 teaspoons minced, 1 teaspoon paste)
2 lime leaves
1 stalk lemongrass, finely chopped, or some lemon zest.

Veggies:

2-3 cups of whatever vegetables, cubed or roughly chopped

Optional:

1/2 cup coconut milk
1 package Udon noodles, cooked

Simmer broth, lemongrass, lime leaves (broken), garlic, ginger, onion and pepper while you prepare the other veggies (at least 10 minutes). Steam remaining veggies until tender. Strain as much of the broth's ingredients out as you would like (consider removing the chili pepper for a milder soup). Add steamed veggies and stir in coconut milk if desired. Salt & pepper to taste. Also tasty served with udon or other large noodles.

Miso Sesame Sauce for Eggplant or Cold Cucumber Salad

Sara Jones, Tucson CSA

If you use eggplant for this recipe, dice them into medium size squares. For cucumbers, slice into coins or half moons.

2 parts miso
3 parts rice wine vinegar
1 part soy sauce
1 part toasted sesame oil
Freshly grated ginger, minced garlic and red chile flakes to taste

For eggplant: Heat 2 teaspoons oil in a skillet over medium high heat. Add eggplant and stir to coat with oil. Cook for about 2 minutes then pour sauce over vegetables, reduce heat to medium low, cover pan and cook until tender. Add water as needed to keep vegetables from drying out or sticking.

For cucumbers: Pour sauce over sliced cucumbers and toss to coat. Let sit for at least 30 minutes before serving.

Quelites and Beans

Adapted from The Vegetarian Times, July 1997

1 good bunch of fresh quelites (amaranth greens or lamb's quarters), bigger stems removed
1 tablespoon olive oil
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 onion, chopped
1 cup cooked pinto beans, rinsed and drained
1 teaspoon chili powder
Salt and pepper to taste

Rinse greens several times to make sure that all sand and grit are removed. Steam greens in tightly covered pot until wilted. Drain greens and finely chop them. In large skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Add garlic and onions and cook, stirring frequently, until onions are soft, 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in greens, beans and chili powder. Cover and cook over low heat for 5 minutes or until heated through. Season with salt and pepper and serve.

Makes 6 servings.