



## WHAT'S HAPPENING AT TUCSON CSA

**MAIZ TUCSON TORTILLAS ARE BACK**

by Shelby Thompson

After moving to Arizona at the age of four, Carlos Figueroa returned to his hometown of Tepic, Nayarit almost every summer into adulthood. There, he reveled in the taste of warm corn tortillas that were made daily at the tortilleria in town. At the end of each summer Figueroa returned home in search of fresh corn tortillas that rivaled those made in Central Mexico, only to find that there were none. So, he decided to make his own.

When your product is made with only three ingredients – corn, water, and slaked lime – it has to be good. That's why Figueroa sources heirloom corn from Masienda and Tamoa, two companies that partner with organic corn farmers in Mexico who dedicate a small portion of their fields to grow the "family corn" that he uses in his tortillas. Depending on its growing conditions, the same variety of heirloom blue corn can taste completely different. Thankfully, each batch of corn comes with information about the farmer, location of the farm, and the elevation at which it was grown, giving Figueroa intimate insight into his ingredients.

Making corn tortillas from scratch is simple but time-consuming, says Figueroa. He starts the process by breaking a kernel or two of corn in his mouth to learn more about it, often reckoning its taste and texture with the farm from which it came. Then, the corn gets rinsed to remove any chaff before it's added to a large pot of water and slaked lime. There, the nixtamalization process begins.

Our bodies have difficulty digesting and absorbing nutrients from dried corn in its natural state. Nixtamalization is the age-old process of making dried corn edible and is thought to have originated in Mesoamerica between 1200 - 1500 BCE. Soaking dried corn kernels in a mixture of water and slaked lime (food-grade calcium hydroxide) changes its structure by removing the outer pericarp from each kernel. This allows our bodies to digest dried corn more easily and absorb the amino acids found within it. The process also removes micro toxins and toxins that can be poisonous. "Without slaked lime, we can't have tortillas," Figueroa says of the key ingredient in nixtamalization.



For a process that increases digestibility and nutrition and removes toxins, nixtamalization is rather simple: dried corn kernels, water, and slaked lime are brought to a boil in a large pot over the stove. Once the mixture comes to a boil, the heat is lowered and the mixture simmers until the corn kernels reach the right consistency. Once the corn has steeped in the lime-water mixture anywhere from 8 - 16 hours, the pericarp is rinsed off and what's left of the kernels goes straight into the stone grinder. What comes out is masa, which is kneaded into a smooth ball. The masa is then shaped into small balls, each of which is

fed into a hopper that presses the tortillas. Once the tortillas have been briefly cooked on the comal, they're packaged and delivered to Tucson CSA.

Although Maiz Tucson is still young, Figueroa has some exciting projects in the works. In partnership with Mission Garden and Arevalos Farm, he received a Capacity Building Grant from the Community Food Bank of Southern Arizona to make his blue corn tortillas even more local. As a result of the grant, Mission Garden is growing Tohono O'dham 60-Day Corn, which Figueroa uses for tortilla-making demonstrations; Aaron Cardonas, owner of Arevalos Farm, is in the process of growing heirloom blue corn for Figueroa to use in his tortillas; and Maiz Tucson has a new grinder, which will allow Figueroa to make more masa, reduce waste, and make the process faster. "Hopefully, [this] year, the tortillas will be made with Arizona-grown corn," he says.

While flour tortillas are great to eat on their own, corn tortillas should be paired with something in order to really make their flavor stand out. "I like to do a really crispy fried egg with a yolky center and some really spicy salsa," says Figueroa, emphasizing the importance of keeping it simple to allow the fresh corn tortillas to shine.

You can find Maiz Tucson's heirloom blue corn tortillas in the Tucson CSA Shop every other week for \$5/dozen.

**SAVE THE DATE****JANUARY 28**Tucson CSA  
Virtual Cooking Demo**FEBRUARY 15**Tucson CSA's  
17th Anniversary!**FEBRUARY 20**Food Justice Book  
Club Meeting

## CSA SEASONAL RECIPES

**ROASTED BEET SALAD WITH ORANGES AND BEET GREENS**Adapted from *Bon Appétit*, January 2004

- 1 bunch beets, with beet greens attached
- 1 orange
- 1 small sweet onion, thinly sliced
- 1/4 teaspoon grated orange peel
- 2 tablespoons wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin (optional)



Preheat oven to 400°F. Trim greens from beets. Cut off and discard stems. Coarsely chop leaves and reserve. Wrap beets in foil or place in a casserole dish with lid and bake about 45-60 minutes until tender. Cool. Peel beets, then cut each into 8 wedges. Place beets in medium bowl. Cook beet greens in large saucepan of boiling water just until tender, about two minutes. Drain and cool. Squeeze greens to remove excess moisture.

Add greens to bowl with beets. Zest one orange over the top of the beets. Cut remaining peel and white pith from orange. Separate orange into segments then roughly chop. Add orange and onion to bowl with beet mixture. Whisk vinegar, oil, garlic, and cumin in small bowl to blend; add to beet mixture and toss to coat. Season with salt and pepper. Let stand at room temperature 1 hour. Serve.

*Find more recipes on the back*



## HOW TO USE IT

# A NEW TAKE ON SPAGHETTI SQUASH

by Shelby Thompson

My relationship with spaghetti squash improved tremendously when I stopped treating it like spaghetti. Let's be honest – while it is many things, spaghetti squash is not the starchy, comforting al dente pasta that I subsisted on until the age of 10. No, spaghetti squash deserves a new name entirely, and some new recipes to go along with it. Hold the marinara, please!

Once I committed to treating it like its own thing, spaghetti squash became quite interesting and—dare I say it—good. It should almost always be cut in half lengthwise, seeded, and roasted, cut side down, in a 375° oven until fork-tender (about 30 minutes). Then, use a large fork to scrape out the stringy flesh and transfer it to a bowl. From there you might try Garlic Spaghetti Squash with Herbs from the blog *Pinch of Yum*, which calls for tossing the cooked squash with sautéed garlic, vinegar, fresh herbs, cheese, and pine nuts. Or, do as Deb Perlman (a.k.a. *Smitten Kitchen*) does and pile it into Spaghetti Squash and Black Bean Tacos with Queso Fresco. If all else fails, take after our own Sara Jones and mix your squash with onion, greens, eggs, flour, and spices before frying it into crispy latkes. So long as you don't expect it to taste like pasta, you'll probably like it!



### WE'RE READING

*The Black/Land Project* gathers and analyzes stories about the relationship between Black people, land and place.



### WE'RE LISTENING TO

*Fuhmentaboudit!* Podcast



### WE'RE WATCHING

*Uprooting Racism, Seeding Sovereignty*



### ON SOCIAL

*A Growing Culture* is a nonprofit confronting unjust power in the food system. Check them out @agrowingculture



## DR. BOOKER T. WHATLEY

by Shelby Thompson

We often speak of community supported agriculture (CSA) as a relatively new concept that spawned from Japan and took hold in the U.S. as result of Michael Pollan's *The Omnivore's Dilemma*. Like many aspects of sustainable agriculture and the local food movement, the concept of community supported agriculture is rooted in Black history – specifically, a man by the name of Dr. Booker T. Whatley.

Dr. Whatley, who was born in 1915, was a horticulturist and lifetime advocate for the small farmer. Raised on his family's farm in Alabama, Dr. Whatley went on to earn a B.S. in agriculture from Alabama A & M and a Ph.D. in horticulture from Rutgers University. In between his studies, he operated a hydroponic farm in Tokyo, Japan that helped to feed U.S. soldiers fighting in the Korean War.

Throughout his successful career, Dr. Whatley continued to develop resources and advocate for small farmers. His book *How to Make \$100,000 Farming 25 Acres* described how a family could make year-round income without an off-farm job. While his ideas for u-pick, agrotourism, goat cheese production, and direct market farming are common today, they were revolutionary when he proposed them in the 1960s and '70s.

One such revolutionary idea was what Dr. Whatley referred to as the Clientele Membership Club, the precursor to Community Supported Agriculture programs.

"...The clientele membership club is the lifeblood of the [farm]. It enables the farmer to plan production, anticipate demand, and, of course, have a guaranteed market. The farmer has to seek out people—city folks, mostly—to be members of the club. The annual membership fee, \$25 per household, gives each of those families the privilege of coming to the farm and harvesting produce at approximately 60 percent of the supermarket price..."

Dr. Whatley's innovative farming philosophy went on to form the backbone of CSA programs and the local food movement as we know them today.

## SESAME GINGER GREENS

by Sara Jones, Tucson CSA

- 1 share CSA greens, such as mizuna, arugula, or tatsoi
- 1 inch fresh grated ginger
- 1 clove minced garlic
- About 2 teaspoons sesame oil
- 2 teaspoons soy sauce
- A sprinkle of red chile flakes
- 2 tablespoons rice wine vinegar

You can use any greens for this recipe, but mizuna, arugula, tatsoi and Napa cabbage are especially nice. Serve as a salad, mixed with lettuce, or toss dressing together with lightly steamed greens for a warm side dish.

Grate about 1 inch of fresh ginger. Mix together with a few cloves of minced garlic, a couple dashes of toasted sesame oil, a drizzle of soy sauce, a sprinkle of red chile flakes, and about 2 tablespoons rice wine vinegar. Toss together with greens and serve immediately.

## SPAGHETTI SQUASH LATKES

by Sara Jones, Tucson CSA

- 1 small spaghetti squash
- 3 green onions or 1/2 yellow onion, chopped
- 1/2 cup finely chopped winter greens (optional)
- 2 eggs
- 1/4 cup flour
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Oil, for pan frying

Cut squash in half, remove seeds and roast at 350° until tender. Let cool. With a fork, scrape strands of squash out of skin into a medium bowl. Mix with other vegetables. Stir in the two eggs, then add the flour. Add a pinch of salt and pepper, to taste. To cook, heat skillet over medium high heat and add enough oil to coat the bottom. When oil is hot, drop spoonfuls of mixture onto skillet and press lightly to flatten. Cook for about three to four minutes on each side, until golden brown. Remove to drain on paper towel or newspaper and continue frying, adding more oil as necessary, until finished. Top with your favorite garnish.