



Tucson Community Supported Agriculture Newsletter

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Spring 06
Week 9 of 13

This Week's Share

Beauregard sweet potatoes
New Red LaSoda potatoes
Yellow straightneck squash
Grapefruit
Salad mix
Cherry Bell radishes or artichokes
Snow peas or fresh fava beans
Vates kale

Recipes in this Issue

Onion- and Garlic-Stuffed
Artichokes
Fava Bean Ragout



In addition to eggs, Kim Webber of Estancia Farm in Dragoon is also offering us his delicious organic, non-pasteurized **apple cider** for \$2 per pint or \$6 per ½-gallon. Stay tuned for an upcoming opportunity to visit the farm during the next apple harvest, in June, when you'll be able to pick your own apples for 75 cents per pound.

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All Organic Eggs Are Not Born Equal

The latest report from Chris O'Brien, our egg producer, is that our hens probably won't start laying until June or July. In the meantime, some of you have been wondering where the eggs we have been currently offering have come from. Hens lay more eggs in spring, so Philippe found two other local egg producers willing to share their seasonal surplus with the CSA: Kim Fox, who raises her 25 hens in downtown Tucson, and Kim Webber, who raises his small flock at his Estancia Farm in Dragoon (70 miles east of Tucson). Their hens are raised not only organically but in outstanding living conditions. They are extremely well cared for and are in excellent health. Kim Fox's hens even have personal names.

These eggs far exceed any organic standards found in commercially available cage-free and organic eggs. They are locally produced, very fresh, and they come from very small-scale operations, which means the owners can pay attention to many small details that can easily be overlooked by commercial producers. The hens are fed not just any commercial organic feed pellets, but rather, pure organic grain, as well as vast amounts of fresh greens (and the more greens a hen eats, the more dark-orange her eggs' yolks will be). Kim Fox buys her grain in bulk at the Tucson Cooperative Warehouse, and Kim Webber gets his grain from the neighboring Mennonite farm, which grows its own grains locally (they even grow corn that has not been genetically modified, a rarity these days). Both Kims create their own grain mixes and both also grow their own greens to feed their hens. The end result is an egg yolk far fluffier than any you will find at retail stores.

The retail market value of eggs of such quality is \$6 to \$7 per dozen. Farmer Frank was astonished to learn that we sell our eggs for only \$4 per dozen—similar eggs cost \$7 to \$8 per dozen up in Phoenix, he says. Remember that commercial eggs are priced as they are because they are industrially produced.

“How life was sweetened when it was simple and direct, when men got what they needed from nature directly enough to know from whom they were getting it and left the divine origin still plainly marked upon the things with which they surrounded themselves,” writes Joseph Wood Krutch in his biography of Henry David Thoreau. If you've never tasted a true farm egg, we encourage you to take advantage of the generosity of our local producers and to taste the difference.

Tucson CSA Booth at Earth Day a Huge Success

Thank you very much to all the volunteers who staffed the TCSA booth on Earth Day, April 22: Racheli Gai, Danielle O'Dell, Emily Dellinger, Seline Hayden, Paul Durham, and Katie Giroux. The TCSA booth was busy all day with an almost uninterrupted flow of people wanting to learn more about Community Supported Agriculture. Thank you also to Greg Butler, who volunteered as a stage hand and spent an hour talking with Dr. Andrew Weil before he took the stage.

On Earth Day, the Tucson CSA also received a small award from Harmony and Health for being “an exceptionally effective local grassroots organization.” The three award recipients were Sky Island Alliance, Bicycle Inter-Community Action and Salvage, (BICAS) and the Tucson CSA, which each received \$300, \$200, and \$100 respectively.

What's Special

Artichokes

This week we receive just a sampling of more artichokes to come. There are small, medium, and large artichokes from which to choose. The size of the artichoke depends not on its age, however, but rather where it grew on the artichoke plant. Artichokes at the top of the plant, for example, can be enormous, while those at the base, shaded by the dense, silvery, sueded leaves, may grow no larger than a Ping-Pong ball. An artichoke stops growing in size once its petals, or *bracts*, begin to open.

The artichoke is a perennial in the thistle group of the sunflower family. The “vegetable” that we eat is actually the plant’s flower bud. If allowed to flower, the blossoms measure up to seven inches in diameter and are a beautiful violet-blue color.

Of all the heirloom varieties, the globe artichoke is by far the easiest to cultivate and the one variety that appears most often in old garden books, according to William Woys Weaver in *Heirloom Vegetable Gardening* (1997). In 1991, a new hybrid globe variety, Imperial Star, became available, which Farmer Frank grows. This variety was developed by Wayne Schrader and Keith Mayberry of the California Cooperative Extension Service. The variety has shown broad climatic adaptability, which allows it to be grown beyond the cooler coastal climates of northern California.



Onion- and Garlic-Stuffed Artichokes

Philippe

Using a sharp knife, cut off the top third of the artichoke as well as the stem, so that the artichoke can sit flat in a pan (see accompanying photo). With your thumb, open up the leaves to spread them out.



Peel an onion, cut it in half, and slice it into fairly thick strips. Similarly, peel two cloves of garlic and cut them into 4 to 6 slices each. Insert the onion and garlic in between the leaves (pack as much in as you can for maximum flavor).

Set the artichoke on its stem in a saucepan. Fill the saucepan with water halfway up the height of the artichoke and then pour ¼ cup oil and ¼ cup vinegar over the top of the artichoke so that they penetrate the artichoke. Sprinkle the artichoke with salt, pepper, and thyme, Italian herbs, or Herbes de Provence. Cover saucepan with lid, bring liquid to a boil, and simmer for 1 to 1-1/2 hours.

To make accompanying dip: Melt ½ stick butter with 2 cloves of crushed garlic and some salt and pepper.

To eat: Pull off each leaf, one by one, dip it into the accompanying garlic-and-butter sauce, then slide the leaf between your teeth (in effect, squeeze out the “meat” from the leaf with your teeth and let the meat slide into your mouth). The “meat” is at the base of the leaf; the finished leaves get tossed in a bowl in the middle of the table.

Don’t quit when the leaves are gone, however, because the best part is next! You’ll see a cone of violet-tipped, thin, pale leaves in the center. Pull this off and discard it. Underneath is a fuzzy mat called the choke; slice it off with your knife. What’s left is the heart—a large disk of purely edible artichoke—yours to enjoy!

Fava Beans

The other new item in our shares this week appears for the first time ever at the Tucson CSA: fava beans. Fava beans resemble such shell beans as butter beans and lima beans. Shelled, parboiled, and peeled of their slightly bitter, pale green skins, they take only a few minutes to cook.

Fava beans require a two-step preparation for cooking. They must first be shucked from their pods, and then the beans themselves should be peeled. The skin has a bitterness that grows more and more pronounced and unpleasant as the favas mature. The very smallest beans, however, can be good, shelled at the table, and eaten raw and unpeeled, with a little salt and olive oil.

It should be mentioned that some people of Mediterranean extraction (and some Asians and Africans, too) may be susceptible to a disease called favism, a serious and potentially fatal toxic reaction to the consumption or inhalation of a substance in fava beans called vicine, which causes a kind of anemia in those who are genetically predisposed to it.

Fava Bean Ragout

<i>Fava bean</i>	<i>Olive oils</i>
<i>1 small clove garlic</i>	<i>Salt and pepper</i>
<i>1 small sprig rosemary</i>	<i>¼ lemon</i>

Shell the fava beans and discard the pods. Bring a pot of water to boil, add the favas, and simmer for 1 minute. Drain and cool them immediately in cold water. Pierce the outer skin with a thumbnail and squeeze each bean out of its skin with thumb and forefinger. Peel and chop the garlic very fine. Strip the rosemary leaves off the sprig and chop very fine.

Put the fava beans in a saucepan with a mixture of half water and half olive oil, enough to cover them barely. Add the garlic and rosemary, and season with salt and pepper. Bring to a simmer, cover, and cook until the beans are tender, about 5 minutes. Finish with a squeeze of lemon and another grind or two of pepper, and serve.