



Tucson Community Supported Agriculture

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Summer '08

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Summer Produce at Agua Linda Farm

Members subscribed to Agua Linda shares are perhaps wondering when more summer produce will appear in their shares. In addition the delicious onions, garlic and arugula that have already arrived, you can expect, by order of appearance, summer squash, green beans, okra, cucumbers and tomatoes, among others. The long cool spring extended the spring crops and delayed the summer crops. But the latter are all in the fields and growing...

Verdologas Tips

Part of the CSA experience is to get to know unfamiliar produce, so don't be put off by these greens. They are quite delicious once you know how to prepare them. Check our online recipe archive (under verdologas) for many delicious recipes.

For an easy way to use them, you can chop them and add them to hot tomato sauces a few minutes before serving (don't overcook them).

Sunset Magazine also suggests adding them to tzatziki (greek yogurt dip – see recipe on our online recipe archive), or combining them with small red potatoes and butter.

Newsletter editor

Philippe Waterinckx

TOMATO SAFETY



There has been much talk in the media about the recent Salmonella outbreak among tomatoes, the latest incident in the series of Salmonella scares that have occurred over the past few years among mass-produced produce. For those of you who have concerns about our CSA tomatoes, rest assured: they are safe.

The key term here is “*mass-produced*”. Produce found at mainstream grocery stores comes from wholesale distributors who buy it from many different large-scale producers, and then pool and process them together for nationwide distribution. It only takes a small contaminated batch of tomatoes from one farm to infect an entire shipment of produce from multiple farms.

Big farmers who grow produce for mass distribution are under great pressure to keep prices low. This causes them to sometimes cut corners that can put consumers at risk. For example, fields may be fertilized with raw manure from industrial feedlots, which studies show can be contaminated with a resistant and virulent strain of Salmonella.

One of the benefits of belonging to a CSA is that members get their produce from small farms which practice safe agriculture. Farmer Frank exercises extreme caution in the growing and handling practices of his produce. He uses organic composted manure from a local organic dairy farm, not raw manure. The fields are left fallow for six months after the application of composted manure, and the first crops planted in those fields are those with edible parts well above ground. Only after that does Farmer Frank plant crops with edible parts that contact the soil.

As far as handling is concerned, farm workers at Crooked Sky Farms benefit from clean sanitary facilities and they also wear gloves when handling produce.

ARMENIAN CUCUMBERS



If you're new to the Tucson CSA, you may be a bit puzzled when you see the strange-looking cucumbers that show up in your shares in the summer. They certainly don't look like the tame, unobtrusive cucumbers you're used to seeing in the supermarket! And their striped varieties go limp so quickly in the refrigerator! But not true! Appearances can be deceiving!

Armenian cucumbers are specifically adapted to our desert conditions. They come in two varieties: the pale green ribbed variety and the darker green striped and crooked variety. The online Cook's Thesaurus (www.foodsubs.com) notes they are “hard to find, but one of the best-regarded slicing cucumbers.”

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. Not only does it seal in moisture, prolonging shelf life, it also seals in pesticides.

Our organic Armenian cucumbers don't need to be peeled or seeded, and despite their limp appearance, 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 them with a light sprinkling of salt. Remember to check out the many cucumber recipes on our website recipe archive.

Barbecued Okra

Adapted from foodnetwork.com

If you want to avoid okra's slippery character, try this.

1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon paprika
1 teaspoon sugar
1 teaspoon ground coriander
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
1/4 teaspoon celery seed
1 pound fresh okra
1 tablespoon unsalted butter, melted, or olive oil

Preheat the grill to high. Place the salt, paprika, sugar, coriander, black pepper, cayenne, and celery seed in a small bowl and stir to mix. Rinse the okra under cold running water and blot dry with paper towels. Dry the okra thoroughly. Trim the tips off the stem ends of the okra but do not cut into the pods. Place the okra in a large mixing bowl, add the butter and toss to coat. Add the rub mixture and toss to coat. When ready to cook, arrange the okra on the hot grate so that they are perpendicular to the bars or you may wish to put several pods side by side on skewers to keep any stray okra from falling through the grates and into the fire. Grill the okra until nicely browned, about 2 to 4 minutes per side, turning with tongs as needed. Transfer the grilled okra to a platter or plates and serve immediately.

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.

Cucumbers and Melon Pico de Gallo Style

Sara Jones, Tucson CSA

This is a tasty Mexican treat that traditionally uses lots of tropical fruit. I usually just use melons. Cut everything into long strips, roughly the same size, for the best presentation.

1 cucumber, seeds and skin removed
1/2 medium size melon
juice of 2 limes
cayenne pepper to taste
salt

Dress the cucumber and fruit with lime juice, cayenne and salt. Serve immediately.

Bruised Raw Curried Kale Salad

Sara Jones, Tucson CSA

You can use any type of cooking greens in this recipe. Salting and bruising the greens is a technique that will give the raw greens a 'cooked' taste and texture. The greens should be finely sliced for best results. To do this, trim the thick stems off of the leaves, lay several leaves on top of each other and roll up tight like a cigar. Use a sharp knife to cut the roll into thin slivers. Sprinkle the cut greens with salt and use your hands to rub the salt into the leaves, squeezing to release some of their juices.

1 bunch kale or collards, sliced fine
1 carrot, grated
2 small turnips, grated
1 cup cooked or sprouted grains
1 cup cooked or sprouted lentils
1/2 cup sunflower or pumpkin seeds
1/2 yellow onion
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
2 tablespoons apple or orange juice
1 tablespoon oil
2 teaspoons curry powder
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon salt, for bruising greens, then add to taste to finished salad

Mix salted, bruised greens with the carrot and turnip and set aside. In a food processor or blender, puree onion, vinegar, oil and spices. Pour spice mixture over vegetables and toss to coat. Add grains and lentils, toss, and season to taste with salt and pepper. Let sit at least one hour, then garnish with seeds and serve.

Moroccan Slaw

Sara Jones, Tucson CSA

This makes a wonderfully refreshing salad on a warm summer day!

Consider using any combination of mixed grated root vegetables, such as beets, kohlrabi, carrots, turnips or rutabaga.

Mix:
1 cup beets, peeled and grated
1 cup carrots, scrubbed and grated
1 cup kohlrabi, peeled and grated
1 orange or grapefruit, peeled and cut crosswise in thin slices

Dress with:
1 pinch ground cumin
1 pinch ground coriander
1/4 cup yogurt
cashews, chopped
fresh cilantro, chopped
salt and pepper

You can replace the yogurt with oil and apple cider vinegar.

Refrigerate before serving.