



Tucson Community Supported Agriculture

Newsletter 435 ~ April 21, 2014 ~ Online at www.TucsonCSA.org

Spring 2014

Harvest list is online

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Tomatillo Tips

Tomatillos are a delicious vegetable similar in shape and size to a tomato, but more closely related to the gooseberry. They have a tangy taste and are classics in Mexican food (e.g salsa verde), but are excellent in a wide range of dishes.

To use your tomatillos, you first remove their papery husks. They also have a sticky residue on their skin that is easily removed by dunking them in water.

Tomatillos are often used in sauces. Grilling or skillet roasting whole tomatillos gives a smoky depth to their flavor. Just cook them over medium high heat, turning occasionally, until they are mostly brown (some black charred spots are fine). Grilled tomatillos and green onions make a delicious sauce, blended together with a little salt, pepper, limejuice and cilantro!



CROP TRANSITION PHASE AT CROOKED SKY FARM

Crooked Sky Farm has entered it's spring/summer transition when the cold weather crops are phasing out and when all of the summer crops are starting to get ready. This year however, with the heat coming at an earlier time, many cold weather crops such as the leafy greens have taken a heavy toll, therefore reducing the range of crops available for harvest. So, the farm will sometimes be doubling items that are still plentiful and still look amazing. Meanwhile the warm weather crops will gradually make their appearance. In the next few weeks you can look forward to the following new items: summer squash, zucchini, purple majesty potatoes, gold potatoes, Russian fingerling potatoes, tomatillos, red onions, gold onions, and Easter egg radishes. In late May and June, we'll also get eggplant, amaranth, arugula, cucumbers and, of course, heirloom tomatoes.

A WORD ABOUT I'TOI ONIONS, by Farmer Frank

In 1699, Spaniards introduced a small onion to the present day Tohono O'Odham people. It was subsequently named after I'Itoi, the Tohono O'Odham deity who resides on sacred Baboquivari Peak, in the Baboquivari Mountains south of Ajo.

While the I'Itoi onion (pronounced ee-ee-toy) is not a true native of the southwest, it has existed, endured and thrived here, in less than ideal conditions, for more than 300 years. If I could only speak of two vegetables in the whole world, they would be tepary beans (another story for another day) and the I'Itoi onion.

I was given my first I'Itoi onions in 1993 by a staff member of the county extension service who had received them from Native Seed/Search in Tucson. Having tucked the onions away in a drawer, that staff member was naturally worried about their condition. Being the hopeful farmer I am, I do what farmers do: I plant. Five precious (all shriveled and meek) bulbs was all it took.

Those humble beginnings ignited a flame of I'Itoi onions into hundreds of thousands. I'Itoi onions multiply rapidly: a single bulb can turn into over a hundred in one single season. They also practically tend to themselves: they require very little water and can suffer great neglect.

Their flavor is reminiscent of something between a green onion and a shallot. Upon harvest, they display a beautiful bronze skin along their stem. Don't be too hasty to them eat them all: plant your last bulb back in the ground. Repeat this process for an endless supply, year after year. Don't worry if after a while they start looking like they died. They likely have not.

Re-growth begins again in July, with the monsoons, and they prosper for the next 10 to 11 months. They require about a third less water than most onions: they seldom get water more than twice a month here on the farm. My recommendation are: plant 12 inches apart about 2 inches deep. When they are young (green onions) they should be dug up with a spade or garden fork and not pulled like regular onions. Fibrous roots seep into the ground about six inches, so pulling them often results in only pulling off the tops and leaving the bulbs in the soil.

Slow Cooker Vegetable Stock

Lorraine Glazar, Tucson CSA

I've never found a canned or boxed vegetable broth I like, and since it is so easy to make my own, I don't have to. Using a slow cooker conserves energy, and the idea can be adapted to stove top or pressure cooker. This is a great place to use an excess of carrots.

Clean vegetable trimmings: Root ends of onion, herb stems, green tops from P'ittoi onions, tails and tips from carrots, tomato cores, celery tops and roots, fennel cores, skins peeled off of ginger roots, etc.

2 quarts good-tasting water

Bay leaf

Peppercorns

Dried chili (optional)

Save your clean vegetable trimmings in the freezer until a gallon sized bag is at least half full. Place these trimmings in your slow cooker and cover with 2 quarts water. Add a bay leaf and a dozen whole peppercorns. Cook on slow for 4 to 8 hours. Allow to cool, and strain liquid into sturdy jars.

Tip: use water you like to drink. Tap water is fine if it tastes good to you, otherwise use filtered. Subtle vegetable flavor won't overcome chlorine or heavy mineralization. Do not salt. You will salt the stock when you deploy it in cooking. Save strong flavored vegetables (members of the cabbage family, artichoke peelings, etc) separately and make a batch with them for use in like-tasting soups. Be sure to taste the stock before you label it in case there are any strong flavors (broccoli stems, etc.) you didn't notice when the mix went in. Potato peels, winter squash trimmings, etc. make a wonderful cloudy broth. It's perfect for chowders or other thick chunky soups; keep it separate from stock you want to look clear.

Shredded Carrot Marinara

Sara Jones, Tucson CSA

This recipe will help use up an abundant carrot harvest. It is a great way to use warm season carrots that aren't particularly sweet and may be tough. You can use beets as well. The trick is to slowly caramelize the carrots with the onions. You will be amazed with the results! This is great served over spaghetti, but is also an excellent base for a soup or chili. Or add ground beef for a delicious meat sauce that could be used for pasta or to stuff peppers or squash.

2 tablespoons olive oil

4 large or 6-7 small carrots, shredded

1 onion, diced

3 cloves garlic, minced

1 large can diced tomatoes

2 tablespoons tomato paste

1 teaspoon dried thyme

1 teaspoon dried oregano

Red pepper flakes, to taste

Salt to taste

Use a large pan or pot with a heavy base, to distribute heat evenly. Over medium heat, cook carrots and onions in olive oil, stirring occasionally, for about 20 minutes. The vegetables should be soft and browning. Add garlic, herbs and spices and tomato paste and cook an additional 5 minutes. Add diced tomatoes and cook about 10 minutes. Salt to taste. Toss with cooked spaghetti or use for soup or chile.

Tomatillo Avocado Sauce

Sara Jones, Tucson CSA

This is a salsa bar standby and is a great taco condiment. This also makes a great dressing for any type of salad. The sauce is just the basic salsa verde recipe, with avocado and sour cream added in.

1/2 pound tomatillos, husked, rinsed

1 small can green chiles

1/2 to 1 jalapeno, optional

1 onion, chopped

2 garlic cloves

1/4 cup (firmly packed) fresh cilantro leaves

1 tablespoon fresh lime juice (optional)

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 whole ripe avocado, diced

2 tablespoons sour cream or plain yogurt (optional)

Roast tomatillos under the broiler until charred. In a food processor or blender, puree all ingredients until smooth. Add salt to taste.

Fennel Parmesan

Philippe, Tucson CSA

1 bunch fennel bulbs, trimmed and quartered, some fronds reserved for garnish

2 tablespoons olive oil

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Cook the fennel in salted water until tender but not limp (8-10 minutes). Drain.

Preheat oven to 400°. Oil an oven dish. Arrange the fennel quarters in the oven dish. Season with salt and black pepper. Sprinkle the cheese on top. Bake for 30 minutes or until cheese is golden brown. To serve, garnish with chopped fennel fronds.