



Notes From the Pea Patch

Foxtail Community Farm

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Farmer's Notebook

One of the questions we ask in our end-of-season member survey is: *which crop did you throw away the most?* I am always surprised to see how many people list "herbs" in response. As someone who loves to cook, I savor my fresh herbs and the vibrant color and flavor they bring to dishes.

In our early years of farming in Wisconsin we ambitiously grew a huge variety of culinary, ornamental and medicinal herbs, something I'd like to revisit someday. Currently we grow a more modest variety of traditional herbs, primarily for cooking (see guide on reverse).

Herbs are versatile in the kitchen. Infuse tea, vinegars, oils, salt or sugar with sprigs. Muddle leaves in a cocktail. Add sprigs to vegetables, meats and soups while cooking. Puree them in creative combinations for pesto. You can substitute fresh herbs for dried in most recipes, using 3-4x more than you would dried.

Stored properly, fresh herbs will last several weeks. I recommend three methods: 1) place herbs in a jar of water as a bouquet and leave on the counter; 2) same as #1, then slip a loose plastic bag over the top of the bouquet and store upright in fridge; 3) wrap delicate herbs in paper towels, place the whole thing in a sealed plastic bag and refrigerate. For all of these, remove the rubber band and avoid bunching too tightly.

Extra herbs can easily be dried for winter use. Hang bunches upside-down in a dark, warm, dry, well-ventilated area (or frankly, anywhere you have space). You can dry herbs in a dehydrator, or spread on a paper towel and microwave on high for 3-4 minutes, stirring frequently. Store dried herbs in an airtight container in a dark area for up to one year.

So don't overlook those herbs in your share box - they are seasonal treasures no less than the strawberries and tomatoes! ~ Rachel

This Week's Harvest

Our best guess for what will be in this week's share boxes - subject to change at harvest & packing time.



red sweet peppers (large shares) - sweet peppers continue to mature, transitioning from green to red (and hopefully some yellow ones coming soon, too). We're enjoying fresh salsa several nights each

week now. If you can't use your peppers within the week you can easily freeze them for off-season use: simply wash, dice or cut into strips and pack into freezer bags (peppers do not require blanching).

thai basil - a unique, flavorful variety of basil. Distinctive purple and green leaves have a mild anise flavor; excellent in Asian cooking.



Also...

cucumbers ~ eggplant or summer squash ~ green beans ~ green peppers ~ hot peppers ~ onions ~ sweet corn (rotating) swiss chard ~ tomatoes



Fruit Shares: cantaloupe from our own field. You'll know they are perfectly ripe when the blossom end smells like...ripe cantaloupe! Leave on the counter to fully ripen, then refrigerate for up to one

week. *No spray.* Also **blueberries** from Stanton's Farm in Feura Bush. Store in fridge, wash before eating. *Conventionally grown.*





Recipe of the Week: Summer Stew with Thai Basil

I have not tried this recipe yet, but I put my trust in Deborah Madison, plus I found at least one cooking blog singing the praises of this recipe. This is from Madison's Local Flavors. I plan to try it with additional in-season veggies including green beans, red peppers and thai eggplant.

- 1 tbs roasted peanut oil
- 1 package fresh, firm tofu, drained and cut into 1/2" cubes
- 2 medium summer squash, diced to 1/2" cubes
- salt and pepper
- kernels from 4 ears corn (about 2 cups)
- 1 hot pepper, diced (careful!)
- 1 generous tbs chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 generous tbs chopped fresh Thai basil
- 1 bunch scallions or 1 onion, sliced
- 1 can (15 oz) coconut milk
- 1 tsp mushroom or regular soy sauce
- 3 cups cooked white rice
- extra cilantro and Thai basil for garnish



Photo by:
lisaiscooking.blogspot.com

In a wide skillet, heat oil over medium high. Add tofu and zucchini. Sprinkle with salt. Cook for 8-10 minutes, shaking or turning occasionally to brown tofu on all sides.

Finely chop the hot pepper with the herbs. Add to the skillet along with the scallions, corn and coconut milk, plus a splash of water. Stir in soy sauce and some black pepper. Simmer until corn is heated through, about 3-5 minutes. Serve over rice, garnished with additional herbs.



From the archives

Need more recipe ideas? CSA newsletters back to 2010 are on our website:

www.foxtailcommunityfarm.com/MemberNewsletters.html

Here are a few favorites to re-visit this week:

- ◆ Sep 6 2011 – *spicy corn quesadilla*
- ◆ Aug 25 2013 – *fresh corn tamales*
- ◆ Sep 1 2014 – *tham ka gai*

A GUIDE TO FOXTAIL HERBS



basil – a foundation of Italian cooking. Best used fresh or added at the end of cooking. We grow three varieties: traditional sweet Italian, lemon and Thai.

chives – native to the Orient, chives give a mild onion flavor sprinkled on potatoes, eggs & more.

cilantro/ coriander – essential for Mexican, Indian and Thai cuisine, people either love or hate the distinctive aroma and taste of the fresh leaves (cilantro) and dried ground seeds (coriander).

dill – from the Norse *dilla* (“to lull”), dill has been used to induce sleep and support milk production in nursing moms. We mainly use it as a pickling spice, and it is also excellent with fish.

lemon grass – a tropical grass native to southeast Asia and used for curries, teas and soups. Can be used fresh or dried and powdered. Unfortunately this year's crop looks like a failure – booooo!

mint – we grow several varieties of mint – common mint, catmint and lemon balm - none of which did particularly well this year.

oregano – a staple of Italian tomato sauces and Greek dishes. Can be used interchangeably with marjoram, but in smaller quantities. Dries well.

parsley - full of Vitamins A, C, B, calcium and iron. We grow both flat and curly leaf varieties. Store in fridge rather than as a bouquet. Parsley is better frozen than dried.

rosemary – many powers have been attributed to rosemary, from improving memory to protection from evil spirits. Outstanding addition to roasted meat and cream sauces or soups. Very fussy to grow in this region - not sure if we'll have any for shares this year.

sage – an aromatic, soft-flavored leafy herb. Works with nearly any vegetable or meat. Dries well.

summer savory – a lovely herb with an earthy aroma and flavor similar to thyme. Traditionally paired with fresh beans, also good in soups, salads or other dishes.

thyme – among the most versatile of herbs, it's hard to go wrong with thyme in your cooking. Dries well.

Most of these herbs will be given out in shares at least once during the season, but may be available over a longer period. Check the farmstand for updates:

www.foxtailcommunityfarm.com/Farmstand.html