



Notes From the Pea Patch

Foxtail Community Farm ~

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Farmer's Notebook

As the summer garden starts to wind down, it's time to put away food for the winter months. Actually, this is an activity we've been working at steadily all season, but the pace picks up as the intensity of field work declines and harvests are still bountiful. So far this week corn, sweet and hot peppers have gone into the freezer, tomato sauce has been canned and blueberries and peaches are in the dehydrator. By Sunday night I hope to add salsa, dilly beans and dried veggie chips to the pantry and get at least one batch of sour pickles fermenting.

Preserving food goes hand-in-hand with eating locally in season. It's a time-honored craft that allows us to enjoy produce after its season has come and gone. It's also an important element of traditional agrarian life as work, recreation and family bonding are woven together in the daily fabric of farm activity. One or two generations ago this would have been part of nearly everyone's life. Even if your grandfather wasn't a farmer, I'll bet your grandmother had a kitchen garden and "put up" shelves-full of some signature item: concord grape jam, tomato sauce, bread and butter pickles or picadilly relish.

Unfortunately, the conveniences and pace of modern family life have disconnected most people from these basic domestic arts, relegating them to quaint curiosities. As we have learned to grow food over the past 20 years, we have also learned (and are still learning) how to prepare and preserve it. Like eating in season and cooking regularly, preserving has become part of the rhythm of our home life and family activities.

Preserving takes time, but it is not difficult. Some simple equipment, quality ingredients and a few good reference books will get you on your way. See reverse for more information on how to get started – you may get hooked! ~ 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.



curly kale – full of vitamins, fiber and hearty taste, kale is one of the healthiest foods you can find. This is a traditional curly variety called winterbor (sounds like it should be eaten while watching *Game of Thrones*). Refrigerate in a plastic bag. To prepare, strip leaves from the tough stems and wash well. Sauté, boil or braise to bring out flavor; perfect for kale chips.

sweet onions - sweeter and juicier than storage onions. This variety is the famous Walla Walla, similar to the even more famous Vidalia (which under Georgia state law and federal regulations can only be grown in the 20-county production region around Vidalia, Georgia). Store in fridge – not suitable for long term storage.



Also... carrots ~ cucumbers ~ eggplant (large shares) ~ garlic ~ lettuce ~ summer squash ~ sweet peppers ~ tomatoes

Fruit Shares: nectarines from Fix Bros Fruit Farm in Hudson. Thought to have developed as a "mutant" variation of peaches, nectarines have smooth (rather than fuzzy) skin and a bit more zing in their flavor than peaches. Picked tree-ripe, these will complete ripening quickly on a counter top, or even faster in a paper bag. Nectarines should yield slightly to touch when ripe, but will feel firmer than a ripe peach when ready. Once ripe, store in a plastic bag in the fridge. Wash before eating. *Conventionally grown.*





Recipe of the Week: Nectarine Chutney

A little bit of this, a little bit of that...chutney is a burst of contrasting colors and flavors based on fruit, vinegar, sugar and spices. I like mine hot, but you can go sweet by reducing or omitting chiles. Traditional as an accompaniment to Indian dishes, chutney is also fabulous atop roasted or grilled meat or as part of a cheese plate. This recipe is sufficiently acidic to can in a hot water bath (process pint or half-pint jars for 15 minutes).

- 4 cups pitted, diced nectarines
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 ¼ cups brown sugar
- ¾ cup apple cider or white vinegar
- ½ cup finely chopped onion
- 1/3 cup golden raisins
- 1 tbs mustard seeds
- ½ cup lime juice
- 1-2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1-2 hot peppers (choose your heat), finely chopped (remove seeds to reduce heat)
- 1 tbs minced ginger (1 tsp ground)
- pinch each of cloves, cinnamon & curry powder

In a large stainless steel saucepan combine sugar and vinegar, bring to a boil and stir to dissolve sugar. Stir in nectarines and salt and simmer ~15 minutes. Add all remaining ingredients, bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer until mixture is tender, soft and thick enough to hold its shape on a spoon (about 20-30 minutes, but may take longer). Follow basic instructions for water bath canning, or ladle into jars and refrigerate.

Preserving at home – you CAN do it!

Canning, freezing, drying, fermenting, common storage...while these may seem mysterious, none are difficult and with a little practice all can become part of your seasonal repertoire. If you don't know your kraut from your conserve, here's a little Foxtail cheat sheet to get you started:

method...	means...	such as...
hot water bath canning	sealing prepared food in a jar by submerging it in boiling water (only for high-acid foods; must use special jars & lids and follow calibrated recipes)	jam, chutney, salsa, tomato sauce, vinegar-based pickles (low acid foods must be pressure canned)
freezing	put raw, blanched or prepared food in a sealed bag or container and stick it in your freezer	pesto, berries, diced peppers, extra greens, salsa
dehydrating	removing liquid from fresh foods by drying in an electric or solar dehydrator or oven	apple rings, veggie chips, fruit leather, "sun dried" tomatoes, herbs
lacto-fermentation	packing raw ingredients in a jar, usually with salt or brine, and allowing natural bacteria to convert their sugars to lactic acid	sauerkraut, kimchi, sour pickles, yogurt
common storage	putting produce suitable for long-term storage in places with the right temperature and humidity to delay spoilage	potatoes, onions, garlic, apples, carrots, winter squash

A good reference book will help you learn and remember the steps of various processes, the pH and blanching times of different vegetables and also provides many starter recipes. There are many great guides out there, from classic to hippie to hipster, but the go-to starter book for all is *The Ball Complete Book of Home Preserving*.

Want more help? We are happy to arrange hands-on workshops for small groups in our kitchen or yours – contact us to discuss options.



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 7 2010 – Summer's End Pickles
- ◆ Aug 25 2011 – Backyard Garden Casserole
- ◆ Aug 23 2012 – Moroccan Carrot Salad