



Notes From the Pea Patch

Foxtail Community Farm ~ Vol. 11, No. 4 ~ January 24, 2016

Farmer's Notebook

For the last two weeks, whenever I ventured into the study I found Eric hunkered down at the computer - catalogs spread out across the desk, a cup of coffee at his side and spreadsheets open on the laptop screen. Seed ordering time!

The success of the season ahead begins with the seeds we order in January. To start with it's a numbers game, working backward from the yields we'll need to fill future CSA boxes. How many cabbages does each share need? How many tomatoes can we expect to get from each plant? How many harvests will we get from a planting of green beans? These equations get more complicated when you factor in variables like germination rates, weather and insect pressure.

Beyond the numbers, there are many important considerations in choosing specific varieties. Marketmore or Silver Slicer cucumbers? Nantes or Amsterdam carrots? Our beloved Fedco seed catalog has seven pages of tomato varieties alone, and "let's try one of each" simply doesn't work for a CSA. Produce quality (taste, texture, aesthetic appeal) is an obvious criteria, but equally important is how a given variety will fare in the hardscrabble growing conditions of our farm.

It's easy to get swept up in the lush catalog descriptions and allure of novelty varieties, but we focus on varieties that have grown well for us consistently and contribute to an overall balance in our share boxes. We purchase from cooperative and employee-owned companies that support small seed producers and reject GMOs. We choose certified organic seed whenever it's available, and include many heirloom varieties that have stood the test of time.

So now, once again, the seed orders are in - over 200 varieties of vegetables, herbs and fruit for our fields and the spring seedling sale. That's a lot of good food to look forward to! ~ Rachel

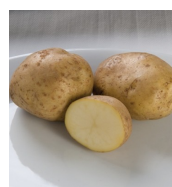
This Week's Harvest

our best guess for what will be in this week's share boxes - subject to change at packing time:



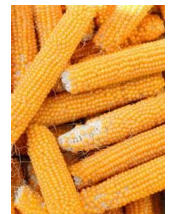
celeriac - this knobby bulb has become one of our most beloved winter crops. Despite its gnarled appearance, it has a wonderful flavor. Store in fridge. To use, trim the top and base, then peel. Try roasted, braised, diced in a winter soup or stew, grated raw or mashed instead of or with potatoes.

green cabbage - a traditional storage variety called Golden Acre, with crunchy green leaves and a slightly peppery flavor that becomes milder when cooked. Equally good shredded raw or used in cooked dishes. Store in fridge.



potatoes - an all-purpose variety of white potato called Kennebec, especially favored for storage. These are from our own fields. Store in a cool, dark area or refrigerator.

popcorn - it seems these took a bit longer than usual to dry this year, but we got a good popping on a trial today. We also discovered that a good way to pop a large volume for a crowd - say 8 teenage boys coming in from a game of ice hockey - is to pop in a covered wok! Remove husks & rub cobs together to remove kernels.



Also...

**carrots ~ garlic ~ lettuce ~
onions ~ spinach ~ butternut squash**

see the winter crop guide included with the December 12 2015 (Vol 11, No 1) newsletter for additional descriptions of winter crops.



Recipe of the Week: Bund gobi aur matar (cabbage with peas)

If you've tired of your usual dishes, look to Indian cooking as a way to re-invent your vegetables, and look to Madhur Jaffrey to show you the way. I made this recipe from her classic "Indian Cooking" book last week – my only tweaks to her recipe were the addition of the grated carrot and substitution of a dried chili for fresh, which worked perfectly. The kids made faces when I put this on the table, but two of the three decided it was very good and the remaining one ate it without too much complaint. Just as Ms. Jaffrey notes, this would be equally good paired with grilled pork chops as with more traditional Indian fare.

- 1 green cabbage
- 3-4 carrots
- 1 cup frozen peas
- ~4 tbs vegetable oil
- 2 tsp cumin seeds
- 2 bay leaves
- ¼ tsp ground turmeric
- ¼ tsp cayenne pepper
- 1 hot chili pepper (fresh or dried), minced
- ¾ tsp salt
- ¾ tsp sugar
- ¼ tsp garam masala

Quarter and core the cabbage, and slice it into long, fine shreds. Rinse peas in a strainer under warm water until they separate, then set aside.

Heat the oil in a wide pan. When hot, add cumin seeds and bay leaves. A few seconds later (when the leaves just begin to take on color) add the cabbage, carrots and peas, and stir for 1 minute. Add the turmeric and cayenne, stir to mix, then cover and reduce heat to low. Cook for ~5 minutes, until vegetables are just tender. Add the minced chili, salt and sugar and stir to combine. Cover pan and cook over low heat another 2-3 minutes. Sprinkle with garam masala and stir gently to combine.

Remove bay leaves before serving.

Another recipe: Celeriac & Wild Rice Chowder

Continuing with the theme of dishes from great women cook-writers, here is one from the ever-wonderful Deborah Madison.

- ½ cup wild rice
- 3 cups peeled and chopped celeriac
- 2 large leeks or 1 onion, chopped
- 2 tbs unsalted butter
- 1 rib celery, diced
- 1 cup potato, thinly-sliced
- ¼ cup chopped parsley
- 1 bay leaf + 1 sprig thyme (or 1 tsp dried)
- 2 cups vegetable or chicken stock or water
- 2 cups milk or half-and-half
- truffle oil for garnish (optional)

Put the wild rice in a small saucepan with 5 cups of water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer ~45 minutes until tender. Set aside.

In a large soup pot, melt butter. Add the vegetables, herbs and 1 ½ tsp salt. Cook at medium-high for ~5 minutes. Add stock/water. Bring to boil, reduce heat to low, and simmer for 20 minutes. Add the milk and simmer until the vegetables are tender. Discard bay leaf. Remove ~1 cup of veggies, puree, then return to the pot. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Serve with a mound of wild rice added to each bowl. Garnish with a drop of truffle oil, if desired.

Foxtail Farm...pass it on



We have space for some new CSA members for the upcoming summer season. Word of mouth from current members is our best advertising, so please spread the word!

Please direct anyone who may be interested to our website:

<http://www.foxtailcommunityfarm.com/CSA>