



Notes From the Pea Patch

Foxtail Community Farm ~

Vol. 10, No. 4 ~

March 15, 2015

Farmer's Notebook

Spring is God's way of saying, "one more time!"

~ Robert Orben

This Friday marks the spring equinox. We've climbed out of the dark days of winter, and even with snow still on the ground the anticipation of a new season is palpable. As we do every year, we'll welcome spring by opening the greenhouse and sowing the first seeds of the season.

About half the crops we grow are started in the greenhouse (the rest are direct-seeded into the field). We'll start next weekend with slow-growing onions and perennial herbs, along with early cool weather crops including broccoli, bok choy and lettuce for June CSA boxes. By May, nearly all the year's crops will be seeded.

Our greenhouses are simple hoop structures Eric designed and built by hand, covered with multi-season greenhouse poly. Seeds are sowed in reusable plastic trays ranging from 25-100 cells per tray, depending on seedling size. Trays are filled with an organic compost-based soil mix, rich with nutrients to support natural seedling growth without added chemical fertilizers – we get a mix made by McEnroe Organics in Dutchess County. Irrigation is by hand with a simple (but long) garden hose, twice daily.

Most seeds need steady temps of 60°F to germinate, so we use a heater for colder nights, but passive solar heat can bring daytime greenhouse temps to 80+°F on sunny days. It's a lovely place to be on an early spring day! As seedlings mature, they tolerate cooler temps. We cater to them by running our greenhouses end-to-end, placing the newest seed trays closer to the heater end, and moving trays steadily down the row as they grow, before finally rotating them out of the greenhouse completely to "harden off" for transplanting. From there, it's into the field and before long, our share boxes. ~ Rachel

This Month's Harvest

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

Black Turtle Beans – a special storage crop that we grow as a labor of love. Harvesting black beans is an event unto itself. After drying on the vines all summer long, the bean stalks are threshed, or flailed, to break the pods open. Traditionally, this would be done using nunchuks (like most martial arts weaponry, nunchuks are actually traditional agricultural tools, developed by oppressed Asian farmers who were not allowed to own conventional weapons). We accomplish the same result by smacking bean stalks against the inside of a clean barrel – some of you helped with this at the Harvest Home last fall! The resulting mix of shelled beans and dry stalks and pods is then winnowed by scooping and releasing in front of a fan, which blows away the light dry material while the heavier beans fall straight down. Beans are then sifted and packed for storage. Store these in a jar or other tightly closed container for up to six months.

Dried Apple Rings – another little treat from the pantry to help brighten up share boxes as supplies of storage crops wind down. Made from locally-grown apples in our kitchen dehydrator with no chemical treatment or added sweeteners.

Lettuce – a nice surprise at harvest time! The lettuce we had to cut back last month has rebounded quicker than anticipated, so we got a nice cutting for shares.

Also...

**Carrots ~ Celeriac ~ Daikon Radish ~
Garlic ~ Potatoes ~ Rutabaga ~
Spinach ~ Acorn Squash**

for storage and preparation instructions on all crops, refer to the December 14 2014 newsletter, archived at: foxtailcommunityfarm.com/MemberNewsletters.html



Recipe of the Week: Rachel's Black Bean Burgers

I've been working on this recipe for several months, playing with different spices and toppings. Easy to make, quite tasty and best of all, our kids are appreciative of the familiar burger style (especially if served with homemade fries, pantry pickles and fruit smoothies). This recipe makes ~6 burgers; adjust proportions as needed.

- 4 cups cooked black beans (from ~2 cups dry)
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 onion + 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tsp chili powder
- 1 ½ tsp each ground cumin & coriander
- 2 tsp salt (reduce if you use canned beans)
- 2/3 cup dry bread crumbs
- mild-flavored oil, for frying

Mash beans roughly in a bowl – leave some whole for texture. Stir in the egg, onion, garlic, spices and bread crumbs. Cover the bowl and refrigerate for 30 minutes (up to 24 hours).

Form the chilled bean mixture into 6 burger-sized patties. Heat a thin layer of oil in a heavy frying pan (cast iron is best) - add more during frying if they dry out. Fry patties until golden brown on each side and heated through – you want to get them nicely hot, it will be at least 10 minutes per burger. If people want cheese on theirs, top with a few slices for the last few minutes of cooking (I'm partial to pepper-jack).

Serve on rolls with your choice of toppings – avocado, sprouts or lettuce, a sauce. I like mayonnaise or sour cream, whisked smooth and combined with red or green salsa. Eric likes sriracha, and the kids prefer barbecue sauce.

HOW TO COOK BEANS

the only hard part is thinking ahead

rinse & sift any stones or chaff from beans ~ **pre-soak:** overnight in a pot covered with water 3" above beans *or* boil for 2 minutes, remove from heat, cover & soak 1 hour ~ **drain, rinse**, back in the pot under 3" water ~ bring to a boil, then **simmer** uncovered until tender (about 60-90 minutes for black beans) ~ **drain** & use or refrigerate. Yum!

and one more...don't forget the bun!

I know it's easier to just buy them, but I promise you will feel so proud and happy when you serve your burgers on these. And the recipe, from the renowned Bernard Clayton, makes a dozen - so you can freeze half for the next time!

- 5 cups all-purpose unbleached white flour
- 4 ½ tsp dry yeast
- 1 tbs kosher salt
- 2 tbs butter, softened at room temperature
- 2 cups hot water at 120-130°F
- a little milk + sesame or poppy seeds

In mixing bowl combine 2 cups of flour, yeast and salt. Cut in the soft butter, add hot water, and beat with wooden spoon (or flat beater of your mixer). When smooth, add the rest of the flour ~1/2 cup at a time, mixing to form a shaggy mass. Knead on a floured surface, or with dough hook of your mixer, 6-8 minutes until smooth & elastic; add flour sparingly during kneading if too sticky.

Place dough in a greased bowl, cover and rise in a warm spot until doubled, ~40 minutes. Turn onto floured surface and divide into 12 pieces. Shape into balls, cover and let sit 5 minutes. Flatten each ball under your palm to ~4" diameter/1" thick, and place on a lightly greased baking sheet. Cover and let rise about 30 minutes. Pre-heat oven to 400°F while rising.

Brush each bun with milk and sprinkle with seeds. Bake for 20 minutes, bottoms should be nicely browned. Let cool, split and enjoy.



From the archives

Need more recipe ideas? Foxtail CSA newsletters back to 2010 are on our farm website.

www.foxtailcommunityfarm.com/MemberNewsletters.html

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

October 4, 2010
~ Root Vegetable Chowder

September 8, 2013
~ Do Chua
~ Daikon Pancakes