



Notes From the Pea Patch

Foxtail Community Farm ~ Vol. 11, No. 23 ~ August 15, 2016

Farmer's Notebook

A teacher friend once described August to me as “one long Sunday afternoon”. As summer rounds the bend toward its final stretch, it's hard not to dwell on the cooler days and busy routines that lie ahead. But I fight the urge with fervor, determined to savor every second of summer while it is here.

The end of summer brings some of my most beloved food from our fields. Sugary sweet corn, juicy tomatoes, vibrant red and orange peppers, dusky eggplants and perhaps my favorite of all, tart little tomatillos.

A native Mexican fruit, tomatillos are very similar to the husk cherries from which modern tomato varieties are descended. Small, firm and light green (sometimes purplish) in color, they come packaged like little gifts in dry papery husks. Their unique tart, herbal flavor is the essential element of *salsa verde*. Tomatillos are indeterminate (meaning once they have started fruiting they produce continuously until frost), so we plant a small patch and then harvest them a few at a time as they ripen. I stockpile these gatherings in a paper bag in the fridge and then make big batches of salsa to can for the winter.

You can probably make other things with tomatillos, but I love salsa verde so much that I've never even tried. Apparently I am not the only one – our outreach last week to inquire who wants tomatillos in their boxes yielded a deluge of emails from members (but at least we've honed our rotation list to only those who want them – hopefully saving countless tomatillos from an untimely death by composting).

Now if you're going to make some salsa verde, you may ask well make a batch of tamales to go with it. A labor of love, tamales are one of those special seasonal meals we make just once a year. They are time consuming but so spectacularly

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This Week's Harvest

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



purple snap beans – a specialty variety of snap beans with a dark purple outer skin and green interior. The taste is basically the same as regular green snap beans. For full aesthetic effect, use them raw – the purple color fades to green when cooked. Wash beans before storing in a plastic bag or container in the fridge.

tomatoes – heirloom varieties are rolling in while red slicers, are still going strong. All the tomatoes we distribute are ripe – the varying colors are characteristic of the different heirloom varieties we grow (yep, even the green ones!) Some cracking is also typical of heirloom varieties and should not affect taste. Store tomatoes stem-side down on the counter – NEVER refrigerate tomatoes as it destroys their texture and taste!



also... beets (large shares) ~ bunching onions ~ carrots ~ cucumbers ~ green peppers ~ lettuce ~ summer squash ~ sweet corn



Fruit Shares: Clapp Pears from Fix Bros Farm in Hudson. An early pear variety that we usually miss for fruit shares because we are busy picking other summer tree fruit. Pears are always picked tree-ripe, meaning they are fully ripe but will continue to soften and sweeten as their starch reserves convert to sugar. Place in a single layer stem side-up in a dry area out of direct sunlight. Ripe pears are fragrant and yield to gentle pressure around the stem. *Conventionally grown.* Plus **one more cantaloupe** from our own field.

Coming Attractions

kale ~ red cabbage ~ watermelon



Recipe of the Week: Fresh Corn Tamales

Masa harina is traditional Mexican corn meal treated with lime - in the international section of some groceries or in bulk section at the Honest Weight Food Coop. Do not substitute regular cornmeal! You can add cooked shredded chicken or pork to the filling, but they are perfectly delicious on their own. A wonderful addition to a larger Mexican feast, or delicious as the main course with rice, black beans and fresh salsa (may I suggest salsa verde? - see last week's newsletter).

- 6 ears fresh sweet corn in the husks
- 3 cloves garlic, in the husks
- 1 tbs olive or canola oil
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 1 small hot pepper, diced
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 ½ cups masa harina
- 1 cup hot water
- 1 stick butter, softened
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1 cup grated Monterey jack cheese

Carefully remove and set aside the husks from the corn (you want to keep the husks in large whole pieces as much as possible). Cut the kernels from the ears - you should have about 3 cups. Set aside about half the kernels and puree remaining half in a blender or food processor.

Dry roast garlic cloves in their skins in a covered skillet over low heat for about 10 minutes, until browned. Let cool, then remove skins. Add garlic cloves to the blender and puree.

Heat oil in skillet and sauté onion, hot peppers and salt until soft. Add to the blender and puree with corn and garlic. Fold in remaining corn kernels. Set aside.

In another bowl, mix masa harina with hot water to make a thick, smooth dough. Set aside.

In a third and large bowl, beat butter until fluffy. Add in tamale dough and corn puree alternately, beating well. Add baking powder and beat well. Stir in cheese.

Spoon 1 - 2 tbs of filling into the center of a corn

husk. Fold the sides over the filling, then fold up each of the ends to overlap. Tie the packet closed (like a little gift) with a thin strip of husk. Repeat with remaining filling and husks.

Layer tamales in a steamer basket. Cover and steam for ~45 minutes. Serve in husks. To eat, simply untie and scoop out the delicious filling.



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good that we can't imagine a season without them. So one night every August - usually around this time when I'm starting to feel a little sorry for myself at the approaching end of summer - we treat ourselves. The fact that it only happens once a year makes it all the more special.

Members tell us that understanding the seasonality of food and learning to cook and eat in season is one of the surprise benefits of joining a CSA. With our global commercial food system, we can easily make strawberry shortcake in March, potato-leek soup in June, or tamales in December. But these out-of-season ingredients will be more expensive, use vastly more resources to store and transport, profit large industrial food producers rather than small farmers, and after all that usually don't taste very good.

CSA members are tuned in to what is growing locally. We know that in upstate New York, there are no strawberries in March, no asparagus in August and no tomatillos and sweet corn in June. Instead of buying starchy corn and cardboard tomatoes, we find twenty different ways to prepare bok choy, delight in the candy sweetness of a fresh sugar snap pea, and celebrate seasonal treasures like microgreens and garlic scapes. So with the last hurrah of summer upon us, gather your family and friends, roast those tomatillos, wrap some tamales and savor the final stretch of summer. ~ *Rachel*