

5th Delivery-July 15, 2003

Dear CSA Member,

This has been a beautiful summer week. The sun has been shining, the humidity has been low and it seems there was always a breeze. We worked for two days putting in transplants for the fall because we knew that rain was in the forecast. Although we give the small transplants water and an organic liquid fertilizer when we plant them, they need water within a couple of hours of transplanting to get them off to a good start. The rain came right when predicted and the transplants all look great. The weather was perfect.

week, not quite as huge as the recent red leaf. This variety is called Red Batavia. There is also a large green leaf lettuce and also raddichio. The sudden hot weather caused the raddichio to start to bolt-to send out its' seed head, and so we needed to pick it again this week. Raddichio two weeks in a row seemed like it might be a lot for some members so I experimented with cooking the raddichio. I knew that raddichio was in the same family as chicory and escarole so I made soup from the raddichio. I never have much of a recipe-so I put summer squash, onions, a thinly sliced raddichio, some left over potatoes, a can of butter beans in chicken stock. A dash of salt and pepper and I gave the soup the lunch time test. All the help had bowl for lunch and there wasn't a drop left in the pan when they were done. That is a very good sign. So, if you've had enough raddichio raw, you might like to give it a try cooked as well. Enjoy the vegetables-Deb

Red Batavia Lettuce

Green Leaf

Chiogga Beets with greens-these are a beautiful, sweet beet that is striped white and red in the center. The greens are very tender and delicious as well

Ruby Red Swiss Chard

Parsley

Summer Squash

Raddichio

New White Potatoes The potatoes looked so great this year that we decided to dig a couple of rows to see how they really were. I also could not stand to eat another soft, storage potato from the store. They are delicious.

First Fruit Share-Raspberries, Red Currants, Sweet Cherries

THIS WEEK: Did you know that 90% of our drinking water comes from upstate NY? The city's famous water filters through family-owned farms and forests in the Catskill region before reaching your sink. By growing, raising, and harvesting food and forestry products sustainably, producers in the Catskills are helping to protect the our water. Stop by City Bakery from 7/11 to 7/28 to see an exciting photo exhibit featuring Catskill farms and forests, and purchase a glass of Maury Rubin's legendary Farmer's Lemonade made with a touch of cream - a nod to the region's dairy farmers - and NYC tap water, of course. (A percentage of proceeds will benefit future Earth Pledge and Watershed Agricultural Council campaigns. City Bakery

COOKBOOK: Advance copies of RECIPES FROM AMERICA'S SMALL FARMS have already been received; we should have copies for all members by next week. SARA MOULTON will feature the book and CSA farmers on her show, SARA SECRET'S on THE FOOD NETWORK on July 21.

All About Herbs

Herbs have so many uses in the kitchen, that it's hard to list them all. Here are just a few:

- * Chop into salad dressings
- * Add to any sauce
- * Sprinkle into soups and stews
- * Mix with soft cheese and use as a dip
- * Chop and sprinkle over baked potatoes or blend into mashed potatoes
- * Sauté briefly in oil or butter; then saute vegetables, fish, meat, or poultry chunks in the flavored oil.
- * Mix into omelettes
- * Add to quick-bread batters
- * Mix your favorite herbs with sea salt and rub into meat or fish before broiling or roasting
- * Make herb butter: Chop and mix a few tablespoons of herbs into softened butter. Put the flavored butter in a mold or form into a log and cover or wrap with waxed paper. Serve with bread, corn, potatoes, or pasta, or over vegetables.
- * Make herb-flavored croutons: Butter a few slices of thinly-sliced bread with herb butter. Cut into cubes and place on a baking sheet. Bake at 300 degrees until golden. Serve in soups or salads.
- * Make herb cream: Heat 1 cup heavy cream with a little salt, pepper, and 1 tablespoon very, very finely chopped herb. Use over pasta or vegetables; add parmesan cheese if desired.

Using fresh herbs

- * Snip fresh herbs with sharp scissors inside a paper bag to keep the small pieces from flying away.
- * Heavy herbs, like rosemary and garlic, can withstand long cooking and can be added at the beginning of the cooking process. But more delicate herbs-basil, oregano, thyme, sage-deteriorate and can either lose flavor or become bitter when they're cooked for a long time. Add them only in the last five or ten minutes of cooking (even if the recipe states otherwise).
- * When using herbs in salad dressings, make the dressing an hour before using to allow the herbs to infuse the oil with flavor. Dress the salad just before serving, to keep the greens from becoming soggy.
- * You can substitute fresh herbs for dried in almost any recipe; just use three or four times as much fresh as you would dry, because drying concentrates the flavor.
- * The flavor of some herbs, particularly sage, thyme, and basil, intensifies when it is blanched or sautéed briefly.
- * Herbs are potent; don't over season by mixing too many of them or using too much. You can sometimes correct an over seasoned dish by straining out some of the herbs or adding more of less-flavorful ingredients (like potatoes, rice, or squash).

Preserving

STORING HERBS

Just about all herbs can be preserved; the taste of frozen or dried herbs is not quite as pure as that of fresh, but there's plenty of flavor left. Don't wait until the herbs have wilted and become brown; decide how much you can use in a few days after harvest, and save the rest.

Freezing: The easiest way to handle herbs is simply to put them in ziplock plastic bags (wash them well and remove tough ends; whether you chop them or not is up to you). Basil should be blanched for about a minute before it's frozen or it will turn black, the others don't need it (though their color

will be brighter if you do). When they're thawed, they'll be crumbly and should be treated like dry herbs. Or, freeze small portions in ice cube trays and then pop out what you need.

Another way to freeze herbs is to make herb butters (above) or pestos. If you're making pesto for the freezer, don't add the cheese until after it's thawed

Drying: Preserving herbs by drying them allows you to watch them (and enjoy their perfume) while they are transformed. Simply tie a bunch with a string (or a pretty ribbon) and hang them upside down in a dry spot (keep them away from drafts, cooking fumes, and extreme cold). When they're completely dry, crumble them and store in glass jar with a tight cover. You'll be surprised how much more flavorful they are than store bought dried herbs, which are sometimes two years old by the time you buy them.

If you need to protect your drying herbs from dusts or animals, place them in a plastic bag before tying them. They won't be as decorative, but dusty or nibbled herbs aren't very useful.

Microwaving: You can dry herbs in a microwave oven in a matter of seconds; just remember that if you leave them for a second too long, you'll find a pile of ash (or possibly a blazing bouquet).

Spread the herbs on a paper towel and cover with another paper towel (do about a cupful at a time).

Microwave on high for 30 seconds; check and repeat for 5 seconds at each try until the herbs are dry and crumbly. After the first round, don't let it go for more than 5 seconds at a time.

Vinegars: If you use herbs in salad dressings and marinades, you can trap their flavors for later use by placing them in vinegar. Use any clear vinegar (balsamic doesn't work well, but wine or fruit vinegars are great). Choose a pretty jar with a tight cover or cork and place the herbs-about 3-4 large sprigs for each cup of vinegar- in it. Cloves of garlic or small chil peppers add taste and ornament. Heat the vinegar to just below boiling, then pour it into the jar. Cover or cork tightly, allow to cool, and store in a dark, cool place. You may be tempted to display it where the sun hits it, but if you do so, the flavor will fade. If kept under the right conditions, your herb vinegars will be potent for about a year.

Oils: Yes, it can be done. But the possibility of a preserved oil becoming contaminated with bacteria is too strong for us to recommend this method. If you decide to make flavored oils, read all the safety precautions before proceeding.

ROASTED BABY BEETS AND SAUTEED BEET GREENS

1 bunch baby beets with tops cut off and reserved

2 tablespoons olive oil

2-3 thyme &/or rosemary sprigs

Balsamic vinegar

Salt and pepper to taste

Place the beets in a roasting pan, toss with 1 tbspn olive oil and add herbs. Roast at 375 for about 30 minutes. Remove skin while warm, and cut in half. Meanwhile saute the beet greens in remaining olive oil and add a splash of balsamic vinegar. Season with salt and pepper and place on plate, top with baby beets.

VARIATIONS: 1. When beets and greens are cooked, place them in a bowl. Add 1/4 cup sour cream or yogurt, 1 tablespoon (more or less, to taste) horseradish sauce), and 1 sliced orange.

2. Slice a zucchini into rounds or spears; place on roasting pan and roast along with the beets.

Roasted Beet Pasta

3 beets per person

Red onions (1/4 onion per person)

Beet or swiss chard greens (1/3 bunch per person)

Olive oil

Pasta (any pasta with a pretty, unusual shape will do)

Asiago cheese- finely grated

Ground pepper and salt

Peel the beets and cut into matchsticks (rectangles about 1/3 inch by 2 inches). Dice the onions. Toss with enough olive oil to coat. Spread out in a baking pan and roast in a 350 degree oven until the ends of the beets begin to crisp up and blacken a little. (Maybe 1/2 hour...)

Meanwhile, wash the greens thoroughly, and cut into ribbons. An easy way to do this is to lay the greens one on top of the other, roll, and then slice the roll into 1/2 inch ribbons. Heat olive oil until shimmering in a wide saute pan. Cook the greens until wilted, stirring frequently.

Cook the pasta until al dente. In a large bowl, toss the pasta with the beets until the pasta has turned a pretty pink and the beets and onions are well distributed. Add the greens, toss again. Finally, toss with as much cheese as you like, along with freshly ground pepper and salt!

Picante Zucchini

1 1/2 pounds tomatoes, coarsely chopped (4 cups)

6-ounce can tomato paste

3 garlic cloves, finely chopped

1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro or chives

1 chile pepper, chopped or ground hot red pepper to taste

1 teaspoon finely chopped fresh rosemary

Salt

3 medium zucchini, sliced 1/4-inch thick

2 cups cooked rice

8 ounces Cheddar cheese, grated (2 cups)

Combine tomatoes, tomato paste, garlic, cilantro, chile pepper and rosemary in a medium saucepan. Cook over low heat until tomatoes are very tender, about 30 minutes. Add a little water, if necessary, to make 2 cups. Taste and add salt.

Meanwhile sauté zucchini in olive oil until tender and lightly browned, about 3 minutes on each side. Remove to paper towels to drain.

Preheat oven to 350°F. Oil a 2-quart casserole or baking dish. Spread the rice evenly into the bottom of the dish; cover with the zucchini slices. Pour the sauce over top and sprinkle with cheese. Bake until bubbly and browned, about 45 minutes.

Variation: spread 3 cups cooked rice into the bottom of casserole or baking dish before adding the zucchini, sauce and cheese.

Zucchini with currants and almonds

1/4 cup currants

1 to 2 tablespoons olive oil or margarine

1 tablespoon chopped shallots

3/4 pounds green or yellow zucchini, cut into matchsticks

1/4teaspoon dried oregano

1/4 cup toasted almonds, coarsely chopped
salt and pepper

1/8 cup chopped parsley

Place the currants in a small bowl, cover with hot water, and let soak for 30 minutes.

Heat the oil in a large skillet. Add the shallots and saute until soft, about 3 minutes. Stir in the zucchini, cover, and cook until barely tender, about 3 minutes. The zucchini will give off some liquid. Cook, uncovered, until most of the liquid has evaporated, 1 or 2 minutes.

Drain the currants and add to the zucchini, along with the oregano and almonds. Cook, stirring, 2 minutes longer. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Sprinkle with parsley.

CHARD STEM GRATIN

SAVE THOSE STEMS! Even if the recipe tells you to discard stems, other than the toughest tips, there's no reason to waste them. Just cook them for a minute or two longer than the leaves. Or, save them for this recipe:

3 cups chard stems (from 2 large bunches), cut into 2-inch pieces

4 tablespoons olive oil

3 shallots, sliced

2 cloves garlic, finely chopped

Salt and freshly milled black pepper

1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg

1/3 cup heavy cream

1/3 cup bread crumbs

1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Preheat oven to 375F. Butter small casserole. Saute chard stems, shallots and garlic in the oil over medium-high heat about 2 minutes. Add salt/pepper to taste and nutmeg; cook until stems are tender, about 4 minutes. Transfer vegetables to buttered casserole. Drizzle with cream. Combine crumbs and cheese; sprinkle over top. Bake until crumb mixture begins brown, about 15 minutes. Serve immediately.