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WEEK

DEAR CSA MEMBER,

Welcome to the 2006 season of Community Supported Agriculture. This marks our 10th year delivering vegetables to CSA members. Our weather has been really cold and very rainy this springtime. We are dressed for fall as we work in the fields and have been coaxing the vegetables along. They are tender and delicious, especially the Bennette Buttercrunch lettuce. The lettuce grows very well in these conditions and you'll have beautiful salads. There is also rhubarb in your share this week. Rhubarb is a perennial plant that is beautiful and very tart. It is used stewed with sugar in as a sauce and also makes a delicious cake. I've included the rhubarb recipe that I like to bake, if you don't already have a copy. Enjoy the spring vegetables

— Pete and Deb

Rhubarb 1 bunch
Red Sails Leaf Lettuce 1 head

Chinese Cabbage 1 bunch. Good steamed or raw

Mizuna 1 bunch
Bennett Buttercrunch Lettuce 2 heads

Romaine 1 head
Chives 1 bunch
Lemon Balm 1 bunch

Lots of spring greens = lots of salads—and dressings.

“Magic” Dressing // // // //

The California Milk Advisory Board came to see me with a batch of yummy recipes. The best of the bunch: Magic Dressing. It's magic because you make this basic dressing which serves as a base. It keeps for a week in the refrigerator, covered. Add different flavorings (below) and enjoy a whole new taste sensation.

Basic Recipe // // // // // Makes 3 cups

- 2 c. low fat cottage cheese
- 1 c. plain nonfat yogurt
- 2 tsp. lemon juice

Process all ingredients in blender or food processor until smooth, 1-2 minutes. Store refrigerated in a tightly closed container.

(Variations)

Magic Mint // // // // //

- 1 c. magic dressing
- 2 T honey
- 1 T.. chopped mint

Magic Asian // // // // //

- 1/2 c. magic dressing
- 1/4 c. light miso
- 1/4 c. honey
- 1 tsp. soy sauce
- 1 tsp. sesame oil
- 1/2 tsp. chopped fresh ginger

Place all ingredients into a blender or processor and process until smooth.

Magic Mexican // // // // //

- 1 c. magic dressing
- 1-2 tsp canned chipotle chiles in sauce
- 2 T. honey
- 1 tsp. chopped garlic

1/2 tsp. salt

Place all ingredients into a blender or processor and process until smooth

Magic Curry // // // // //

- 1 c. magic dressing
- 2 T. coarsely chopped green onions
- 1 T. curry powder
- 1 T. Major Grey's chutney
- 1 tsp. lime juice

Place all ingredients into a blender or processor and process until smooth

Magic Mediterranean // // // // //

- 1 c. magic dressing
- 2 T. coarsely chopped green onions
- 1 tsp. coarsely chopped garlic
- 2 oz. Feta cheese

Place all ingredients into a blender or processor and process until smooth

Sesame-ginger dressing // // // // //

Great on spinach salad, slaw, cooked broccoli, asparagus and green beans. Also good on grilled or steamed fish or chicken.

Makes 1/3 cup

Whisk together 2 T. rice wine vinegar, 1 T. fresh orange juice, 1 T. fresh lime juice, 1 T. sesame oil, 1 T. vegetable oil, 1 tsp. cream sherry, 1 tsp. soy sauce, 1 tsp grated ginger root and 1 small pressed garlic clove.

Lemon balm // // // // //

Long for a lemon tree on your terrace? Lemon balm is a tasty stand in; lemony with just a touch of mint. Deb stays that it adds a lemony zing to iced tea. We like these two recipes, as well:

Lemon balm vinaigrette // // // // // Makes 2/3 cup

- 1 T. shallots, minced
- 2 T. lemon balm, minced
- 1/2 tsp. lemon zest
- 6 T. fresh lemon juice
- 4 T. white wine vinegar
- 1 tsp. Dijon mustard
- 1 tsp. brown sugar
- 8 T. vegetable oil

Mix the first seven ingredients together, the slowly blend in oil. Mix well before serving. It's great on salads or fish.

Lemon balm fruit dip // // // // // Makes 12 oz.

- 2 oz. unsalted butter
- 8 oz. cream cheese (low fat, if desired)
- 1 tsp. orange zest
- 1 T. orange juice or orange liqueur
- 3 T. lemon balm, chopped
- Fresh fruit

Allow butter and cream cheese to soften, then blend together in a medium bowl. Mix in other ingredients. Let dip chill overnight to allow flavors to blend. Serve at room temperature with strawberries, orange slices, grapes and pineapple.

Mizuna // // // // //

Is an Asian mustard green and can be used in most recipes calling for cooking greens. Toss coarsely chopped mizuna into soups (chicken, miso, vegetable, etc.) It's also good lightly steamed then tucked into quesadillas. Toss into a green salad or toss into stir fries or fried rice. It can be steamed and then served under broiled fish, too.

Mizuna Quick Fry // // // // //

Heat 3 T. olive oil on high, then toss 3 cups thinly sliced summer squash and cook for 3-4 minutes, stirring a bit. Add 3-4 chopped garlic cloves and one bunch of chopped mizuna. Season with salt and pepper. Grate Parmesan over to finish off the dish.

Hot and Sour Cabbage Salad

- 1 lb Chinese or green cabbage, thinly shredded
- 1/4 c rice vinegar
- 4 baby leeks or green onions, thinly sliced
- 1 T. minced peel fresh ginger root
- 1 tsp. sugar
- 1/2 to 3/4 tsp. dried red hot pepper flakes

Put cabbage and leeks in large bowl. Bring vinegar, ginger, and pepper flask to a boil in small saucepan over moderate heat, stirring until sugar is dissolved. Pour hot dressing over cabbage, tossing to combine.

RHUBARB CAKE // // // // //

- 1/4 c. butter
- 1 1/2 c. brown sugar
- 1 egg

- 2 c. flour
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 c. yogurt
- 1 1/2 c. rhubarb, cut into 1/2" pieces
- For topping:
- 1/2 c. sugar
- 1 T. cinnamon
- 1/2 c. walnuts
- 2 T. melted butter

Mix the butter, brown sugar and egg. Add sifted flour, baking soda, salt alternately with yogurt and rhubarb. Spread in a 9 x 12" baking pan. Sprinkle topping mixture on top. Bake for 35-40 minutes at 350 degrees.

Mushroom, cabbage and noodle salad

- // // // // // Serves 8
- 12 large dried shiitake mushrooms
- 1 T. peanut oil
- 3 c. thinly sliced Chinese cabbage
- 1 T. minced peeled fresh ginger
- 1 T. minced garlic
- 14 green onions, 12 halved lengthwise and cut on diagonal into 2-inch lengths, 2 chopped
- 3 T soy sauce
- 1 1-lb package fresh thin Chinese egg noodles (or one 12-ounce package dried noodles)
- 1/3 c sesame oil
- 2 T. fresh lemon juice
- 1 T. rice vinegar
- 2 tsp. sugar
- 3 hard-cooked eggs, 2 thinly sliced, 1 chopped for garnish
- 1 c chopped fresh cilantro

Place mushrooms in medium bowl; add enough boiling water to cover. Let stand and soften, 45 minutes. Drain; cut off stems and discard, thinly slice caps.

Heat oil in wok or nonstick skillet over medium high heat. Add cabbage, ginger, garlic and mushrooms. Stir fry until cabbage wilts, about 2 minutes. Add 2-inch green onion pieces, toss about 30 seconds. Remove from heat, stir in 1 T soy sauce.

Cook noodles in large pot of boiling salted water until tender but still firm to bite. Drain well; place in large bowl. Whisk together sesame oil, lemon juice, vinegar and sugar and 2 T. soy sauce in small bowl. Add to noodles. Add eggs, 3/4 c. cilantro and cabbage mixture; toss to blend well. Season with salt and pepper. Sprinkle top with chopped green onions, chopped egg and remaining 1/4 c. cilantro and serve.

CSA:

ASK US ANYTHING

Q: Why were the Brussels sprouts so small last fall?

A: Deb replies: "Many of the varieties of seeds that we grow are developed for conventional use. Small, organic farmers have different resources than large conventional farms that can use high doses of chemical fertilizers. I feel that many of the varieties of seeds that are now available have been bred to produce best under conventional systems. The fertilizer we use as organic farmers, the amount of water we allocate to each crop, is different than a conventional system. It seems that especially the varieties of brassica crops like broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and Brussels sprouts are very difficult to produce good-sized heads coupled with good yields, utilizing organic growing methods. I'm not saying they aren't delicious, just not as large as many people are used to seeing in the traditional setting. I keep comparing our Brussels Sprouts to the recent baseball turmoil with the artificially pumped up players compared to those that are really talented, but just not quite as large in size. So, as the organic movement grows and more farmers are demanding seeds that are bred to produce under organic methods."