

AJO COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE



Summer 2010 / Week 2 of 13

Editor: Nina Altshul

Planned harvest: Summer Squash, Tomatoes, Sweet Corn, Dried Onions, Red LaSoda Potatoes, Apricots, Grapefruit, Yukon Gold Potatoes

Editor's note: In case you missed it, beginning with our last issue, Stephanie Doerries is now writing our newsletters. Stephanie brings her trademark enthusiasm and sharp eye to the task. We hope you enjoy her excellent contributions!

Organic Pest Control

The European corn borer (*Ostrinia nubilalis*) is a serious pest of sweet corn varieties such as the delicious Trucker's Delight we get from Frammer Frank. The corn borer is a moth that lays its eggs in clusters on the underside of leaves. When the larvae hatch, they first munch on the top of the corn plant and then move down to feed on the stalk and ears. While commercial agriculture relies on pesticides to combat this insect, organic growers have found other alternatives. Farmer Frank uses Trichogramma wasps, a type of parasitoid wasp less than one millimeter in size, to minimize crop damage due to corn borers. When introducing them into his fields several years ago, he was told they were 95% effective, which he soon discovered meant that basically each ear is affected, but only the top 5% of the cob is damaged. Female Trichogramma wasps lay their own eggs inside corn borer eggs they find by smell. The Trichogramma eggs hatch into larvae that eat the corn borer egg, and in about 10 days adult wasps emerge. Because the life cycle of the Trichogramma wasp depends on that of the corn borer, there is some lag time before the wasps are able to "catch up" with the borers. The first few weeks we get corn, you might need to chop off the top 1-2 inches of your cobs before enjoying them.

Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*)

Sorrel is a plant of dichotomies. It is considered both a green and an herb, and grows wild and cultivated. In taste, it ranges from tart and tangy as young leaves to more acidic as older leaves. Also known as spinach dock, sorrel is native to Europe. Early Egyptians and Romans ate sorrel after overeating to soothe digestion and take advantage of its diuretic properties. Like other greens, it is high in vitamin C. If you're still wondering what to do with your sorrel, try adding small leaves to a salad for a pleasant tang. When using in cooking, add finely chopped leaves near the end of cooking time; it cooks quickly, turning grey-green when done. The flavor is fascinating, almost lemony, when incorporated in scrambled eggs or omelets. Use it to add a refreshing taste to soups and stews. You can also mix sorrel in a sauté of garlic, green onion, and sliced summer squash for a true CSA summer dish!

Apricots (*Prunus armeniaca*)

Most of us are familiar with the delicious yellow-orange to rose-colored fuzzy globes that are apricots. While most closely related to plums, apricots are also near relatives of peaches, cherries, and almonds. This fruit was first domesticated around 3000 BC in China or India and was extensively cultivated. By ancient times apricots were so well established in Armenia that they were assumed to be native to the area, a mistake made memorial in the species' scientific name. While the fruit made an appearance in 1720s Virginia, the arrival of grafts in California's Spanish missions in 1792 marked the true beginning of apricot cultivation in the United States. Apricots are delicious fresh (as you must already know!), but are also wonderful dried, incorporated into pastry, and preserved as jam. The pits of apricots grown in central Asia and around the Mediterranean tend to be so sweet that their extract is used as almond oil. Nutritionally, apricots are rich in Vitamin A, an antioxidant that supports good vision, Vitamin C, and potassium. They also contain phytochemicals such as carotenoids, the compounds that give red, orange, and yellow coloration to fruits and vegetables. One carotenoid found in apricots, beta-carotene, prevents heart disease by protecting LDL (so-called "bad") cholesterol from oxidizing into cancer-causing agents. Because dried apricots have a high fiber-to-volume ratio, they are sometimes used to relieve constipation, with effects being felt after eating as few as three!

As with all fruit, fully-ripened apricots offer the highest nutrient content...but why...and how? In Austria, researchers at the University of Innsbruck suggest a mechanism explaining how antioxidant levels increase as fruits fully ripen. Interestingly enough, this process is related to the color change we see in ripening fruits – and autumn leaves. Chlorophyll gives both leaves and fruits a green color. Scientists recently discovered that when this compound breaks down, the first decomposition products are nonfluorescing chlorophyll catabolites (NCCs). The colorless NCCs replace chlorophyll in both leaves and fruit, especially in the peel and flesh immediately beneath it. While chlorophyll can have a phototoxic effect, NCCs are powerful antioxidants. In quick review, the riper the fruit, the more NCCs so the more antioxidants it has to help you build a stronger you!

- Stephanie Doerries

RECIPES ETC.

Beet Cake

(adapted from RecipeZaar.com by Stephanie Doerries)

4 eggs
2 cups sugar
1 cup applesauce
2 cups white whole wheat flour
2 tsp baking powder
1.5 tsp baking soda
1 Tbsp cinnamon
1 Tbsp vanilla
3 cups shredded fresh beets
1 cup chopped walnuts

Heat oven to 350°F. Grease and flour 13 x 9-inch baking pan. Beat eggs, sugar, and applesauce until light and fluffy. Sift together flour, baking powder, baking soda, and cinnamon. Add to egg mixture and mix well. Add vanilla, beets, and walnuts. Beat for ~1 minute. Pour into pan and bake for 45 minutes, or until a pick comes out clean. Enjoy plain or with your favorite homemade frosting recipe (I recommend almond-flavored)!

Carrot Apricot Muffins

(from *Farmer John's Cookbook*)

butter for greasing the muffin pan
2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 cup sugar
1/4 cup brown sugar
2 tsp baking powder
1/2 tsp salt
2 large eggs
1/2 cup butter, softened
1/3 cup buttermilk
2 tsp orange juice concentrate
1/2 cup chopped dried apricots
1 1/2 cups grated carrots
1/2 cup walnuts or almonds

Preheat oven to 400°F. Generously coat a 12-cup muffin pan with butter or line it with muffin cups and set aside. Mix flour, sugar, brown sugar, baking powder, and salt in a large bowl. In a separate large bowl, beat the eggs. Beat in the butter, buttermilk, and orange juice concentrate. Slowly add the flour mixture, stirring lightly and briefly, until just combined. (Avoid overmixing the batter, as this makes muffins dense and tough.) Add the apricots to the flour mixture. Stir in the carrots and nuts until the ingredients are just combined. Ladle the batter into the prepared muffin pan, filling each cup no more than three-quarters full. Bake the muffins until a toothpick inserted near their centers comes out clean, 20 to 25 minutes. Cool for 10 minutes on a wire rack before serving. Makes 12 muffins.

Vegetable Stock

(inspired by Nina Altshul)

Making your own vegetable stock is a fun (and tasty) way to take advantage of all of the leftover vegetable cuttings and peelings (including seeds and stems!) you end up with after preparing the evening's meal. While you may not even have all of the basics, try it anyway or substitute with what you do have! Odds are

you'll end up with a delicious stock to which anything store-bought pales in comparison. And if sodium is a dietary concern for you, homemade stock is a great way to reduce salt intake.

The Basics

3 corn cobs, halved,
a few carrots, with tops
a few celery stalks
1 medium dry onion, halved (skins and all)
a few cloves garlic
parsley sprigs
bay leaf
peppercorns
nutmeg (a pinch)
salt (to taste)

Optional

1 leek, parsnips with tops, turnips, summer squash, winter squash, potatoes, sweet potatoes, mushrooms, apples, tomatoes, green beans, lettuce

Start with a large pot, preferably something heavy-bottomed like a Dutch oven. Fill at least half full with water and bring to a slow simmer after adding all of the vegetables. If the stock seems to be boiling down quickly, slow down evaporation by partially covering the pot. Simmer for at least an hour and a half. When rich in flavor, strain and discard all the veggies. Enjoy immediately or refrigerate for up to 5 days. This stock also freezes well, making for quick and easy preparation.

Zucchini Chocolate Chip Cookies

(from Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal Vegetable Miracle*)

1 egg, beaten
1/2 cup butter, softened
1/2 cup brown sugar
1/3 cup honey
1 tbsp. vanilla extract
Combine in large bowl.

1 cup white flour
1 cup whole wheat flour
1/2 tsp baking soda
1/4 tsp salt
1/4 tsp cinnamon
1/4 tsp nutmeg
Combine in a separate, small bowl and blend into liquid mixture.

1 cup finely shredded zucchini
12 oz chocolate chips
Stir these into other ingredients and mix well. Drop by spoonful onto greased baking sheet, and flatten with the back of a spoon. Bake at 350°, 10 to 15 minutes. Makes about two dozen.

