

AJO COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE



Fall 2009 / Week 8 of 13

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Planned harvest: Cucumbers, P'ittoi Green Onions, Okra, Tomatoes, Spring Mix, Cherry Radishes, Butternut Squash, Swiss Chard.

Squash Season: *Cucurbita maxima*, or the winter squash family, presents a wide range of colors, shapes, sizes, and textures. This year, Frank has grown butternut, acorn and spaghetti squash, as well as the popular Jack-O'-Lantern (the one we received last week is called Magic Lantern) and an heirloom Cushaw squash. However, sources say that unlike summer squash, winter squash originated in South America and was not grown in North or Central America before European colonization. It became a staple product in North America by the early to mid-1800s, particularly in New England as necessary winter storage food, but the native peoples of Arizona have also grown their share. Its excellent storability and nutrition value make it an important part of the modern diet as well, especially if you are trying to eat locally and seasonally. It has a high percentage of vitamin A as well as potassium, fiber and complex carbohydrates. Its flesh is extremely versatile and lends itself to many preparations, from savory to sweet.

Preparation tips: Most of the winter squash have a hard peel which can be eaten but is usually not the best. In order to deal with it, you can slice your butternut in quarters (pumpkins in smaller pieces, acorn in halves), remove the seeds, and roast covered in an oven at 375 F for about 45 minutes to an hour, or until soft. Another method is by steaming chunks in your steamer on the stove-top until soft, about 20-30 minutes, depending on how big the chunks are. In both methods, you can then serve the slices as they are, or remove the peel before serving, or scoop out the meat and use for purees. Purees can be used for pumpkin pies or added to sweet breads, muffins, cookies, pancake batter or made into a pumpkin flan. You can also use it in soups and stews, or make a topping for your Shepherd's pie or a filling for your tacos or enchiladas. Or try adding the cooked chunks to a risotto, or filling up phyllo dough for a sweet or savory treat. Of course you can also use your well-sharpened knife and working your way around the bulb of the squash remove the peel before cooking, but be forewarned!

Crooked Sky Farms Pumpkin Patch Open: Come and get your perfect Halloween pumpkin at the field at 40th St and Southern (SW Corner behind Walgreens) on Mondays to Fridays between 2 pm and 8 pm, on Saturdays between 10 am and 8 pm, and on Sundays between 12 am and 8 pm!

Wheat Berries: Last week we received the first wheat berries of the season, and they might be a bit puzzling at first. Before using, the grains have to be cleaned: Crooked Sky Farms' wheat berries are mostly clean, but they do include some chaff and also tiny black wild mustard seeds from the field. The seeds are harmless and can safely be left in. The chaff can be removed by winnowing the grains before use. Just as with dry beans, I recommend taking a large baking tray and sorting through them to remove any other impurities. Once they have been cleaned, you can simply grind the berries for a delicious nutty flour. A coffee grinder will do the job just fine, and better quality blenders work great, too. Once ground, keep the flour in the refrigerator, since it can spoil easily due to all the nutrients (this should tell you something about store-bought flour). However, if you are planning to soak and cook the berries, you can clean them by just putting them in a large bowl and pouring water over them; the impurities will just rise to the surface. Drain by letting the impurities out first, and repeat a few more times until your berries are clean. The berries cook best if first soaked (like dry beans) and then cooked. To boost their nutrients, you can also leave them soaking longer, for approx. 24 hours till they start sprouting. When soaked you can cook them as breakfast cereal (lightly ground, and with milk or soymilk, like porridge), as a substitute for rice, in pilafs, soups and stews, casseroles, warm salads, or for stuffing, e.g. bell peppers, etc. A simple yet delicious way to use your berries is to grind them with some milk in a blender to a coarse grind, and then make your favorite pancake batter by adding eggs and baking powder and whatever else you like. Adding wheat berries to your diet will increase your intake of whole grains and broaden your culinary horizons!

RECIPES ETC.

Green Tomato Soup With Bacon and Croutons

(adapted from *The New York Times*)

2 Tbsp unsalted butter
½ medium onion, thinly sliced
½ teaspoon whole coriander seeds
1 garlic clove, finely chopped
1 ½ pound green tomatoes, cored and roughly chopped (about 4 cups)
1 cup chicken or vegetable stock
¾ teaspoon kosher salt, more to taste
Freshly ground black pepper
2 ounces sliced bacon
1 slice bread, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
¼ cup crème fraîche (optional)
1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill or basil
1 tsp honey, or to taste.

Melt butter in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add onion and cook, stirring occasionally, until translucent, about 5 minutes. Meanwhile, lightly crush the coriander, either with a mortar and pestle or side of a knife. Add it to pot along with garlic and sauté for 3 minutes longer. Stir in tomatoes, stock, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil; immediately reduce heat to medium-low and simmer soup until tomatoes have fallen apart, about 30 minutes. Meanwhile, fry bacon in a skillet until crisp. Use a slotted spoon to transfer bacon to a paper-towel-lined plate. Return skillet to medium heat. Add bread to bacon fat in pan and toss to coat well. Toast, tossing occasionally, until croutons are golden, about 5 minutes. Set aside. Using an immersion blender (or puréeing in batches in a regular blender), purée soup until smooth. Return soup to medium heat and stir in crème fraîche if desired, dill and honey. Cook until heated through, 1 to 2 minutes. Taste and add more salt or honey or both if desired. Ladle soup into individual serving bowls; crumble bacon over top and garnish with croutons.

Nina's Anti-Flu Stir-Fried Veggies in Spicy Peanut Sauce

1 zucchini, sliced, or 1 cup winter squash, peeled and grated
1 CSA bunch of P'ittoi onions (about 6 scallions), cleaned and sliced
1 CSA basket of okra (about ½ pound), washed and cut into bite-size
½ medium cabbage, cubed
2 carrots, sliced
3 large Shitake mushrooms, sliced
2 inch ginger root, peeled and sliced

2 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped
3 Tbsp sesame oil
Garnish: scallions, cilantro, peanuts, raisins, sliced bananas, pears, apples... etc., optional

Have all the ingredients ready before you start cooking. Heat up 2 Tbsp sesame oil in a heavy large pan or wok, and start frying the cabbage, carrots and okra first at high heat, then add

the mushrooms and zucchini. Stir frequently, and add more sesame oil if needed. When all the liquid disappears, add the ginger, scallions and garlic, stir a few more times, and then add the sauce.

For the sauce, combine:

1/3 cup high-quality unsalted unsweetened peanut butter, preferably chunky
1/3 cup your favorite soy sauce
sea salt (to taste)
1 Tbsp brown sugar
¼ cup apple cider vinegar
2 Tbsp lime or lemon juice
1 tsp lime or lemon zest, grated (optional)
1 tsp cayenne pepper (or less or more, to taste)

Whisk well, then add about 1/3 cup water or more to obtain a nice liquid consistency. Add the sauce to the pan, heat through until the vinegar smell evaporates, and turn the heat off.

Cook your favorite noodles (rice, buckwheat (Soba) or linguine) according to the directions on the package, add to the sauce and stir gently. Garnish with any or all of the options listed above. For extra protein, you can add baked tofu, grilled chicken, steak etc.

Pumpkin Muffins

(adapted from *VegNews*)

A healthy and hearty nutritious version of a fall favorite...

2 cups of fresh pumpkin puree (use any winter squash)
½ cup maple syrup
½ cup olive oil
2 tsp vanilla
½ cup firm tofu, mashed
1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
1 ½ cups whole-wheat flour (or use the flour from your wheat berries)
1 Tbsp + 2 tsp baking powder
1 tsp cinnamon
½ tsp sea salt
½ tsp ground cloves
1 cup dried cranberries (or substitute dried cherries, or raisins)

Preheat oven to 350° F. Lightly grease a 12-cup muffin tin, or line with paper liners. In a large bowl, mix pumpkin puree, maple syrup, olive oil, vanilla, and tofu. In a separate bowl, sift all-purpose flour, whole-wheat flour, baking powder, cinnamon, sea salt, and cloves. Add dry ingredients to the pumpkin mixture and stir until just combined. Fold in dried cranberries, and spoon mixture into prepared muffin tin. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or until toothpick inserted comes out clean.