

Ajo CSA Week 8

Planned Harvest: Green Chiles, P'ittoi Onions, Purple Bok Choi, Mizuna (Ruby Spikes), Jack O'Lantern Pumpkin or Spaghetti Squash, Spring Salad Mix, Tomatoes, Wheat Berries.

News from the farm: On October 12, the Crooked Sky Farm hosted an Outstanding in the Field event (check out their website www.outstandinginthefield.com for more info!). The mission of this organization is to re-connect diners to the land and the origins of their food, and to honor the local farmers and food artisans who cultivate it. Ingredients for the meal are almost all local (sometimes sourced within inches of one's seat at the table) and generally prepared by a celebrated chef of the region. After a tour of the site, farmers, food producers, culinary artisans, winemakers and diners sit down, sharing one long table with a view of the farm. The menu at Crooked Sky Farms included vegetables harvested right before the exquisite five-course dinner, including eggplants, tomatoes and greens, and according to Tania the food was really delicious and everybody seemed really satisfied.

CSA Picnic: Twice a year the farm hosts a picnic for their CSA members, and plans are in the making for one to be held soon. It will take place on a Saturday, and will be announced soon enough for everybody to make plans. I will keep you informed. Also, some of Ajo CSA members offered to make green smoothies for everybody in a week or two on Friday at the pick-up. I will give you the exact day soon.

P'ittoi Onions

This week's planned harvest includes P'ittoi onions, which hold a special place in Sonoran Desert culinary culture. The P'ittoi plant grows easily and prolifically in the deserts of the American southwest, and left in the ground during its summer dormancy the onion re-sprouts toward the end of the season, at which point it is harvested and replanted. It is virtually unknown in mainstream gardening and has been "red-listed" by the slow food movement as one of America's endangered foods. It is also sometimes referred to as Papago onion. You will not find it in most nurseries, but if you do want to grow it you can order bulbs from Native Seeds Search in Tucson.

The original US harvest of the wild P'ittoi onion took place on P'ittoi Mountain, which is also known as Baboquivari Mountain. This mountain is regarded by the O'odham nation as the navel of the world—the place where the earth opened and people emerged. The name P'ittoi signifies the Elder Brother, who is the creator deity in Tohono O'odham legends; consequently the onion is a sacred reminder of the O'odham creation story. On the other hand, botanical studies place the P'ittoi onion among a very old line of clumping onions brought to the US by Jesuit missionaries in the late 17th century, concluding that the onion is not necessarily a US native.

Regardless of its ambiguous history, the P'ittoi onion has a bold and complex taste, and its sharp, peppery flavor is well suited to southwestern stews and sauces, which often have robust, piquant flavors. (Sources: Slow Food USA, US Ark of Taste)

Butternut squash soup

Mara found a great recipe for butternut squash soup, and would recommend it to us all, especially since she says it is really easy to make. She did not blend the soup, as the recipe recommends, but just used a hand mixer so that the veggies remained somewhat chunky.

Ingredients:

2 tablespoons butter
1 small onion, chopped
1 stalk celery, chopped
1 medium carrot, chopped
2 medium potatoes, cubed
1 medium butternut squash – peeled, seeded, and cubed
1 (32 fluid ounce) container chicken stock
salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Directions:

Melt the butter in a large pot, and cook the onion, celery, carrot, potatoes, and squash for 5 minutes or until lightly browned. Pour in enough of the chicken stock (or use veggie broth) to cover vegetables. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low, cover pot, and simmer 40 minutes, or until all vegetables are tender.

Transfer the soup to a blender, and blend until smooth. Return to pot, and mix in any remaining stock to attain desired consistency. Season with salt and pepper.

Baked millet pudding

I would like to share a colder-weather, more substantial dish based on a traditional Slovene recipe for millet kashi with prunes and cream. My mom makes a similar dish using rice and a bit of lemon peel, and recipes for a similar dish called *torta di riso* can be found all over northern Italy. If you prefer a lighter dessert or breakfast dish, this recipe can be adjusted to be non-dairy by using soy, rice or almond milk and non-hydrogenated margarine instead of butter. Also, white sugar can be substituted with brown sugar or agave syrup, and the eggs can be left out with just as tasty results.

Ingredients:

1 cup of millet
5 cups of liquid (milk, water or any combination thereof; I usually use 50/50)
½ cup of sugar
2 tablespoons of butter
1 apple (optional)
½ cup of raisins or other dried fruit (optional)
2 eggs
cinnamon to taste

Directions:

Cook the millet in all the liquid with a pinch of salt until well cooked and of thick consistency, for about 45 to 50 minutes. Set aside, and mix in sugar and butter while still warm. Let cool. In the meantime, soak dried fruit, if using, in a bit of water. Grate the apple, if using. When the millet is cold, separate egg yolks from whites, add yolks to the millet, along with the fruit and spices, and mix gently. In a separate clean bowl, mix egg whites until firm peaks form and gently fold into the millet mixture. Spread into lightly greased baking dish (for example, 9 x 9) and bake for about 35 minutes at 375, or until lightly brown on the top. Let cool for a few minutes, and serve warm as a substantial dessert (perhaps with some apple compote on the side) or breakfast. But some people swear it is even better served cold the next day.

Enjoy!
Nina