

AJO COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE



Editor: Nina Altshul

Spring 2010 / Week 7 of 13

Planned harvest: Grapefruit, Lettuce Mix, Artichokes, Cauliflower, Carrots, Dandelion Greens, Kale, Beets.

Member Appreciation Day at Crooked Sky Farms: On Sunday, April 18, Farmer Frank and his crew are inviting their CSA members, their families and friends to join them at their South Phoenix field at 1601 W Watkins in Glendale. The event is scheduled to run from 10 am to 1 pm and they will be providing food to eat, food demonstrations, drinks, open tours and talks throughout the morning and early afternoon. Please let me know if you will be able to attend so that I can let the farm know the approximate number as well as organize carpooling. This is your farm's thank you to you for supporting them, so I hope you will be able to attend!

The Flame Within: Working with the Amungme of Papua, Indonesia: On Monday, April 12, Carolyn D Cook, PhD Ecological Anthropology (and Ajo CSA member) presented her work with Amungme Tribe in Indonesia. The presentation began with a brief history and geography of the Amungme Tribe and their (and Carolyn's) connection with Freeport. It will describe the flame that grew within Carolyn as she came to know them – a flame that was a desire to help them to see what their choices were and how those choices would affect their lives. Carolyn talked about her experience living in a remote village doing research about their knowledge of their surroundings and the technology they use for coping with the rugged terrain. She was invited back to assist Freeport with their obligation to improve the lives of the people whose land they occupied. In the position of Senior Anthropologist (the first and only anthropologist), Carolyn developed a network of projects which included basic adult reading, writing and math, intensification of pandanus nut trees, fruit trees, and coffee in an agroforestry system, mushrooms, fish ponds and short term "crops" of vegetables and spices. The coffee portion of the project was described in a 20 minute documentary for Carolyn directed. The presentation finished with the issues that persist for the Amungme – and a positive note regarding the new connections between Freeport in Ajo and Freeport in Indonesia and Carolyn's new coffee project.

Citrus Gleaning Project: In cooperating with the Ajo Community Garden, I am starting a gleaning project where by inviting citrus owners around Ajo to let a group of volunteers to pick their trees in exchange for a third of the fruit (with a third of the fruit going to the owner (or less if he or she wants it) and the remaining harvest going to the food bank). Let me know if you would like to volunteer to help pick and please let your friends and (departing) neighbors know, too – we can also take care of their fruit after they leave.

Food Revolution: If you are not aware of this show by Jamie Oliver, you should definitely check it out! Jamie Oliver is a British chef and TV host, kind of a modern Julia Child to my generation. After tackling food in the British school system, he is trying to make things change for the better in the States. It is his belief that every child in America has the right to fresh, nutritious school meals, and that every family deserves real, honest, wholesome food, since people cannot be unaffected by what they eat. The show is on Friday evenings on ABC.

Earth Day 2010: It's spring again and time to celebrate Earth Day on April 22. Last year we gathered in the desert and shared our green tips for greener living; this year we are hosting a party in the Ajo Community Garden on Saturday, April 24. It will be a fun day for the whole family! There will be yoga, a tour of the garden with gardening tips, an herbal walk through the garden with Lynelle Wagner, the state of recycling in Ajo with Deb Morrow, an alternative energy workshop with Aaron Cooper, permaculture workshop with Christine Johnson and healthy foods demonstration with Christina Vega. And my favorite, kids' activities: a "Meet-Your-Veggies" hands-on session, a "Who am I?" quiz, a Veggie Scavenger Hunt and Veggie Chalk Art. Kids of all ages are welcome!

RECIPES ETC.

Chard (*Beta vulgaris* var. *cicla*), also known by the common names Swiss Chard or Silverbeet, is one of the cultivated descendants of the sea beet, native to the coasts of Europe, northern Africa, and southern Asia, also known as wild spinach. Although the leaves are eaten, it is in the same species as beetroot (garden beet) which is usually grown primarily for its edible roots. Chard has shiny green ribbed leaves, with stems that range from white to yellow and red depending on the cultivar. Similar to spinach and beets it has a flavor that is bitter, pungent and slightly salty. Fresh young chard can be used raw in salads. Mature chard leaves and stalks are typically cooked or sautéed; their bitterness fades with cooking, leaving a refined flavor which is more delicate than that of cooked spinach.

Chard is used in a variety of cultures around the world, and is very popular among Mediterranean cooks; no wonder, since the first cultivated varieties have been traced back to Sicily. Chard can be harvested while the leaves are young and tender or after maturity when they are larger and have slightly tougher stems. All parts of the chard plant contain oxalic acid but in amounts smaller than spinach and it is not harmful to healthy adults. Just to be on a very safe side, reheated chard should be avoided by children and the elderly. Also, traditionally cooks would add lemon juice or tomato as well as some type of cheese to chard dishes in order to make them more easily digestible and to counter the effect of oxalic acid on one's body.

Swiss chard is truly one of the vegetable valedictorians with its exceptionally impressive list of health promoting nutrients: it has very high concentrations of vitamin K, vitamin A, vitamin C, magnesium, manganese, potassium, iron, vitamin E, and dietary fiber. Swiss chard is also a very good or good source of copper, calcium, vitamin B2, vitamin B6, protein, phosphorus, vitamin B1, zinc, folate, biotin, niacin and pantothenic acid. Due to its fiber content, it is beneficial to the digestive tract. The vitamin K provided by Swiss chard – 306.3% of the daily value in one cup of cooked Swiss chard – is important for maintaining bone health.

Chard is best sautéed, stir-fried or boiled. It marries well with eggs, cheese and beans, as well as just about any herb or spice, including soy sauce, hoisin rice vinegar, olives, mustard and cilantro. My favorite quick way for preparing chard is still cutting it up into small strips and braising it until it wilts (3-5 min) with some olive oil, chopped onions (green or yellow) leeks and/or garlic, a touch of chile flakes and salt (do try before you salt since some chard can be on the salty side as it grows anyhow!). Or, leaving the beautiful colorful stems whole, boiling it in water with a clove of garlic; drain well, then mash the garlic clove with some salt, lemon

juice and olive oil, and serve. Try piling cooked chard on top of a toasted piece of bread, cover with some cheese and melt under the broiler – a perfect appetizer or snack!

Nina's Fennel Chips

The first thing you should know is that I love fennel and that I really love the fact Farmer Frank is growing it so successfully this year! I love adding it to soups and salads, but for an easy side dish (or snack/appetizer) try making these healthy chips: Preheat the oven to 375F. Remove the outer/damaged stems of your fennel bulb and the leafy tops. Cut across into as thin slices as you can, put in a bowl, fill with water and make sure all the dirt that might be between the layers is gone. Drain and transfer to a cookie tray large enough so that you can distribute the layers flat without them touching. Drizzle a tiny bit of olive oil over the fennel slices, sprinkle with some salt and cover with aluminum foil. Put into the preheated oven and roast for about 10-15 minutes. Remove, uncover and return to the oven for another 10-15 minutes or until the slices start slightly caramelizing. Adjust the salt and serve!

Chilled Lettuce Soup

(adapted from the New York Times)

Wondering what to do with an abundance of lettuce from the farm and the garden, I came across this recipe:

2 tablespoons butter
1 large onion, sliced
Salt and ground pepper
2 to 3 heads romaine lettuce, cut into thin ribbons
2 cups chicken stock
1/2 to 1 cup cream or half-and-half
Small croutons or crumbled bacon for garnish.

Put butter in a medium saucepan over medium heat; when it melts, add onion and sweat for about 2 minutes or until it begins to soften; sprinkle with salt and pepper. Add all but a couple of handfuls of the lettuce to the pan, reserving the rest for garnish, and cook until it wilts. Add stock, turn the heat to medium-high and bring liquid to a boil; lower heat to medium and cook until lettuce is very soft, about 5 minutes.

Put cooked lettuce in a blender and add 2 cups of ice water. Purée mixture until smooth, then put in a large bowl and refrigerate for at least an hour.

Once soup is chilled, add cream or half-and-half to taste and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Finely chop reserved lettuce and put about 1/4 cup in each bowl and ladle soup on top. Garnish with croutons or bacon.

Yield: 4 servings.