

AJO COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE



Fall 2009 / Week 4 of 13

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Planned harvest: Tomatoes, Okra, Bartlett Pears, Butternut Squash, Red LaSoda Potatoes, Green Chilis, Bell Peppers and Cucumbers.



Ajo CSA solar oven and mesquite demonstration: Last Sunday, Ajo CSA participated at a free community breakfast organized by the International Sonoran Desert Alliance as a part of the opening festivities for the International Day of Peace celebrations in Ajo. Using solar ovens, we were baking and serving mesquite sweet potato and whole wheat cookies and mesquite sweetbread, as well as a refreshing cucumber lemonade. We kicked off with two solar ovens, one commercial one kindly lent by Christine Johnson and one home-made which was made for ISDA by Sue Reiman. Both ovens warmed up quickly and we were baking away by 9 am. In the middle of the day, Aaron Cooper brought in 4 more home-made ovens that

were made by his students at San Simon High School on the reservation. These ovens looked very straightforward, made from scrap materials, using an aluminum baking tray with black-painted bottoms and oven bags, and Aaron was quite skeptical about how well they would work, so after placing the first batch of cookies into the ovens we didn't check on them for a while. How shocked we were when we found we had actually burned one batch, i.e. blackened all the way through! Sun power really works! 2 solar-powered modified golf carts were running kids around the plaza by then, demonstrating that as well! Later on, Christine brought in another home-made solar oven, made out of a pizza box, so we had a total of 7 ovens glittering in the sun! It was quite a spectacle. It was a typical very hot day in Ajo, and by noon we had baked and given away over 20 batches of cookies and 2 batches of sweet potato bread, accompanied with fliers with info on mesquite, Ajo CSA and recipes. The organizers estimated that about 450 breakfasts were served, and at least half of those people tried something from us, too. For most if not all, this was their first taste of mesquite, which used to be the main food source to the Native Americans in this region (for more info on mesquite see the Recipes page on ajocsa.com); however, both of the restaurants on the plaza expressed interest in incorporating mesquite and even solar power into their menus and operations, too, so watch out! The solar ovens attracted a lot of wonder – both kids and adults were peering in, amazed that it can be done!



I would like to express my thanks to all of the dedicated CSA members who helped make this day happen: Jane, Christine, Stephanie and Chris – ladies, you rock! Thanks also goes to Aaron for providing the extra ovens (and who kindly agreed to volunteer to organize a solar oven making workshop on Saturday, November 21, as part of the education week that Ajo CSA is organizing in cooperation with Ajo Community Garden – don't miss it!), Crooked Sky for providing the wheat and sweet potatoes, Betsy for grinding the wheat berries for us in Tucson, and Mark Moody from the Arizona Mesquite Company for donating the mesquite flour. Also thanks to ISDA for inviting us, and at last but not least, thanks to everyone who stopped by the booth.

RECIPES ETC.

Baked Okra and Ground Beef Casserole

(submitted by Mimi Phillips, ISDA Program Director and organizer of Intl. Day of Peace in Ajo)

1 clove garlic
9 Tbsp butter
3 Tbsp oil
1 cup chopped onion
2 lb ground beef or lamb
2 cups crushed tomatoes
salt and pepper to taste
¼ tsp cayenne pepper
1 tsp dill
2 eggs
1 cup grated Romano cheese
2 lb okra
½ cup flour
3 cups milk
4 egg yolks

Chop garlic. Heat 1 Tbsp butter and 1 Tbsp oil, sauté onions until soft and lightly browned. Add garlic and meat and cook through. Drain fat. Add tomato, salt, cayenne and dill. Cook over moderately high heat for 4-5 minutes to thicken. Place in bowl and cool slightly.

When meat has cooled, beat 2 eggs. Stir in eggs and ½ cup cheese and set aside.

Wash, dry and stem okra. Cut into ½ inch disks. Heat 2 Tbsp butter and 2 Tbsp oil, sauté okra until slightly browned, about 10 minutes. Season with salt and pepper and set aside.

Melt 6 Tbsp of butter, stir in flour and cook for 2-3 minutes. Whisk in milk, bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Strain if sauce is thick or lumpy. Beat in remaining cheese and 4 egg yolks. Adjust salt and pepper to taste.

Butter a 9x13 inch baking dish. Spread half the meat mixture into bottom of dish. Cover with sautéed okra and top with remaining meat mixture. Cover with sauce. Bake in pre-heated 350° oven for 45-50 minutes. Serve hot or cold.

Mesquite Chocolate Chip Cookies

(submitted by Mark Moody of the Arizona Mesquite Company)

½ lb butter (or vegan margarine)
1 ¼ cup packed brown sugar
1 tsp salt
2 tsp vanilla
1 tsp baking soda
3 eggs (or egg replacer to equal 3 eggs)
2 ½ - 3 cups wheat or unbleached white flour

1 cup mesquite flour
1 12-oz package of chocolate chips

Cream butter and sugar together. Mix in salt, vanilla, baking soda, and eggs. Slowly mix flours into this mixture, then add chips at the end and mix just enough to spread the chips evenly in the batter. Place small lumps of dough on greased baking sheets and bake at 350° for 10-13 minutes.

Nina's Green Chile and Cheese Soup

3 Tbsp butter (or olive oil)
1 ½ cups chopped onion
3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
½ teaspoon dried oregano, crushed
4 cups chicken or veggie broth
2 cups (1/4-inch) diced Red LaSoda potatoes
1 teaspoon hot pepper sauce
1 CSA share of roasted green chilis (about 10)
1 teaspoon chopped fresh cilantro
½ cup heavy whipping cream
1 cup shredded Monterey Jack or Mexican Blend cheese, or more to taste

Melt butter in medium saucepan over medium heat. Add onion, garlic and oregano, and sauté for about 10 minutes. Add the potatoes and hot pepper sauce, and stir well; add the stock and bring to a boil. Cook for 20 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Add green chilis, cream and cheese. Heat until cheese is melted. Season with salt and black ground pepper, and serve garnished with a few corn tortilla chips and chopped cilantro.

Green Tomatoes We are starting to get the first of the fall crop of tomatoes from Frank's fields in Duncan, and most of them are still green. Of course you can always leave them on your counter and hope they will turn red, or, since they are nutritionally very similar to the red ones, you can go ahead and enjoy them in their green state. You can simmer them with sugar and spices into a chutney or marmalade. You can pickle them, or toss together a tart salad seasoned with Russian dressing, anchovies and spicy summer basil. And then there is a Southern classic: Fried Green Tomatoes, dredged in spiced cornmeal and fried in bacon drippings in a cast iron skillet (for a more Mediterranean version use olive oil instead). You can also simply chop them and fry them with a bit of onions and garlic, and serve as a vegetable side dish, garnished with basil. Or pour some whisked eggs over them and bake into a frittata. Try making salsa verde with green tomatoes instead of tomatillos. Or cook them into a creamy soup or au gratin. Recipes to follow next week.