

# AJO COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE



Summer 2009 / Week 12 of 13

Editor: Nina Altshul Layout: Peter Altshul

**Planned harvest:** Melons, Asian Pears, Anaheim Chiles, Eggplants, Red LaSoda Potatoes, Truckers Delight Sweet Corn, Glendale Gold Onions, Cucumbers. And you can grill your chiles right at the pick-up, too!

**Fall 2009 Session Registration Open till August 31!** So what kind of produce can you expect during the next three months? We're looking at bell peppers, chiles, corn, summer and winter squash, potatoes, sweet potatoes and onions, melons and pears. Greens have been planted and we should start getting them in the second half of September, too – Frank says get ready because when the greens start coming, there will be a lot!

**“We have to be about the whole picture”:** As we were loading up the Ajo CSA shares on Saturday, a great big shiny green tractor rolled up with a surprisingly quiet roar, and out climbs Frank. Wow! Meet Frank's latest effort to make farming at Crooked Sky Farms even more environmentally friendly: not only did they recently replace the old fuel-inefficient truck used to deliver shares to CSAs in Phoenix, Tucson, Prescott and Flagstaff, but they also invested in 4 brand new Tier 3 tractors. Tier 3 is a regulation standard which conforms to new California and EPA standards for carbon emissions, fuel efficiency and noise. These machines will make farming less fuel dependent and more cost-effective. It was a big decision for Frank, but he believes that it would be really hard to say you are organic if you are not doing everything you can. He believes organic should be about land stewardship and not adding any more pollutants to the air than you absolutely have to.

**“Cool as a cucumber”:** Cucumis sativae, first cultivated in India more than 3,000 years ago, is now a global food. Many cultures use cucumbers, raw and pickled, in their cuisine. Even Iceland grows cucumbers as a major crop, using natural steam for their hothouses. We have now started to harvest our cucumbers in Duncan. This non-hybrid variety, the Marketmore 76, is a great slicing cucumber, and was originally an East Indian crop but spread to other parts of Asia and Europe long ago.

Cucumbers are 95 percent water and contain relatively small amounts of vitamins A, C and a few minerals. They are however surprisingly rich in vitamin E, and since they are a light and cooling vegetable, cucumbers help us replenish fluids and minerals lost in perspiration, leaving us “cool as a cucumber” (touch one on the vine in the middle of a hot day – they're cool!). The cucumber is also an effective skin conditioner, perhaps due to its vitamin E content. Try rubbing an end slice or the inside of the peel on your face, or do a traditional cucumber-slice-on-your-eye mask and tune out for a few minutes.

**Storage and cooking tips:** Cucumbers store best in a refrigerator wrapped in a dry plastic bag; in the hydrator drawer they will keep up to a week. Once cut or peeled, it will deteriorate quickly, so use up the leftovers as soon as possible. There is no need to peel Crooked Sky Farms' cucumbers since they are not waxed and are grown with “beyond-organic” principles. However, if you feel the skin is too tough, go ahead and remove it; for a sliced decorative effect, peel alternating stripes down the length or score with fork tines. If you find the seeds to be too big, halve the cucumber and scoop out the seeds. Cucumbers go well with yogurt, dill, mint, salt, pepper, garlic and cumin (think Indian raita or Greek tzatziki). Use sliced cucumber in your sandwich or on top of your snack cracker for extra crunch, or serve with a dip such as eggplant Baba Ganoush or tepary hummus. Kids might enjoy munching on them in slices or whole. Cucumbers also make a great chilled soup, blended with yogurt, avocado and/or nuts. Or prepare quick refrigerator pickles by cutting them into slices and covering them with boiling vinegar. You can add any spices you like, from traditional dill to spicy chiles, and even make them sweet by adding some sugar to the vinegar. And yes, you can cook cucumbers as well! My mom's sautéed cucumbers with garlic, tomato and a bit of sour cream, served with green beans and some meat always signaled the height of the summer to me. When cooked, the crunchy texture turns succulent and soft. Yum! Try adding them to warm soups, or pan frying them like you would zucchini or fried green tomatoes, or perhaps grilling them rubbed with some pesto or other herbs. And then there is cucumber agua fresca: blend your cucumber with a bit of lemon or lime juice, add water if necessary and sugar syrup or agave syrup to taste. Strain in order to obtain clear liquid, and enjoy a refreshing summer treat!

## RECIPES ETC.

**Eating healthily and locally in Ajo:** On Friday, August 14<sup>th</sup>, the Desert Senita Community Health Center held a food demonstration as part of National Health Center Week. Before the demonstration started, event organizer and Ajo CSA member Jane Canon led a group of about 17 people in a fun session of laughter yoga. All relaxed, chef Cheralyn Schmidt of the University of Arizona Pima County Extension Office then prepared two dishes featuring the new Women Infants and Children (WIC) food package, using tofu and brown rice (see recipes below). Cheralyn was also very excited to be able to cook with Crooked Sky Farms' Glendale Gold onions, emphasizing the beneficial effects of onions in general, as well as the importance of preserving heirloom varieties and eating seasonally and locally. The theme of eating locally was then further expanded by Ajo CSA Coordinator Nina Altshul, while serving a Sunshine Rice dessert with a tasting of 5 different melons provided by Crooked Sky Farms. Nina listed reasons for eating locally, from nutrition and taste to the effects on farm workers, communities, and the environment, and introduced the community supported agriculture model and the Ajo group. Fran Driver, Public Health Nurse for the Pima County Health Department in Ajo (and Ajo CSA member) then introduced another option for eating locally: gardening, and specifically the Ajo Community Garden. Listing the successes members have had so far with growing vegetables during the fall, winter, spring and even summer, she invited all interested to tour the garden after the demonstration. Then she invited the participants to use the prepared milk cartons filled with dirt and plant some seeds of their choice from a great variety provided by Cheralyn. Handouts with recipes, tips on eating locally, and copies of the Ajo CSA newsletter were given out, and everyone left happy, with bellies full of laughter and good food, and hands full of Glendale Golds and seeds. Thanks Jane and thanks to all involved for the great work!

### Hot TJ's

(adapted from recipe by Chef Stephanie Green)

2 tsp olive oil  
¼ cup Glendale Gold onions, finely chopped  
1 clove garlic, finely minced  
1 Tbsp Jalapeno, seeded and finely diced  
2 tsp chile powder  
2 tsp Italian seasonings  
¼ tsp sea salt  
1/8 tsp black pepper  
2 Tbsp dark brown sugar, packed  
5 ounces tomato paste  
½ cup water  
15 ounces extra firm tofu, drained and mashed  
½ cup zucchini, finely diced  
½ cup corn  
2 cups diced fresh tomatoes  
1 cup black beans, canned, rinsed and drained

Heat oil over medium heat in a large skillet. Add onion, garlic and jalapeno. Cook for about 2 minutes. Add chile powder, Italian seasonings, salt, pepper. Cook for about 2 minutes. Add tomato paste and mix well cooking for about 1 minute. Add water mixing well. Add tofu, zucchini, corn, tomatoes and beans. Cook for about 5 minutes, stirring often. Serve warm. Garnish with shredded cheese, if desired, and cilantro. Serve on whole-wheat buns, tortillas or with chips.

### Sunshine Rice

(adapted from recipe by Chef Stephanie Green)

1 cup brown rice  
2 cups water  
1 tsp cinnamon  
¼ teaspoon sea salt  
¼ cup golden raisins  
1 tsp butter or oil  
3 Tbsp dark brown sugar, or to taste  
1 orange, peeled and segmented (or substitute any other seasonal fresh fruit such as Asian Pears!)

Combine brown rice, water, cinnamon, salt and golden raisins in medium saucepan, bring to a rolling boil and stir well. Reduce the heat to low and cover with lid. Cook for about 50 minutes, then remove from heat and let rest. Heat butter in a small sauce pan over medium heat. Add sugar and orange (or other fruit) and cook for about 3 minutes until bubbling. Stir well. Gently fold the hot mixture into the cooked rice and serve warm, with slices of chilled Crooked Sky Farms melons!