

AJO COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE



Winter 2010 / Week 9 of 11

Editor: Nina Altshul

Planned harvest: Mizuna, Mustard Greens, Tokyo Bekana, Carrots, Spring Mix, Citrus, Broccolini, Butternut Squash.

Sign-up for the Spring '10 Session (March through May) is now open. The registration will be open till March 1. The cost per season (13 weeks) for a full share is \$240. We will also offer a 6 week half-season share option (with the last pick-up on April 10); the cost for half-season share is \$120. The gas money amount will be announced at the end of February.

Tom's Pharmacy now has an Organic section! It features:

- * Food items, i.e. brown rice, oats, spelt pasta, olive oil, coffee etc. various flours, mustards, crackers, hot oatmeal mixes etc.
 - * Body care products: Himalaya body and hair line
 - * Environmentally friendly cleaning and home pest control products
- Items that are not currently available can be special ordered.



Fennel: *Foeniculum Vulgaris* is finding its way into our shares with a history as rich as its taste! For centuries, fennel has been utilized as a food, medicine, herb and even insect repellent. In ancient Greece, fennel played a significant role in celebrations of the gods and goddesses. It was planted in the temple gardens in their honor and worshippers wore crowns of its feathery leaves, according to the Madison (MI) Area CSA Coalition's book *From Asparagus to Zucchini* (1996). And my favorite little piece of mythology: in Greek mythology, knowledge sometimes came to humans from Mt. Olympus in the form of a fiery coal contained in a fennel stalk.

Fennel grows wild around much of the world, and people still forage for it; once when my husband and I were vacationing in Cinque Terre on the Italian coast, an idyllic set of fishing villages set into the rock above the sea which are protected as a cultural and national heritage site, we had a chance encounter with a group of older Italian ladies who were climbing a steep and narrow path – faces smiling, talking constantly, their hands full of flowering wild fennel heads. Two varieties are cultivated: the bulbous type and the common fennel grown for its seed and leaves. Fennel belongs to the Umbel family, and is related to carrots, celery, parsley, dill (which it resembles in looks) and anise (which it resembles in flavor).

Low in calories and rich in water content, fiber, vitamin A, calcium, potassium and iron, fennel was believed by the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans to be an excellent aid for digestion, bronchial troubles, poor eyesight, and nervous conditions. To this day, fennel seed is used in India for seasoning as well as offered after the meal as a breath freshener and digestive aid. It is also an antioxidant, so don't skimp on it!

Fennel will give a zing to any salad, or can be served as a vegetable accompaniment to a main course. It can be consumed raw, thinly sliced, or cooked with a bit of olive oil or butter and shallots, green onions, garlic or ginger. Try using dry white wine as your braising liquid. Lemon juice also marries well fennel (and it keeps it from oxidizing when you cut it up), so squeeze some into your braising liquid or your salad. Also, fennel goes well with fish, so try adding a few fronds to the pan next time you prepare your salmon or any other fish. With baby fennel, you can try chopping the bottom and some stalks finely, and either sauté it slowly with some butter or olive oil and a touch of salt, or roast it until it caramelizes. You can mix it in with other roasting veggies, like potatoes, sweet potatoes, turnips, beets etc. for a nice fennel taste. The green fronds are especially nice when used as a spice: add (sparingly) to cream cheese spreads and dips (or try serving it serving with smoked salmon!), sour cream or homemade ranch dressings, or add to your egg dishes or sprinkle over a soup. If you are cooking borscht any time soon, this will be your perfect spice. Try sprinkling some over goat cheese before serving with bread or crackers. Or add some to your braising carrots. You can also make a potato-based soup by boiling cubed potatoes in salted water until soft, adding fennel bottoms fairly early in the cooking, and fronds towards the end, then purée in a blender or food processor, add some sour cream, sweet cream, cream cheese or your favorite cheese (grated) and gently reheat. Fennel will work very nicely in Indian dishes, too – try adding it, both tops and bottoms, to your curry.

RECIPES ETC.

Cold Fennel Soup

(adapted from French Women for All Seasons, by Mireille Giuliano)

Nina's tip: try using your entire baby fennel in this soup, including the bulbs and the fronds!

5 cups vegetable stock (or water)
1 pound fennel bulbs, cleaned and chopped
4 ounces ricotta
1 Tbsp olive oil
2 Tbsp lemon juice
Salt and freshly ground pepper
4 Tbsp minced parsley
Pinch of paprika

Bring the stock to a boil. Add the fennel pieces, and simmer for 20 minutes. Put the fennel and stock through a blender or vegetable mill using a blade with small holes. Let cool, and refrigerate for 2 hours.

Add the ricotta, oil, and lemon juice to the chilled soup. Mix well, and season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve in soup dishes, garnishing with the parsley and paprika.

Soy Ginger Mizuna Salad

(by Cheralyn Schmidt, Serves 8)

1 bunch mizuna, chopped into 1 inch pieces (4-5 cups)
2 cups mung bean sprouts
½ cup chopped cilantro or parsley
¼ cup thinly sliced red onion
3 Tbsp soy sauce
1 Tbsp toasted sesame oil
1 Tbsp vinegar
2 tsp powdered ginger or 2 Tbsp fresh grated
1 Tbsp sugar (optional)

Mustard Greens and Bulgur

(adapted from *Eating Well*)

Bulgur is made by parboiling, drying and coarsely grinding or cracking wheat berries, and is widely used in the Mediterranean. Unlike cracked wheat, it simply needs a quick soak in hot water for most uses. Look for bulgur in the natural-foods section of large supermarkets, near other grains, or online.

1 cup bulgur
2 tablespoons chopped walnuts
6 teaspoons walnut oil, or extra-virgin olive oil, divided
2 shallots, chopped
1 tablespoon finely chopped garlic
12 cups thinly sliced mustard greens, (about 1 bunch), tough stems removed
1/3 cup chopped pitted dates

2-3 tablespoons water
4 teaspoons white-wine vinegar
1/2 teaspoon salt

Prepare bulgur according to package directions. Transfer to a colander and rinse under cool water; drain. Toast walnuts in a small dry skillet over medium-low heat, stirring, until lightly browned and fragrant, 2 to 3 minutes.

Place 5 teaspoons oil and shallots in a large skillet over medium-low heat. Cook until the shallots start to brown, 4 to 6 minutes. Add garlic and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 15 seconds. Add mustard greens, dates and 2 tablespoons water and cook, stirring occasionally, until the greens are tender and the water evaporates (add another tablespoon of water if the pan is dry before the greens are tender), about 4 minutes. Stir in vinegar, salt and the prepared bulgur; cook until heated through, about 1 minute. Drizzle with the remaining 1 teaspoon oil and sprinkle with the walnuts before serving.

Sauté of Cauliflower & Mustard Greens with Peanuts

(adapted from EatingWell)

Cauliflower and mustard greens is an unusual combination that really works, especially when tossed with a subtle peanut sauce. Make it a meal: Brown rice is the perfect accompaniment. Nina's tip: try substituting the cauliflower for broccoli!

2 tablespoons peanut butter
1 tablespoon rice-wine vinegar
2 teaspoons reduced-sodium soy sauce
3 tablespoons water
2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
3 cloves 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped (1 tablespoon)
3 cups cauliflower florets, (1/2 small head)
1/2 cup vegetable broth, or water
8 cups firmly packed, coarsely chopped mustard greens, stems included, (1-pound bunch)
Salt & freshly ground pepper to taste
2 tablespoons chopped peanuts

Whisk together peanut butter, vinegar, soy sauce and water in a small bowl.

Heat oil in a large deep skillet or Dutch oven over medium heat until very hot. Add garlic and cook, stirring, until golden, about 30 seconds. Add cauliflower and vegetable broth (or water) and bring to a boil. Simmer, covered, until the cauliflower is almost tender, about 5 minutes. Add greens and simmer, covered, until the greens are tender, an additional 5 minutes. (Do not overcook the greens or they will lose their vibrant color.) Stir in the peanut sauce and cook, uncovered, for 2 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Serve garnished with chopped peanuts.