

AJO COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE



Summer 2009 / Week 13 of 13

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Planned harvest: Sweet Potatoes, Cucumbers, Asian Pears, Glendale Gold Onions, Bell Peppers, Basil, Watermelon or Melon, Anaheim Chiles. And you can grill your chiles at the pick-up again, too!

Farmer Frank to attend the End of the Season Potluck Summer 2009! We would like to thank all of our members for another great season and are looking forward to kicking back with you this Saturday after the pick-up. Bring a seasonal drink or dish to share. Take a break for a while and enjoy the food, live music and the pleasant atmosphere. And you can say hello to Farmer Frank, who will treat us to a short presentation and is looking forward to getting to know some of his CSA members. See you there!

Anaheim Chiles – The chile pepper is an ancient native species of the New World. In Peru, there is archeological evidence of chile peppers at burial sites dating back more than 8,000 years. The Mayans cultivated many types of chiles, and the Aztecs and pre-Columbian civilizations used chiles extensively in their diets. Some wild chiles, including the chiltepíns, grew as far north as the Sonoran Desert (and still do), but it was Spanish settlers who were responsible for spreading and cultivating other varieties of chiles in Arizona and New Mexico, beginning in the late 1500s. Before that time there is little evidence to suggest that chiles were being used by North American Indians in this region. With the Spanish, chile cultivation proliferated, and chiles were soon found all over what is today the American Southwest. Among the chiles that adapted well to the region was the long green chile from New Mexico (consequently called the New Mexico chile) which came to be known as the Anaheim chile when it was taken to California in the early 1900s. In fact, once in California the New Mexico chile not only got a name change but was also bred to be milder. So now they are two distinctly different chiles.

All chiles are in the nightshade (Solanaceae) family, and in the same genus of peppers, i.e. *Capsum*. Peppers in general have high levels of vitamins A, C and E as well as the minerals iron and potassium. Hot chile peppers are exceedingly high in vitamins A and C, and anyone who has enjoyed hot pepper in their food can attest to the medicinal effects of clearing nasal passages and lung congestion. The active ingredient in chiles that provides heat is a chemical called capsaicin. About 80 percent of the capsaicin is concentrated in the seeds and white membranes of the chiles and is dispersed in lesser quantities throughout the chile. Even though Anaheims are considered one of the mildest chiles, they can get quite hot in the fall, so if you want to moderate the heat, when cleaning your chiles, take precautions when handling them, and take care to remove the seed pod and as much of the white membrane as possible. Capsaicin is soluble in alcohol and milk but not water, so using dairy products or serving alcohol with a chile dish is another way to tame the heat. (Adapted from Janos Wilder's *The Great Chile Rellenos Book* and Madison Area CSA Coalition's *From Asparagus to Zucchini*).

Frank grows Anaheim chiles, which are also known as New Mexico chiles, at his location in Duncan, on the Arizona-New Mexico border. They are long and narrow, ranging in length from 4 to 10 inches. They are green when freshly picked and turn red if allowed to ripen. Green chiles can be used as they are, added chopped to a variety of dishes, both cooked and raw. The most traditional way to process them, however, is to roast them (either on the grill or under a broiler) until the skin blisters and blackens, then put in a closed container to cool, and thus allowing the skin to be easily peeled off. You can freeze them like that, in small bags, or peel them, clean out the seeds and stems and then freeze them for later use. Chiles can be stuffed and fried (the famous Chiles Rellenos), layered in casseroles, or added to your beans and/or meat for flavorful chiles. You can also blend the chiles into simple salsa verde, or cook them with some spices into a versatile green sauce (see recipe below). You can use the sauce as a condiment, or for enchiladas, burritos, soft tacos, and huevos rancheros. Or add chiles to your favorite corn bread recipe.

And if you do not get around to using your green chiles, you can let them dry out on a tray, making sure there is enough air circulation, and turning them occasionally and checking for any signs of bugs or mold. They will turn red, and then you can process them as any other red chile: hang them in a rista for later use, grind into a chile powder or flakes, or rehydrate and use in a red chile sauce.

RECIPES ETC.

Asian pears are cousins to the pears that are typically seen in grocery stores and come from *Pyrus pyrifolia*, a pear tree species native to China, Japan, and Korea. The tree is of a genus in the rose family (Rosaceae), and its edible fruit is known by many names, including: Asian pear, nashi or nashi pear, African pear, Japanese pear, Korean pear, Taiwan pear, sand pear, or apple pear. It is not a cross between apples and pears, as common names like *apple pear* may suggest, but its shape and crisp texture are reminiscent of apples. Asian pears differ from traditional European ones in shape: these pears are usually round, firm to touch when ripe, and ready to eat after harvest. Asian pears are known for keeping well. Store them for a week at room temperature or up to three months in the refrigerator.

Nutritional facts: Pears contain about 16 percent carbohydrate and negligible amounts of fat and protein. They are good sources of the B-complex vitamins and also contain vitamin C; in addition, they contain small amounts of phosphorus and iodine.

Serving suggestions: Asian pears are great on their own, like an apple. They are also excellent served peeled and deseeded, on their own or with cheeses and nuts, or in salads, especially with spicier greens like arugula, cheeses (try blue or goat cheeses) and balsamic vinegar. If you choose to cook them, you can poach them in sugar syrup or wine, with spices such as ginger and cinnamon, and served with melted chocolate and cream. They also work great in pear crisps, cobblers and strudels. Or try adding them to your butternut squash soup – you'll love that rounded fall flavor!

Nina's Simple Green Salsa

10 green Anaheim chiles
2 Tbsp lemon or lime juice
1 Tbsp olive oil
1 pinch of salt (to taste)
a few sprigs of cilantro

Roast (grill or broil) chiles until blistered on all sides, transfer to a bowl or plastic bag, cover and allow to cool (i.e. sweat). This process allows the skin to peel off easily. They can also be left in the fridge for a day or two at this stage. When the chiles are cool enough to handle, peel the skins, slice along the length of the chile and then scrape the seeds, the membrane and the stem off with the back of the knife. You now have a butterflied chile that can be used in all kinds of ways or frozen for later use. Put your cleaned chiles in a blender with the rest of the ingredients and blend until smooth. If the mixture is too thick, add a spoonful or two of water. Taste and adjust the seasoning, and serve with chips, as a burrito or taco topping or use it to spice up any dish.

Watermelon Bread

(submitted by Stephanie Doerries, adapted from About.com: Home cooking)

1 ½ cups flour
2 tsp baking soda
1 tsp baking powder
¼ tsp cinnamon
1/8 tsp salt
6 Tbsp butter, at room temperature
2 eggs
2/3 cup sugar
½ cup sour cream
1 cup watermelon juice with pulp (simply blend chunks of deseeded watermelon into a thick liquid with small bits of pulp)
¾ cup chocolate chips (optional)

Preheat oven to 350 F. Lightly grease two 4 x 8 in. bread pans. Whisk together flour, baking soda, baking powder, cinnamon, and salt. Set aside. In a large bowl, cream butter and sugar. Beat in eggs. Add sour cream and watermelon, beating just until combined. Fold in chocolate chips, if using. Fill bread pans evenly. Bake 25 to 30 minutes or until tops are solid, turn a light brown, and rise back up when gently poked. Place loaves on racks to cool. Enjoy!