

# AJO COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE



Editor: Nina Altshul

Summer 2010 / Week 1 of 13

**Planned harvest:** Summer Squash, Onions, Green Onions, Fennel, Wheat Berries, Grapefruits, Tomatoes, Sorrel

For the new members this season and us old-timers in need of review, here's the Ajo CSA pick-up etiquette:

1. Bring your own bags, boxes, etc.
2. Handle the produce as little as possible to prevent bruising.
3. Take your whole share: no more, no less.
4. A whole share is put on the Trading Table at the beginning of the pick-up to give you an option to trade in the items you do not want or get more of what you do want. You can exchange as many items as you like but you have to trade a whole portion for a whole portion.
5. Please stick to the allocated pick-up timeframe. We are picking up at the Plaza on Wednesday evening between 5:30 and 6:30. If you can't make it, ask a friend or neighbor to pick up your share for you or let Nina know you will not be picking up that night so we can arrange to set aside your share in advance! If you do not show up and do not contact Nina, you will forfeit your share to the Food Bank.

## Food Demonstrations Coming to Ajo!

On May 21 and 22, Cheralyn Schmidt and her assistants Kate and Mike from the University of Arizona Extension Office provided two days of cooking training for 13 Ajoites interested in conducting food demonstrations at community events. Friday's knife skills training session began with Mike leading us through an activity to test how effectively we wash our hands after teaching us the proper technique. Once our hands were clean, Cheralyn discussed kitchen etiquette and safety and introduced us to our cutting set up...and the knives! We learned how proper cutting techniques allow us to slice through the cells in our food instead of compressing and damaging them, thereby allowing foods to maintain nutritional quality through cooking and keep longer. By the end of the training, our cutting had improved tremendously, and we all enjoyed the fruits of our labors as we prepared and savored our own slaw!

Saturday was devoted to training for food demonstrations. We students split into four groups that were each given a demo kit, a recipe, a selection of ingredients, and time to prepare a 15-minute demo for the rest of the class. While we enjoyed a sample of the tasty dishes, Cheralyn and Nina guided the groups and provided praise and suggestions for our future demonstrations to the public. The final challenge was incorporating unusual or "difficult" ingredients into an easy recipe. With this awesome experience under Cheralyn's wonderful teaching skills, by the end of the weekend we were capable food demonstrators. Our new skills will enable us to reach out to the community with the goal of helping people include more fresh fruits and vegetables in their diets and start on the path towards healthier living! The Ajo Community Food Bank will soon be the site of regular food demonstrations on the first Thursday of every month. Farmer Frank will kindly donate produce to both support the demonstrations and hand out to the patrons. This week Farmer Frank gave us two large crates of beautiful summer squash (thank you!). While we were unable to provide a cooking demonstration, people at the food bank were excited to receive fresh produce, including CSA and farm stand leftovers. Fresh food is only a small portion of their share (and nothing is organic!) so every little bit counts! If you are interested in this rewarding opportunity to volunteer with us at the food bank, even if you have not gone through the above training, please contact Nina Altshul and we will find a place for you!

## Summer Squash (*Cucurbita pepo*)

These delectable vegetables are members of the Cucurbitaceae family and are related to winter squash, gourds, melons, and cucumbers. Varieties include zucchini, yellow crookneck, straight neck, and patty pan (like sunbursts, my favorite!). Squash originated between Guatemala and Mexico and have been consumed for over 10,000 years. While they were originally grown for their seeds, squash were soon cultivated through most of the Americas and varieties developed with a greater amount of and more palatable flesh. Christopher Columbus brought squash back to Europe where additional varieties were cultivated, including the dark green, round French variety we enjoyed last week. Summer squash is packed with nutrients, especially manganese and vitamin C. It is a low-calorie food with high water content, making it a refreshing snack on sweltering summer afternoons! Summer squash are picked when immature so their skin and seeds are edible, though they are most tender when harvested between 4" and 7" long.

Because these vegetables dehydrate quickly, store in a plastic bag or in the hydrator drawer for up to one week and use damaged squash as soon as possible. Cooking possibilities for summer squash are endless. They are delicious raw sliced into salads or served with your favorite dip. Bake, steam, and sauté them to your heart's delight. If you find yourself with more summer squash than you can handle, cook, puree, and freeze them in an airtight container to use as an addition to or a base for soups.

- Stephanie Doerries

# RECIPES ETC.

## **Provençal Summer Squash Gratin with Tomatoes**

(adapted from Vegetables by James Peterson)

2 medium summer squash (~1 lb), ends cut off  
1 clove garlic, minced  
1 tsp each freshly chopped marjoram, thyme, rosemary, sage,  
and/or parsley (or 1/2 tsp each dried or 2-3 Tbsp herbes de  
Provence)  
3 Tbsp olive oil  
4 medium tomatoes (1 1/2 lb), peeled (or one 15 oz can,  
partially drained)  
20 fresh basil leaves (finely chopped)  
2 Tbsp finely grated Parmesan cheese or hard goat cheese

Slice the squash on an angle into 1/8-in-thick slices. Crush garlic into smooth paste and combine with the herbs and 2 Tbsp of the olive oil in a small bowl and reserve. Cut the tomatoes in half from top to bottom, cut each half into 4 wedges, and deseed. Preheat oven to 325°F. Rub the bottom of a medium baking dish with the rest of the olive oil and smear the chopped basil over the bottom of the dish. Arrange the squash in a single layer, overlapping halfway up each slice. Arrange the tomato wedges in a single layer over the squash. Brush or spoon over the herb-olive oil mixture, season lightly with salt, and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Bake for 1 hr or until there's no liquid left from the tomatoes and the rims of the squash have browned slightly. Add fresh ground pepper, serve immediately, and enjoy!

## **Vegetable Kebabs**

(adapted from The New Moosewood Cookbook)

Marinade (double if you want extra for basting):

2/3 cup olive oil  
1/4 cup red wine vinegar  
5 medium cloves garlic, minced  
1/2 tsp ground marjoram  
1/2 tsp thyme  
1/2 tsp basil  
a pinch or two of rosemary  
1/2 tsp salt  
freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 medium (6- to 7-inch long) eggplant, cut into 1/2-inch cubes  
~ 12 cherry tomatoes  
~ 12 medium-sized mushrooms  
1 or 2 bell peppers (any color), cut into 2-inch strips  
1 medium onion, cut into 1.5-inch wedges  
1 1/2 lbs very firm tofu, cut into 1 1/2-inch cubes  
1-inch slices of corn-on-the-cob, parboiled 5 minutes  
1 1/2-inch chunks of potato or sweet potato, parboiled ~8  
minutes (until just tender)  
1-inch chunks of summer squash

Prepare marinade in long, shallow baking pan. Add all other ingredients and stir gently. Let marinate, stirring occasionally, for at least 2 hr, and as long as overnight. Arrange the marinated vegetables on 9- or 10-inch skewers in an

imaginative sequence. Grill over hot coals or broil, basting frequently with the marinade and turning every few minutes. Watch carefully and remove from heat as soon as they seem done (tender, browned, perfect). Baste one more time, serve with rice or pasta.

## **Potato Gratin With Sorrel**

(adapted from The New York Times)

2 pounds potatoes, peeled and sliced 1/8 to 1/16 inch thick  
3 medium onions, peeled and thinly sliced  
1 1/2 teaspoons salt  
3 tablespoons unsalted butter  
1/2 pound sorrel, thick stems removed, coarsely chopped  
1 cup heavy cream  
1 garlic clove, peeled and minced

Put the potato and onion slices in a saucepan and pour in two cups of water. Add one teaspoon of salt. Bring to a boil, shaking the pan to prevent the vegetables from sticking to the bottom. Turn off the heat at the boil. Drain potatoes and onions but reserve the cooking liquid for later. Melt two tablespoons of the butter in a skillet, add the sorrel and cook for two minutes, wilting it into a puree. Mix in the cream and the remaining half-teaspoon salt. Cook for three minutes or longer, stirring occasionally, until the mixture thickens. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees. Rub a 14 x 8 x 2 in baking dish with the remaining tablespoon of butter and scatter in the minced garlic. Add the potatoes and onions to the dish, pour in the cooking liquid, and spread the creamy sorrel on top. Bake in middle of the oven for an hour to an hour and a half or until potatoes are tender and golden on top.

## **Fennel-Roasted Red Potatoes**

(adapted from From Asparagus to Zucchini by Madison Area CSA Coalition)

1 lb red potatoes, cut in 1/2-inch pieces  
1 onion or several green onions, chopped  
1-4 cloves garlic, chopped  
3-4 Tbsp chopped fennel  
3-4 Tbsp olive oil  
salt and pepper to taste

Heat oven to 350°F. Coat potatoes with other ingredients and spread out in a shallow baking dish. Roast until tender, 40-45 minutes.

## **Sparkling Grapefruit Juice**

(inspired by Nina Altshul)

3-4 grapefruits, juiced  
1 L seltzer water, chilled (or to taste)  
2-3 Tbsp agave nectar, honey, or other sweetener  
1 tsp ginger (or to taste)

Combine ingredients and serve chilled or over ice. Enjoy as a refreshing drink during the hot Ajo summer!