

Ajo Community Supported Agriculture



Summer 2009 / Week 1 of 13

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Planned harvest: Tomatoes, Sweet Ambrosia Corn, Summer Squash, Red LaSoda Potatoes, Yellow Onions, Armenian Cucumber, Wheat Berries, Grapefruit.

Summer begins at Crooked Sky Farms! Right now Farmer Frank has a lot of summer squash, while winter squash is catching up as well. We will continue getting the sweet bi-colored Ambrosia corn for a few weeks, as well as tomatoes. In about two weeks the first tomatillos will be ready to harvest, while black-eyed peas and green beans will be ready in about a month. And in August, we can start looking forward to green and red chiles. The real exciting news is that Farmer Frank planted just about every variety of melon available in the Johnny's Seeds catalogue, and they are all looking real good. But the best way to see what we will be getting is for you to come to the farm this Saturday and see for yourself how things are growing!

Celebrating the One-Year Anniversary of Ajo CSA! Being an avid foodie and enthusiastic gardener for most of my life, one of the biggest challenges of moving to Ajo in December 2007 in order to do research for my graduate studies was figuring out how to eat well in Ajo. Coming from Europe where I mostly sustained myself on my own garden, farmers markets and organic food stores, the hardest thing to deal with here was the Standard American Diet. Unless buying processed foods, I found fresh basic foodstuffs to be expensive, and monotonous in their looks, taste and variety. It really made me wonder where all this food comes from, and how it gets to Ajo. I started looking for alternatives: shopping at the Food Co-op in Tucson was great if expensive, and with gas prices rising and work to do, who can drive to Tucson every week or even every two just to shop for food? I tried ordering produce from a mail-order organic food company in California. I started looking for the nearest growers and farmers markets close to Ajo, and was giving up after realizing that "near" is nowhere near us. All along, I have been aware of the movement where for instance people would have farmers deliver a box of food to their doors once a week (Peter's mom Connie, for example, tried this for a short period of time in 2005), but I didn't dare even dream that this would be possible in Ajo. But in April 2008 I read an article in *Vegetarian Times* called Catch the CSA Wave, which described, among others, Crooked Sky Farms and their CSA in Tucson, and I knew it was time to go surfing. I absorbed everything I could find on the net and started looking for someone to split a share with me so that we could take turns driving to Tucson or Phoenix, but no luck. In early May I started talking to Farmer Frank and Tania at Crooked Sky, and was trying to work out ways to get a share either from Tucson CSA or directly from the farm. In the middle of May I talked to Dr. Johnson at the clinic, and she said that some people at the clinic and her daughter Christine were also looking into ways of getting healthier produce. At the end of May I talked to Mimi Phillips, who suggested I talk to Betsy Wirt. Betsy was very excited about it, and told me she would talk to her friend Christine (yes, THAT Christine!) about it, and she would get back to me. At that time, Betsy was driving to Phoenix every week, but needed time to think about it. The days were going by and I was getting anxious since the Tucson CSA sign-up season was ending and the free spots were filling up in a hurry. By then, I had been to Tucson twice, checking out pick-up days and loved it all, the produce and the vibe of people! More days went by, and since nobody contacted me I decided to bite the bullet and just sign up with Tucson CSA. Right after I sent in my contract and check, Betsy called and said she wanted to do it, and so did Christine, and that she would be going to Phoenix every week, so she could start picking up there on Tuesdays. So on Monday, June 1, I arranged the first pick-up with Tania at the farm, and gave Betsy my check for another share, and on Tuesday, June 3, Betsy brought our first veggies to our house. That night we just sat down and ate them without anything on top – it all tasted so good! The first week we had four shares, the second week six, and by the end of the summer we were up to nine. This newsletter was also launched in that first week, and has been going ever since (37 issues in the first year, with 128 different recipes and countless ideas about how to use CSA produce, including many contributions from members and friends). About half of the original members are still with us, and they form the core of a solid group of health food and locovore enthusiasts who keep AJO CSA running strong!

RECIPES ETC.

Ajo CSA Birthday Cake

(submitted by Ajo CSA member Christine Johnson)

5 Ajo eggs (or 4 large eggs)
½ cup sugar
½ cup agave syrup
½ cup oil
3 cups flour from CSA wheat berries
1 tsp. salt
1 Tbsp baking powder
¼ cup orange juice
2 tsp Vanilla
2 cups local organic peaches

Separately combine wet and dry ingredients (except the peaches), and then combine. Add the peaches at the end, and then bake in a solar oven or a regular oven at about 350° F for about 30 minutes or until slightly brown on top.

Seasonal Ratatouille

(submitted by Ajo CSA member Mari Kaestle)

3-4 Tbsp grape seed oil
2 medium size CSA onions, sliced thin
4 young CSA eggplants sliced about 1/2" thick and halved
sea salt
2 CSA squash sliced about 3/4" thick and cut in halves or quarters
2 large cloves of garlic mashed and chopped fine
1 large can diced tomatoes or 4-5 large, juicy CSA tomatoes chopped with juice
1 15 oz. can black or white beans (drained/rinsed) or 1/2 bag CSA red beans cooked and drained or 1 1/2 cup fresh green beans cut into 1" lengths and parboiled
fresh basil leaves/torn fresh dill/torn flat leaf parsley/chopped
salt/ pepper/red chile flakes
parmesan or Romano cheese (optional)

Heat oil very hot in a large casserole pot, add onion slices, reduce heat to medium. Sauté until brown and sweet (don't burn). Lay eggplant slices on paper towels and salt generously. When onions are done, remove from pot with slotted spoon and add

eggplant to cooking oil. Sauté until translucent, but not gooey. Add squash and garlic, and sauté briefly, keeping squash crispy. Return onions to pot, add tomatoes and beans. Cook gently and bring liquid to simmer. Add herbs. Season to taste, remove from heat and let sit covered until cooled to room temperature.

Garnish with parsley and basil leaves. Serve at room temp or slightly warm. Top individual portions with cheese if desired.

Nina's Chilled Cucumber Soup (vegan and raw)

Take about a quarter of a really big CSA Armenian cucumber (or half of a regular one), halve, scoop out and discard the seeds. Chop the cucumber into pieces and put in a blender. Add a ripe avocado, a few sprigs of cilantro, a fistful of cashews (soaked, if you remembered soon enough, but it works without soaking too), half a clove of garlic (optional), juice of half a lemon, extra virgin olive oil and salt. Blend thoroughly with about a cup and a half of water, adjust the lemon juice and salt, and serve immediately or chill for an hour or two.

Local Natural Grassfed Beef for Sale!

Starting this summer, I will be arranging shares of natural grassfed beef from Double Check Ranch in Winkelman, Az. Their beef is raised on open range and finished on green pasture grass, and is free from artificial hormones, antibiotics and steroids. During their lives, the animals are treated with utmost care and respect. Some of our members have already tried their beef, and recommended it highly! Shares contain some ground beef as well as a selection of various types of beef cuts and optional soup bones. They weigh between 5 and 7 pounds and run between \$50 and \$70, depending on the exact weight and type of cuts. I will be collecting your orders for two weeks (i.e. up to June 19). After the order is put in, we will receive our shares in about 2-4 weeks.