

AJO COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE



Summer 2010 / Week 8 of 13

Editor: Nina Altshul

Planned harvest: Yellow Beans, Tomatoes (double share), Melons (double share), Okra, Squash, Tomatillos

Black-eyed peas, *Vigna unguiculata*, are legumes like beans, lentils, peas, and mesquite. Like other pulses, black-eyed peas, a subspecies of the cowpea, make a complete protein when paired with whole grains such as corn. Of all legumes, black-eyed peas are one of the highest in fiber (16 grams in 1 cup cooked peas) and lowest in calories (179 calories per cup). A favorite in the American South, black-eyed peas are traditionally eaten on New Year's Day to bring good luck throughout the year. Most of us are familiar with the dried legumes common in most grocery stores. The first time I encountered fresh beans was through Ajo CSA. While initially intimidated, I quickly found that fresh legumes have a unique, delicious flavor well worth the effort of shelling! No soaking is required when cooking fresh beans, and the cooking time is much shorter. To use fresh black-eyed peas, shell the beans, wash them, and sort as you would dried beans. Place in a pot with a tight-fitting lid and add enough water to cover by 2 inches. Bring to a boil, lower the heat, and simmer partially covered for 15-20 minutes. To keep the beans from breaking apart and becoming gritty, do not add salt until the beans start getting tender. Adding salt during the early stages of cooking breaks down the skins, causing the beans to burst before done, resulting in tough bits and pieces. Adding up to 2 Tbsp distilled white vinegar or freshly squeezed lemon juice when you add the salt will keep the beans firm but tender, with intact skins – perfect for salads like the recipe below. Like other legumes, black-eyed peas can easily be prepared ahead of time and are actually cheaper (and tastier!) than canned beans. After cooking, let the beans cool in their liquid and store in a container with a tight-fitting lid. Refrigerate for up to 5 days or freeze up to 6 months for a quick-and-easy dinner!

Tomatillos, *Physalis philadelphica*, are members of the nightshade family like eggplant and tomatoes, but are more closely related to gooseberries. Enclosed in a light green husk, these little fruits possess a tangy zing that adds a hint of citrus that can brighten almost any dish. Their complex flavor makes them the ideal base for a simple salsa requiring few additional ingredients to mix up a delightful sauce! While some tomatillo varieties are purple, the more common varieties only start to turn purple when fully ripe. Choose firm, pale green tomatillos that are under-ripe, as ripe fruits have less of the characteristic sourness. When the papery husk is removed, the surface of a tomatillo should feel a bit sticky. Store tomatillos in a paper or plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to 3 days. After peeling and washing, tomatillos can be frozen whole or sliced. Do not limit the use of tomatillos to Mexican-style dishes. Try adding them to any dish, soup, or stew that needs a little brightening up!

Cardamom is an ancient spice obtained from the seeds of a ginger-like plant native to southern India, where it grows wild. The brown-black seeds come inside a pod with a triangular cross-section in three double rows of six. Pods range in size from 1/4 to 3/4 in. long. Two forms of cardamom are used in food and medicine. Green cardamom, genus *Elettaria*, is the more common form of the spice. In South Asia, it is used as a medicine to treat teeth and gum infections, prevent and treat sore throats, and relieve lung congestion and digestive disorders. Black cardamom includes species in the genus *Amomum* and tends to have larger pods than the green variety. More blunt and pungent in flavor, it serves as an ingredient in traditional medicine systems of the East. Ground cardamom can be rather expensive, but you can obtain whole cardamom pods from an Asian specialty store for a reasonable price. When ground, cardamom loses its flavor quickly, while whole pods will keep at least a year, making the latter a more economical choice. When ready to use, simply open the pods, remove the seeds, and grind by hand in a mortar and pestle or mechanically using a clean coffee grinder.

- Stephanie Doerries

RECIPES ETC.

Fresh Black-Eyed Pea Salad

2 cups of fresh black eyed peas, shelled, washed, and sorted
1/4 cup raw summer squash, small dice
1/4 cup tomato, small dice
1/4 cup cucumber, small dice
1/8 cup red onion, small dice
1 handful of basil, roughly chopped

Place fresh black-eyed peas in large saucepan. Cover with water; bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to low. Simmer, covered, until peas are soft when pierced with fork, 15 to 20 minutes. Drain. Let cool. Once cool, mix vegetables, basil and peas together. Add salt and pepper, as needed. Dress with Lemon Vinaigrette.

Simple Lemon Vinaigrette

1 lemon
1 tsp. Dijon mustard
1 clove of garlic, minced
1/2 cup of olive oil
Salt and pepper, as needed

Zest and juice the lemon. Combine all ingredients and mix until blended. For more variety, add your favorite herbs to taste (parsley, oregano, basil, thyme, etc.)

Tomatillo Salsa

(adapted from *The Art of Simple Food* by Alice Waters)

1 lb tomatillos (one CSA share), chopped
1 jalapeño or serrano chile, seeded and finely chopped
1 cup chopped cilantro leaves and stems
2 cloves garlic, minced
Salt, to taste

Mix ingredients together in a large bowl. Let sit to develop the flavors. Enjoy as an accompaniment to grilled foods, a dip for tortilla chips, a sauce for tamales, or anything else that suits your fancy!

Melon and Cardamom

(adapted from *Farmer John's Cookbook* by Farmer John Peterson and Angelic Organics)

1 medium melon (such as Farmer Frank's Honey Yellow or Snow Leopard Melons...anything but watermelon)
1/4 tsp ground cardamom
1-2 Tbsp freshly squeezed lime juice (~1 medium lime)
1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro
Freshly ground pepper

Toss all ingredients in a large bowl and refrigerate for at least 1 hour. For a sweeter version add 1 tsp maple syrup. Enjoy plain or serve over vanilla ice cream!

Stephanie's Agua Fresca (Cucumber-Watermelon-Lime Drink)

1 cucumber, peeled and seeded, if necessary
Freshly squeezed lime juice
Watermelon, seeded
Seltzer water
Agave nectar or honey
Mint (optional)

Puree cucumber, lime juice, watermelon flesh, and mint, if using, in a blender. Mix with seltzer water and sweetener to taste. Enjoy as a healthy, refreshing drink on a hot summer afternoon!