

AJO COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE



Spring 2009 / Week 4 of 13

Editor: Nina Altshul, Proofreading and Layout: Peter Altshul

Planned harvest: Citrus, Beauregard Sweet Potatoes, Carrots, Purple Kohlrabi, I'toi Onions, Baby Swiss Chard, Spring Mix, Plant Starters (for members with half-season shares, fruit will be provided instead).

The challenging aspects of CSA (Part 2): In the words of Wendell Berry, “A successful local food economy implies not only a new kind of food producer, but a new kind of eater as well, one who regards finding, preparing, and preserving food as one of the pleasures of life rather than a chore.” In this issue we continue our discussion of how to make CSA work for you – remember, you can see your blender as either half empty or half full!

3. I'm getting too much/too little. If you are left with too much produce by the time the next pick-up comes around, consider reducing supplemental produce from the grocery store to insure that you are fully using your CSA produce. Prioritizing your CSA vegetables before putting them away will ensure that the most perishable produce gets used first. Another thing I find useful is preparing a “kitchen-sink” soup towards the middle of the week with the produce that needs to be used up before the next harvest. And sharing some veggies with your friends can be fun too. If you are still left with too much produce, consider splitting a share. If that does not give you enough produce, you can always buy a second (or full) share. If there is something you like on a certain week, the farm can sometimes accommodate extra requests (e.g. to purchase some type of produce on top of your CSA share), so please don't hesitate to contact me.

4. Inconvenience of the pick-up. You have to pick up your share every week on a specific day during a specific time period, and if you do not pick up, you lose it even though you paid for it. Ask a friend or neighbor to pick up for you. Schedule your pickup day to coordinate with other food routines (try to do your grocery shopping after you see what your share contains). Another good idea is to share pick-up duties with another CSA member. And if you contact me, I can hold your share for another day or two.

5. No choice/seasonal produce only/repetition/absence of certain produce. Being a CSA member requires being open to new things, tastes, vegetables and preparation methods, which can be a challenge but is also an integral part of the fun. For example, the very idea that vegetables are only available during a particular season makes them all the more special. And once you have eaten produce at the height of its season, you will have a hard time eating it out of season again. Plus, you will actually learn to enjoy the overabundance of a particular kind of produce too, since you know that this is *the* time for this vegetable/fruit. Understanding the subtle shifts as we move between seasons helps us develop intuition about and connections with our food and the place we live. So consider the challenges in this category more as an invitation to enjoy food and the seasons to the fullest, and to be creative in use of the vegetables we do get. Continue to cook your favorite dishes by just changing the vegetables according to the season or availability. Your favorite pasta dish may thus highlight tomatoes, winter squash, leafy greens or broccoli, depending on the time of the year. When dealing with an abundance of a particular vegetable, try preserving (freezing, pickling, drying.) them for a future time; this also helps prevent boredom with seasonal vegetables and offers the convenience of homemade frozen food. At last but not a least, browse the back issues of the Ajo CSA newsletter, other CSAs' websites (especially Tucson CSA), cookbooks and the Internet for fresh ideas, ask questions at pick-ups, propose and attend food demonstrations, and talk to other members. The more knowledge, stories and tips we can share among us, the more people can enjoy their CSA experience. Member Stephanie Doerries suggest dealing with this challenge with a simple change in perspective: “Rather than being dismayed by a lack of choice, see it as an opportunity to try new things, be inventive, and further delve into the culinary arts! Working with the surprise produce that makes its way into our shares now and then is an adventure, an inconvenience rightly perceived. Enjoy it!

RECIPES ETC.

Dr. Andrew Weil's Braised Red Cabbage

(submitted by Chris Dimitrakopoulos)

1 tablespoon quality extra-virgin olive oil
1 large yellow onion, chopped
2 large carrots, peeled and sliced
1 large head red cabbage, cored and sliced 1/4-inch thick
1 large green apple, peeled, cored, and diced
3 large cloves garlic, pressed
1 bay leaf
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves
1 1/2 cups dry red wine
1/4 cup red wine vinegar
2 tablespoons light-brown sugar
1 cup peeled chestnuts (optional)
Salt to taste

In a large pot, heat the olive oil. Add the onion and carrots and sauté over medium heat until onion is translucent. Add the cabbage and apple and mix well, then add salt to taste, the garlic, the bay leaf, cloves, wine, vinegar and sugar. Bring to a low boil, cover, and cook for about 1 hour. Remove bay leaf and correct seasoning to taste. You may also add the peeled chestnuts to cook in the braising liquid.

Nina's CSA Groundnut Stew (inspired by *Sundays at Moosewood Restaurant*)

2 cups chopped onions (yellow or I'toi)
2 tablespoons canola oil
1/2 teaspoon cayenne
1/2 teaspoon CSA dried chiles, ground
3 cloves of garlic, chopped
1 head of cabbage (purple or green)
1 big sweet potato
1 big Red LaSoda potato
4 CSA carrots
3 cups diced canned tomatoes
1 cups apple juice
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon grated peeled fresh ginger root
1 tablespoon chopped fresh cilantro
1 cup shelled peas (frozen is ok too)
1 1/2 - 2 cups frozen, sliced okra
1 cup peanut butter

Sauté the onions in the oil for about 5 minutes. Stir in the cayenne, chile and garlic and sauté for another couple of minutes. Add the cabbage, sweet potato, Red LaSoda potato and carrots, and cover and sauté for a few minutes. Mix in the tomatoes with juices, apple juice, salt, ginger and cilantro. Cover and simmer for about 10 minutes, then add the peas, and simmer until the potatoes and carrots are tender. Add the okra (no need to defrost first) and simmer for 5 minutes more. Stir in the peanut butter, and simmer gently until ready to serve. Add more juice or water if the stew is too thick.

Serve the stew on one of the starches: rice, millet, quinoa, wheat berries, or couscous. Serve with any of the following as garnishes: hard-boiled eggs, chopped scallions, chopped fresh parsley or cilantro, cubed papaya, sliced bananas, mangos, pineapples or oranges, grated coconut, whole or crushed peanuts or your favorite nuts.

To prepare steamed millet, combine 3 1/2 cups cold water, 1 teaspoon salt and 2 cups of millet in a heavy saucepan. Cover and bring to a boil, reduce the heat and simmer for about 20 minutes. Let stand for 5 minutes, fluff with a fork and serve. For a richer flavor, add a little butter or olive oil.

Abidjan Cabbage Salad (adapted from *Sundays at Moosewood Restaurant*)

This cool, crunchy salad is welcome with any African stew. Or serve it with avocados, devilled eggs, and baguettes for a delightful luncheon.

4 cups thinly sliced purple or green cabbage
1 cup shredded carrot
1 cup pineapple chunks (fresh or canned)
juice of 1 lemon
juice of 1 orange
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/3 - 1/2 cup vegetable oil

Pile the cabbage, carrots and pineapple into a large bowl. Mix the dressing either by whisking all the ingredients until creamy or by slowly drizzling the oil into the juices while whirling in a blender or food processor. Thoroughly mix the salad and dressing. Serve immediately or refrigerate until ready to serve.