



Planned harvest: Tomatoes (double share), Eggplants, Pearl Honeydew Melons, Armenian Cucumbers, Summer Squash (assorted varieties), Winter Squash (Spaghetti or Butternut), Grapefruit.

Melons! I am standing in the middle of a field, melon vines crawling along my feet, as farmer Frank excitedly points out yet another variety of melons he planted this year – these globes are smaller, whitish-green, with unusual and irregular dark green patches and dots. “These are Snow Leopards,” he explains. “They’re doing really well.” Rows and rows of melon and watermelon plants extend on both sides of where we stand. I look around and see white, yellow, green, orange and brown melons, ranging from smooth to ribbed, oval to round, shining among the low canopy of entwisted vines and leaves. I ask him how he decides which melon varieties he wants to grow. “The seed selection actually begins now, when the melons start ripening. We observe the taste, and everything we have done. There are always some melons that do better than others, and some melons that taste better than others. And some melons are more requested than others.” This year Frank has planted more than 30 varieties of melons and several more of watermelons, more than 100 rows, which he expects will yield around 350 tons of fruit. Honeydews, French Charentais, Cantaloupes, Canaries, Cassavas, Asian melons, and the list goes on. Growing a wide variety of melons not only produces an array of tastes, colors, smells and textures, but also allows for not one peak season, but a prolonged harvest, hopefully into October or even November.

Take the Eat Local, America! Challenge from July 5th to July 20th, 2009

This challenge celebrates and supports the growing interest in locally grown food by inviting individuals to eat as much local food as they can. You can set your own goals: one local dish per meal, one local meal a day, one local day a week etc. Crooked Sky Farms is willing to supply us with extra produce for sale. See the Tucson Food Co-op web site at <http://www.foodconspiracy.org/> for more info and a list of free events.



Melons need a lot of work. First the soil needs to be specially prepared, with a lot of compost, then tilled really well to incorporate the compost, and then furrowed out. The seeds usually get planted directly in the field, starting in the last part of February or the first part of March. Melon plants come out pretty quickly, in a week or ten days when it’s cooler. They take about 90 days on average to mature. During these three months and some, they get deep-watered only 5-6 times, thanks to Frank’s evolved irrigation system. He comes out every day to observe the plants, see if they need watering, and how they are ripening. During their growth period, weeds need to be controlled, and that’s Larry’s job. He chops weeds among these rows all day long, five days a week. And then

finally, there’s the harvest. The first melons are always the hardest to pick since they give the impression that they are ripe, but in a few weeks all the staff will be well versed in recognizing the ripe ones. “You know a melon is ready to pick when the skin tone warms up or gets a little brownish, and you can smell them, or when the small leaf at the fruit attachment yellows. With watermelons, you look at the two leaves on each side of the stem where the watermelon is attached, and see if they are slightly browning and withering.” Each melon plant produces about 3-5 good fruits. At the height of the picking season it takes 4-6 people harvesting all day long. Some melons can be stored for a while, but they are usually able to sell melons as soon as they harvest them. If your melon seems to be slightly underripe, you might want to leave it on the counter for a few days, until the color is really warm or you can detect a fruity smell. Chill before serving and dig in!

Melon of the Week: the Honey Pearl Honeydew (from Johnny’s Seed Catalogue) is a white-skinned melon with white flesh. The rich and sweet flavor and grainy texture of this early honeydew call to mind Asian pears.

RECIPES ETC.

Hearty Summer Medley

(submitted by CSA member Mari Kaestle)

3 medium CSA onions sliced thin
3 Tbsp grape seed oil
3 stalks red or white chard chopped and dried
2 yellow CSA squash sliced into 1/2" thick slices, then halved
2 cobs CSA corn
2 large cloves of garlic mashed and chopped fine
1/2 cup chopped flat leaf parsley
1 15 oz can of kidney beans drained and rinsed
1 15 oz can of diced tomatoes or 3-4 CSA tomatoes diced with juice
sea salt/ pepper and /or CSA crushed red chili pepper
fresh CSA basil
parmesan or Romano cheese

Heat oil very hot in large casserole pot, add onions and caramelize on medium heat. Add squash and garlic. Sauté briefly. Remove corn from cob, add to mixture in pot. Add parsley. Add chard, carefully integrating with cooked veggies. Add beans, tomatoes, salt, pepper, chopped basil to taste. Bring to full simmer. Remove from heat, let cool with pot covered.

Delicious hot, warm or cold. Garnish with more basil. Good with corn tortillas, pasta, quinoa, etc., and a green salad.

Tzatziki

(submitted by CSA member Stephanie Doerries)

2 cucumbers (or half a CSA cucumber), peeled
2 cups plain yoghurt
2 cloves garlic
2 tsp olive oil
salt
pepper

Grate cucumbers, sprinkle with ~ 1 tsp salt, and set in strainer to drain for 20-30 min. Combine yoghurt and garlic. Mix drained cucumbers into yoghurt. Drizzle mixture with olive oil. Mix well and season to taste. Use chilled. Goes great with falafel or grilled meats.

Agua Fresca de Pepino (Cucumber-Lime Drink)

(adapted from Amy Schwemm, Tucson CSA)

Our gigantic Armenian cucumbers are ideal for this most refreshing summer drink. Easy to make and to drink! It will use up your CSA cucumbers faster than you can get them.

1 large Armenian cucumber, unpeeled (equivalent to 3 English cucumbers)
1/2 to 1 cup lime juice
1-2 cups water
¼ cup sugar, agave syrup, or other sweetener

Juice the whole cucumber (with skin and seeds), or blend and strain it. Add lime juice, water, and sugar. Serve chilled. For added zest, sprinkle with chopped mint or Stevia leaf. Makes approximately 2 quarts. Substitution: instead of lime juice and sugar, you can use 2 tablespoons of frozen concentrated lime juice per pint of cucumber juice.



Nina's Roasted Eggplant Dip

5-6 small CSA eggplants, peeled, cut into chunks
½ CSA yellow onion, chopped
1 clove garlic, sliced
1-2 small red chile peppers
2 Tbsp olive oil
salt and pepper, to taste
2 cloves of roasted garlic
4 sun-dried tomatoes, soaked in water overnight
2 tsp tahini paste
juice of ½ lemon
Cilantro or flat-leaf parsley, to garnish

Mix the ingredients from eggplants to salt and pepper, and roast for about 30-45 min at 375°F, or until brownish and done. Cool. Add roasted garlic, sundried tomatoes, tahini paste and lemon juice, and blend. Serve sprinkled with cilantro or parsley.