

AJO COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE



Winter 2008 / Week 7 of 12

Editor: Nina Altshul, Proofreading and Layout: Peter Altshul

Planned harvest: Citrus, Green P'itoni Onions, Collard Greens, Swiss Chard, Lettuce, Spinach, Wheat Berries, Broccoli. Green-striped cushaw tasting at the pickup.

Recycling While hopefully the Ajo Recycling Center will eventually reopen, if you find yourself with bags or boxes of recyclables, Christine recommends two places to take them. In Tucson, you can find a recycling bin behind the library at Mission and Ajo Way, on the loop that goes into the park behind the library. In Phoenix, one of the options is a place off Highway 60 in Mesa, on the corner of Southern and Rural. The bin(s) are behind the library on the Rural side.

Green-striped Cushaw Squash The green-striped cushaw (*cucurbita mixta*), also known as Tennessee Sweet Potato Squash, is technically a winter squash, though in the American South it also produces a spring harvest. A crookneck squash from the family Cucurbitaceae, fruits average 10 to 20 pounds, grow to be 12 to 18 inches long, and are roughly 10 inches in diameter at the bowl. The skin is whitish-green with mottled green stripes. The flesh is light-yellow; it is mild and slightly sweet in flavor; meaty in texture and fibrous. It is sometimes called cushaw pumpkin and is often substituted for the standard orange jack-o-lantern pumpkin in pie-making. The cushaw has a green summer squash flavor and scent to it. It has a smoky flavor and is moist without being wet. It is used for both savory and sweet dishes and is great for northern climates because it provides vitamin C for the winter and stores very well. In some Native cultures, the seeds are toasted for snacks or ground and made into sauces and moles. The flowers are stuffed and/or fried. Sometimes the flesh of the fruit is used for livestock feed. According to Gary Nabhan, "It's a squash that came pre-historically, north from the tropics into what is the United States today." In her book *Foods of the Southwest Indian Nations*, author Lois Ellen Frank writes that the green-striped cushaw is believed to have been domesticated in Mesoamerica sometime between 7000 and 3000 B.C. Its significance endures, and is one of the most popular squashes amongst the Hopi, the Akimiel O'odham and the Tohono O'odham. Cushaw, a heat-hardy plant, is grown in the Sonoran Desert with the summer rain. In addition to the plant's tolerance for heat, the green-striped cushaw's large, vigorous vines are resistant to the squash vine borer, which kills other squash and pumpkin plants that aren't protected with pesticides. This quality may account for the green-striped cushaw's longevity—natives could count on it when other species didn't survive. The green-striped cushaw is also noteworthy for its fortitude after harvesting: it can be stored for up to four months. It remains a central ingredient to the culinary cultures of peoples beyond the southwestern Native Americans. Making cushaw butter is a family tradition in Tennessee, and all around Appalachia cooks prefer to use cushaws in their pumpkin pies. There is a long Louisiana Creole tradition of similarly sweetening the squash for use in pies and turnovers; sometimes it is simply eaten warm, straight from the pot. Mary Moore Bremer's book *New Orleans Recipes* cites this squash as by far the most delightful of the pumpkin family, and the way the Creoles like it best is to quarter it and cook it in the rind, after removing the seeds. Put in oven and bake till it may be pierced with a fork. Serve it in the rind, with butter on top. Another way is to peel and cut into small pieces and steam till quite done. Do not add water as it contains quite enough. Mash and salt and pepper, and flavor with sugar, nutmeg or cinnamon. Stir in a lump of butter, and serve. (Source: Slow Food USA)

Other Perspectives: Maine CSA (by Karen Johnson)

Not too long ago everyone bought from local suppliers in the marketplace. But back then everyone was self-employed and the barter system was alive and well in this country. That was around 1850. Then came progress: the Industrial Revolution, transcontinental shipping, and, of course, the supermarket. We are finally sick, and sick of the whole system. Much of our supermarket food is non-food, loaded with synthetics, pesticides, preservatives, GMOs, high fructose corn syrup and aspartame. "Fresh" is an advertising slogan unrelated to produce shipped from South America or Sri Lanka! The idea of eating real food, bought direct from the farmer, is catching on across the country. I know folks in Maine whose families have never stopped buying local eggs, blueberries, maple syrup, strawberries, honey, lamb, milk, and truck produce from their neighbors. Everywhere in Maine there are local food co-ops sponsored by local farms, mostly organic (even though some, like Crooked Sky, do not bother with the political formality of registering organic). Usually they deliver to some central location such as a church or grange hall. We buy shares for the season which in Maine is from June through October. The farm controls everything and if we have problems, questions or changes we talk directly with the farmer. The first crops are spring greens, asparagus, Jerusalem artichokes, strawberries, peas, rhubarb, parsley and herbs. Then comes kale, spinach, chard, radishes, dill, summer squash, green and yellow beans. Later there is broccoli, cauliflower, beets, carrots, parsnips, new potatoes, honey, raspberries and green pole beans. Then come tomatoes, corn, squash, mature potatoes, blueberries, blackberries, onions, pole or shell beans, cabbage, rutabagas and turnips, carrots, and

RECIPES ETC.

dried herbs. The quality of the produce we get through our shares is outstanding – just like you went out and picked it yourself a few hours ago. Most people share some of what they get with others because the allotments are very generous. The farms that co-op usually sell only from their farmstand and to the co-op members, so we don't get "leftovers." It's really great to be able to get fresh produce here in Ajo. Thanks to everyone who is making it happen.

Red dried chiles enchilada sauce (Sara Jones, Tucson CSA)

4-6 dried red chiles, rinsed clean
½ onion, minced
½ teaspoon ground cumin
½ teaspoon dried oregano
1 tablespoon oil
1 teaspoon white vinegar

To re-hydrate chiles, leave them submerged overnight in warm water. You can also pour boiling water over chiles and leave them to re-hydrate for about 45 minutes. Once pliable and moist, remove stem and seeds from each pod and place in a blender, with about ¾ cup of the soaking liquid. Blend well. In a large skillet, heat oil over medium high heat. Add onion and cumin and stir until fragrant. Pour in chile mixture and oregano. Be CAREFUL, the steam the chiles will release is spicy – don't lean directly over the skillet! Cook, stirring continuously, for about 3 minutes. Remove from heat and add vinegar and a bit of salt to taste. You can supplement the CSA chiles with any other dried chiles you might have at hand for a more complex taste.

Butternut and Acorn Squash Soup (submitted by Mara Branson)

1 butternut squash, halved and seeded
1 acorn squash (or cushaw), halved and seeded
3 tablespoons butter
1 chopped sweet onion
1 quart chicken broth
2 T packed brown sugar
1 (4 ounce) package cream cheese, softened
1/2 t ground black pepper
ground cinnamon to taste (optional)
fresh parsley, for garnish

Preheat oven to 350 °F. Place the squash halves cut side down in a baking dish. Bake 45 minutes or until tender. Remove from heat, and cool slightly. Scoop the pulp from the skins. Discard skins. Melt the butter in a skillet over medium heat and sauté the onion until tender. Pour broth in a pot. Add the squash pulp, onion, brown sugar, cream cheese, pepper, and cinnamon. Heat over medium heat. While heating the soup, use a hand mixer (or blender if you don't like the squash pulp) to blend it. Once it's done, boil it and serve with corn bread.

Nina's CSA Greens and Beans Soup

1 onion
1 medium turnip or kohlrabi
1 sweet potato (or some peeled and cubed winter squash)
2 Red LaSoda potatoes
2 ribs of celery
approx. 2 cups of cooked pinto, navy or cannellini beans with cooking liquid (soak the night before, then cook in enough water with a bay leaf and 2 cloves of garlic till soft, remove the garlic and bay and add salt)
1 bunch of kale (or any other type of greens)
olive oil, salt, pepper, chipotle flakes, parsley

Chop the onion and sauté in about 4 T of olive oil; add chopped celery, turnip and potatoes, add salt and braise for about 7 minutes. Then add beans with the liquid, stir, add chipotle flakes to taste, and cook for about 15 min. Gently mash in the pot with a hand potato masher (or hand mixer, or remove half and process in a blender), add chopped kale and cook for another 5 min. Let cool for a few minutes, and serve sprinkled with parsley. This makes a big batch of soup, but it is even better the next day. You can also add some cooked pasta, or bread for the velvety classic Italian ribollita taste and texture, and if you have any Parmesan heels on hand, toss them in during the cooking as well.

Karen's favorite recipe for winter greens (submitted by Karen Johnson)

Wash and de-stem greens. Cut out any really fat stems, especially in older leaves. Shake them lightly to remove some of the water and put them in a covered dish in the microwave on 4.30 minutes. Remove and serve with real butter and a little salt and pepper. It doesn't get any better than this. Karen likes to combine chard and beet greens.

Green Turkey Omelet (submitted by Maddy Huff)

6 slices turkey bacon (uncured, no nitrates preferred)
your favorite greens
sliced green onions
grated cheese
eggs

Fry turkey bacon until crisp. Add olive oil to pan drippings. Stir-fry greens until wilted. Salt and pepper them. Prepare omelets and add greens, onions, and cheese as filling. Serve with bacon and fresh fruit.