

AJO COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE



Editor: Nina Altshul

Winter 2010 / Week 6 of 11

Planned harvest: Dried Beans, Dried Wheat Berries, Red LaSoda Potatoes, Sweet Potatoes, Ruby Streak Mizuna, Herb Mix (Dill, Cilantro or Watercress), Purple Top Turnips, Spring Mix.

Mokum Carrots: The carrots we received in last week's share are a very sweet early hybrid, top-rated for taste. The roots are longer than in regular type of carrots and therefore harder to harvest however they make up for the hard work with their juiciness and brittle tenderness. Since they have almost no core, they are really the perfect carrot for eating raw.

Notes from my healthy roots journey: When I was growing up in Slovenia, rutabagas had a very bad reputation, probably because of the lingering cabbagey smell when it was cooked in school kitchens (and only now do I understand how lucky I was that my school actually cooked our school lunches from scratch!). So I was a bit cautious when I approached our share. After Mari Kaestle told me that her mom used to cook it soft and then mash it with some butter, nutmeg and sherry, I decided to try my mom's trusty recipe for mashed potatoes (in the hope that this recipe would work with anything, right?): I peeled it and boiled it with a bit of water and salt until soft (approx. 15 min), and then mashed it with some butter, milk and sour cream. I served it instead of potatoes, and it was absolutely delicious! However, I'm learning that one doesn't even have to cook it: Tania from the farm loves it raw, straight out of the soil on the fields, while Bruce Secker likes to slice it into sticks and serve raw on top of the daily salad. Now I can't wait to get more rutabagas!

Wheat berries are back! Harvested from Crooked Sky Farm's original Glendale field, this variety of red winter durum wheat has a wonderfully rich and nutty flavor and is low in gluten. It can be ground or used in its berry form. Before using, the grains have to be cleaned: Crooked Sky Farms' wheat berries are mostly clean, but they do include some chaff and also tiny black wild mustard seeds from the field. The seeds are harmless and can safely be left in. The chaff can be removed by winnowing the grains before use. Just as with dry beans, I recommend taking a large baking tray and sorting through them to remove any other impurities. Once they have been cleaned, you can simply grind the berries for a delicious nutty flour. A coffee grinder will do the job just fine, and better quality blenders work great, too. Once ground, keep the flour in the refrigerator, since it can spoil easily due to all the nutrients. However, if you are planning to soak and cook the berries, you can clean them by just putting them in a large bowl and pouring water over them; the impurities will just rise to the surface. Drain by pouring out the impurities first, and repeat a few more times until your berries are clean. The berries cook best if soaked first (like dry beans) and then cooked. To boost their nutrients, you can also leave them soaking longer, for approx. 24 hours, till they start sprouting. When soaked you can cook them as a breakfast cereal (lightly ground, and with milk or soymilk, like porridge), as a substitute for rice, in pilafs, soups and stews, casseroles, warm salads, or for stuffing, e.g. bell peppers, etc. A simple yet delicious way to use your berries without soaking is to make pancakes (see Recipes etc. below).



Jen whipping up a batch of magic wheat berry pancakes

Event reminder: Don't miss the Cultural Dinner this Saturday at 6 pm in the Curley School Auditorium! Candles will light up the dinner which will start with Ajo CSA and Ajo Community Garden's mixed salad with cholla buds from the Tohono O'odham reservation, followed by a variety of ethnic entrees, including tamales made by the Cultural Crafts Group (and one of our members).

Next Saturday, January 30, Desert Senita Health Clinic will be holding their annual Health Fair between 10 am and 2 pm with a free health screening, cake walk, yoga and laughter yoga and many more activities. At noon Chef Cheralyn is returning to Ajo to do a cooking demonstration which will incorporate next week's CSA share, and share more tips on healthy cooking. You will be able to talk to the chef again in the evening at the pickup, where she will be handing out some goodies, however don't miss her "show" at the Fair!

RECIPES ETC.

CSA Wheat Berry Pancakes

(submitted by Jennifer Woods of Crooked Sky Farms)

Jen first introduced us to this great recipe using whole wheat berries last summer at the members' picnic.

1 cup milk
2/3 cup wheat berries
2 tsp baking powder
2 Tbsp brown sugar
2 eggs
dash of salt

Clean wheat berries in a pot of water, swish around and let the stuff surface, then remove. Using a glass blender (will scratch plastic), blend milk and wheat berries for 4 minutes on high. (Stop blender intermittently if you're concerned about overworking your blender.) Add 2 tsp baking powder, 2 Tbsp brown sugar, 2 eggs and a dash of salt to the blender, and mix it all together. Spoon batter onto a hot greased griddle. Flip pancakes once during cooking (pancakes are ready to flip when bubbles on top stay open). Cook pancakes for several minutes, until done. Serve with fresh fruit or syrup!

Nina's Wheat Berry "Risotto" with Mushrooms and Butternut Squash

2 cups wheat berries, washed and soaked for at least 6 hours
6 cups of stock (veggie or meat)
2 cups water
2 Tbsp olive oil
2 Tbsp butter
1 onion, peeled and finely chopped
1 celery stalk, chopped
1 carrot, chopped
2 cloves garlic, chopped
1-2 dcl dry white wine or vermouth
½ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese, or to taste
sea salt and black pepper, to taste
½ cup fresh parsley, chopped
2 tsp dried thyme
1 butternut squash, peeled and cubed (or substitute 2 sweet potatoes and/or rutabaga)
1 ounce (approx. 1 cup) dried porcini mushrooms
½ lb fresh mushrooms such as cremini, shiitake etc. (optional)
Lemon, sliced, for garnish

Wash and soak your wheat berries, then drain. Reconstitute the dried mushrooms by pouring 2 cups of warm water over them, letting them soak the water for at least 30 minutes. Lift out the mushrooms by hand, squeezing as much water as possible back into the container. Rinse the mushrooms in several changes of water to remove any grit. Chop coarsely, and set aside. Filter the soaking water through a strainer lined with a paper towel. Add the mushroom water to the stock (you should have about 8 cups), and heat it up in a separate pot.

Then prepare your soffritto: heat up the olive oil and 1 Tbsp of butter in a large, thick-bottom pan, add onions, garlic, celery, and carrot, and cook very slowly for about 15 minutes without coloring. Add the wheat berries and thyme, and lightly fry while stirring. Add the wine and keep stirring until the wine evaporates. Then add 6 cups of the stock with the mushroom water, bring to a boil and simmer for about 45 minutes, or until the wheat berries are soft. About 25 minutes into cooking, add your butternut squash.

You don't have to stir this dish all the time, just keep checking the liquid level—don't let the mixture dry out—and add more stock if needed. There should be some liquid remaining in the pot at all times, but not too much.

When the wheat berries are starting to become tender but still firm to the bite (and some grains have begun to split), add the reconstituted mushrooms and let cook for another 10 minutes. If the wheat berries are submerged in stock after that time, raise the heat and cook until there is just enough to moisten the grains, like a sauce. If there is not, stir in the remaining stock.

Just before serving, stir in the Parmesan, the remaining tablespoon of butter, finely chopped parsley and pepper. Remove from heat, put the lid on the pan, and let rest for a few minutes before serving. Serve with slices of lemon and more Parmesan cheese.

If you have any fresh mushrooms on hand, clean them, and quickly fry them in some hot oil and/or butter, then coarsely chop half of them and add them to the Parmesan, butter and parsley. Divide the other half on top of the plates when serving.

Salsa with Cilantro

(submitted by Jennifer Woods of Crooked Sky Farms)

This is Jen's friend JJ's recipe: put one bunch cilantro, a cup of tomato puree, 1/4 cup of white onion, a pinch of dried crushed red pepper, and pinch of salt in a blender. Let 'er rip and ta daa, the best salsa!

Kale Kalamata Pizza

(adapted from Vegan Lunchbox by Jennifer McCann)

Jen Woods swears that her son chose this healthy pizza over a regular one, so give it a try!

6 c kale, stems removed, thinly sliced
pizza sauce or tomato sauce
4 sun-dried tomatoes, chopped
6 kalamata olives
handful pine nuts, (opt.)

Steam kale until completely tender. Drain in colander, pressing out most of the moisture. Place kale in a bowl and toss with pizza sauce, tomatoes and olives. Spread on pizza crust, sprinkle with pine nuts. Bake.