

AJO COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE



Fall 2009 / Week 9 of 13

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Planned harvest: Red Tomatoes, Melon (mix), Glendale Gold Onions, Arugula, Swiss Chard, Braising Mix, Green Chilis, Spaghetti Squash.

I'toi onions hold a special place in Sonoran Desert culinary culture. The I'toi plant grows easily and prolifically in the deserts of the American Southwest, and left in the ground during its summer dormancy the onion re-sprouts toward the end of the season, at which point it is harvested and replanted. It is virtually unknown in mainstream gardening and has been “red-listed” by the slow food movement as one of America’s endangered foods. It is also sometimes referred to as Papago onion. You will not find it in most nurseries, but if you want to grow it you can order bulbs from Native Seeds Search in Tucson.

The original US harvest of the wild I'toi onion took place on I'toi Mountain, better known as Baboquivari Mountain. This mountain is regarded by the O’odham nation as the navel of the world—the place where the earth opened and people emerged. The name I'toi signifies the Elder Brother, who is the creator deity in Tohono O’odham legends; consequently the onion is a sacred reminder of the O’odham creation story. On the other hand, botanical studies place the I'toi onion among a very old line of clumping onions brought to the new world by Jesuit missionaries in the late 17th century, concluding that the onion is not necessarily a US native.

Regardless of its ambiguous history, the I'toi onion has a bold and complex taste, and its sharp, peppery flavor is well suited to southwestern stews and sauces with robust, piquant flavors. You can also use it like any other scallion, so add them sparingly to your salads, dips, or garnish. (Sources: Slow Food USA, US Ark of Taste)

Cooking your salads? When temperatures drop and we start looking for our sweaters, our food choices and preparations might need some adaptation as well. According to the yogic tradition and Ayurveda, the traditional Indian holistic medicine, in cooler months the digestive system slows down, and raw vegetables and fruits can cause your *agni* (digestive fire) to work harder as it breaks down food so that your body can assimilate the nutrients. In a recent article in Yoga Journal, Devendra Triguna, president of the All India Ayurvedic Congress, explains that “uncooked vegetables deplete the metabolic fire in each cell and especially in the digestive system. They produce heaviness in the stomach. Unable to process these cold foods completely, the *agni* is forced to leave behind *ama*, a toxic residue that wreaks havoc in the form of gas, bloating, and stomachache.” According to this belief, by breaking down rough, fibrous veggies with a little roasting, steaming or sautéing, we give our body a head start so it can digest more easily. Cynthia Copple, dean of Mount Madonna Institute’s College of Ayurveda in California, noted that “after 26 years of working with clients, I’ve found that eating raw foods can increase the tendency toward getting colds and having congestion. Warm cooked food in the winter makes you feel warm and nurtured.” So if for the past six months a large part of our CSA shares ended up in raw salads and cold soups, now might be the time to try some heartier foods, see how your body likes them, and then, as always, find a balance that works for you and you alone.

For a simple meal or side dish, you might want to try warm or room-temperature mixed salads that incorporate a variety of lightly cooked vegetables combined with greens, and grains for a more substantial dish, brought together with a dressing. Some favorites include sautéed, steamed or roasted green beans, carrots, sweet potatoes, beets, broccoli, zucchini, butternut or spaghetti squash etc., in any combination, tossed with lemon or orange juice and olive oil, arranged over warm or cool grains such as rice, wheat berries, quinoa or millet, on a bed of wilted greens. Greens can include arugula, chard, mustard, kale, or a braising mix. Instead of oil and lemon juice, try a yogurt dressing or any other creamy dressing. And don’t forget to sprinkle the salad with your favorite nuts, like pecans, almonds, walnuts, pistachios, sesame seeds or pepitas, preferably toasted as well. You can also add cooked legumes like lentils, chickpeas, green peas or beans to the greens (the classic Italian version is white cannellini beans with steamed greens). The options are virtually limitless. Play with tastes, textures (crunchy and soft) and temperatures (combining hot ingredients with cold ones) to find your favorite combinations.

(Based on *Dressed for Winter* by Shubhra Krishan, published in Yoga Journal, Nov. 09)

RECIPES ETC.

Quinoa and Sweet Potato Salad

(adapted from *Yoga Journal*)

2 Tbsp white wine vinegar or lemon juice
1 Tbsp roasted sesame oil
1 tsp honey
1 tsp tamari or Bragg's Liquid Aminos (or substitute salt)
½ tsp grated fresh ginger
Juice of ½ orange
1 cup diced sweet potato (or substitute winter squash)
1 cup cooked quinoa
½ cup sliced chives or P'ittoi onions
2 Tbsp slivered almonds
1 bunch braised kale or other greens

Whisk together first six ingredients in a small bowl and set aside. Place sweet potato in a steamer basket over boiling water and steam 1 ½ to 3 minutes, until crisp-tender. Plunge into cold water to stop cooking. Blot dry with a paper towel. (Alternatively, roast in the oven tossed with some olive oil, and bake until tender.) Combine sweet potato, quinoa, chives, and almonds with 3 Tbsp of the dressing. Toss braised greens with the remaining dressing.

To serve, arrange equal portions of dressed greens on 4 salad plates, and arrange equal portions of the salad on top.

Gluten-Free Pumpkin Bread

(submitted by Paul Oglan)

Dry ingredients:

1 ¼ cup oat flour
1 1/3 cup spelt flour
1 cup barley flour
1 cup sugar (ok to use less – ¾ c or try some honey)
2 tsp baking soda
1 tsp salt
½ tsp baking power
1 heaping tsp cinnamon
1 heaping tsp cloves

Wet ingredients:

4 eggs
1 ½ can organic pumpkin (I use 2 cans to make it like pumpkin pie bread)

1/3 c coconut oil

2/3 c water

Combine the dry and wet ingredients, and bake at 350° F for 60 min, or check with a toothpick. Makes 2 9x5 loaves.

Nina's Butternut Squash Dip

Wash, halve and deseed your butternut squash (or use pumpkin, or acorn squash, or a combination), then place it face down on lightly oiled tray, add a tablespoon or two of water, and cover with aluminum foil. Bake at 350°F for about 30 to 45 minutes, or until the squash is soft. Let cool slightly but leave the oven on. In the meantime, sauté 2 small Glendale Gold onions in some olive oil, slowly until almost melted away. Add some chopped garlic to the pan and stir. Turn the heat off, add salt, pepper and your favorite seasoning (basil, oregano, sage, Cajun mix, chili powder etc.). Add the squash, and mix well. Crumble 2/3 cup of Feta cheese (or any other type of your favorite cheese), and add to the mixture. Add enough thick cream to make the mixture moist, then spoon into an oven-proof dip dish, and bake for another 15-20 minutes, or until slightly bubbly. Serve sprinkled with some paprika and/or sliced P'ittoi onions, alongside with tortilla or pita chips and veggie croutons.

This makes a big serving, so you might want to reserve save half and bake it later. You can also use this dip as a stuffing for burritos, topped with salsa, or mix with cooked pasta for a hearty mac&cheese dish, sprinkled with some Parmigiano cheese.

For a sweet version, combine 1 cup of cooked squash or pumpkin with 1 package of cream cheese, softened, and 1 cup of confectioners' sugar. Beat in a large bowl until smooth, then add ½ cup of sour cream or yogurt, a touch of salt, 1 tsp of ground cinnamon, and 1 tsp pumpkin spice. Serve cold or slightly warm with gingersnaps or graham crackers and/or apple slices.

