



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

July 19-20, 2013

It's All About Potatoes!

by: Richard de Wilde and Andrea Yoder

It's time to dig potatoes! It's always exciting to see the first potatoes come in from the field, and this is the week for it! We have an exciting line-up of potatoes to send your way this season, so get ready! This week we dug our first variety of potatoes, Red Norland, and are pleased to send them your way. We call these "new potatoes" because they were harvested from vines that were still green and the skins on these potatoes are tender and delicate. While we aren't "potato growers," we do grow quite a few potatoes for CSA. Each potato variety is carefully chosen and selected based on specific criteria including yield potential, disease resistance, days to maturity, flavor, and size. This week we want to introduce you to some of the varieties you'll be receiving throughout the season. Keep this information handy as the potatoes come to your table and refer back to this newsletter so you can properly identify and utilize the different potato varieties.

While potatoes originated in South America, they are thought to have been brought to the United States by way of Irish immigrants. There are thousands of potato varieties being grown all around the world right now and are eaten in many different cultures. Potatoes are actually grown from a piece of potato that was produced the year before. "Eyes" or sprouts start to grow from the potato as it is held in storage. We cut the potatoes into pieces making sure that each piece has several eyes and then plant that piece in a trench. This year we have 10 different varieties of potatoes and each plant looks a little different. Potato plants actually form beautiful flowers, with the colors of the blossoms varying depending on the variety. The field was gorgeous when it was in bloom with varying colors of beautiful flowers - from white to magenta. In the vegetable world, the purpose of a flower is usually to produce fruit or seed to reproduce the plant. Potato plants do produce seed, but potatoes are not usually planted from seed, they are planted from pieces of sprouting potatoes. Potato seeds contain a wide range of genetics. When you plant a potato seed, you never know quite what you are going to get and often the result

This Week's Box

NEW POTATOES: Grill these potatoes with mushrooms, toss with fresh dill and a drizzle of lemon juice, for a summer barbeque.

CARROTS: Packed with flavor, these are great roasted with onion and potato, paired with a juicy roast beef.

CUCUMBERS: Small dice in a bowl with nectarines, avocado, lime juice, cilantro, and green onion for a refreshing salad to serve with fish tacos.

ZUCCHINI: These are great stuffed and baked with a mixture of diced chicken, quinoa, feta cheese, parsley, and green onion.

SWEETHEART CABBAGE: This cabbage is known as the salad cabbage. Yes you can cook it, but the beauty of this cabbage is that the leaves are more tender, sweet, and mild, making it best for raw eating.

BROCCOLI OR CAULIFLOWER: Interesting way to jazz up your homemade meatballs; add minced broccoli, garlic, and parmesan cheese to the meat mixture.

SWEET SPANISH ONIONS: Place chunks of these on kabobs with pork, broccoli, and zucchini.

AMARANTH: This is a beautiful green that thrives in the heat of the summer. It should be lightly steamed or sautéed. An easy idea is to sauté amaranth with Sweet Spanish Onions, then finish with a splash of red wine vinegar and fresh basil.

ARUGULA: Wilt this green on top of a homemade pizza.

GREEN BOSTON LETTUCE: This tender lettuce is great for lettuce wraps or tear into bite-sized pieces and toss lightly with a simple vinaigrette.

CHOICE - BASIL: For a refreshing sweet drink, basil is great in strawberry nectarine lemonade. For the adults, simply stir in some smooth vodka and garnish with a fresh strawberry.

doesn't even look like the original plant that produced the seed! This is also probably how we got to have so many different kinds of potatoes. If you select a potato from a plant and replant it, you will get a plant that looks like the original piece that was planted. This is how different varieties are maintained.

We've carefully selected some interesting varieties to grow for you this year. We purchase certified organic seed when available, and also purchase seed that is certified disease free. Potatoes are vulnerable to diseases such as the dreaded, late blight which can defoliate an entire potato crop and kill the plant. While late blight can also be spread through the air, the first line of defense against this disease is to make sure it doesn't enter your field on a piece of the potato seed!

The first variety we dug is our early season Red Norland potato. This is a common potato with red skin and white flesh. It is a waxy potato and when eaten shortly after harvest, you'll find it to be one of the best potato eating experiences of the season! Our favorite way to eat the first potatoes of the season is to simply boil them just until tender, then drain off the water. Put

the potatoes back in the warm pan over low heat and melt some butter with the potatoes. Season with salt and pepper and a little fresh parsley or dill. So simple and tasty.

Now might be a good time to discuss the two different types of potatoes. Technically they both have starches, which is a stored form of energy and is the whole reason the plant produces a potato. Depending on the type of starches in the potato, they can be classified as either waxy or starchy. Waxy potatoes are more moist and creamy. They hold their shape after they are cooked which makes them good candidates for roasting, potato salads and soups where you want the potato to hold its shape. These are not good for making mashed potatoes as they get too sticky and are kind of like wallpaper paste. Starchy potatoes are more dry and fluffy when cooked. They don't hold together as well, which makes them a good candidate for a soup where you might want to use the starch as the component that will thicken the soup. This is also the best type of potato to use for making fluffy, smooth mashed potatoes.

Yukon Gold potatoes are probably

one of the most common gold potatoes. While we don't grow this variety, we grow a close relative called Carola. This is a gold skin potato with gold flesh. It is a waxy potato that has a creamy texture and buttery flavor. We grow this potato because it produces great yields and is just a really good potato.

This year we are going to try growing a russet potato. We don't typically grow this variety, but we wanted to add a little contrast to the waxy potato varieties with this potato, which is more dry and starchy. This is the perfect potato to use for mashed potatoes, gnocchi or potato bread.

Ok, that's it for the common, "normal" varieties. To keep things interesting, we're always looking for beautiful potatoes that are interesting in appearance, but still meet our criteria for production, disease resistance, etc. While we've grown purple skin-purple fleshed potatoes previously, we haven't done so for several years. They are a beautiful potato, but if not cooked properly they can turn from a vivid purple to a not so beautiful gray. This year we're trying a

Grilled Salt & Vinegar Potatoes

This recipe was sourced from 101cookbooks.com. It is an adaptation of a recipe that was originally published in *Martha Stewart Magazine* in June 2009. It is a very easy recipe to maneuver and the potato slices are delicious as is or you can dip them into sour cream or a flavorful aioli.

Serves 4

- 2 cups white wine or apple cider vinegar
- 1 pound waxy potatoes, cut into ¼-inch slices
- 2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp flaky sea salt, plus more for seasoning
- ¼ tsp freshly ground pepper

1. Pour the vinegar into a medium saucepan, then stack or arrange the potatoes so the vinegar covers them completely. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat and simmer for about 5 minutes, or until the potatoes are just fork tender. You want them to hold their shape, so they don't fall apart on the grill later.
2. Let the potatoes cool in the vinegar for 30 minutes. Drain well, then very gently toss with olive oil, salt and pepper.
3. Heat the grill to medium high. Grill potatoes, covered if possible, until golden on one side, then flip and grill the other side, roughly 3-5 minutes per side. Serve sprinkled with salt.

new variety called Purple Majesty...with hopes that it will retain its majestic color! We have another beautiful purple skinned potato called Purple Viking. We grew this variety a few years ago and it quickly became one of our favorites. It has purple skin with splashes of pink and the flesh is pure white. I love this potato because the flesh has a texture unlike any other. It's kind of a cross between a waxy potato and a starchy potato. It is excellent to use in soups and mashed potatoes as it lends itself to a velvety texture and consistency. This potato also has an excellent flavor and can be used in pretty much any preparation.

So several years ago we saw a really cool potato at the county fair...yes we were envious. For the past several years we've been trying to find this variety...without really knowing what the name of the potato even is! Last fall we stumbled upon a variety called Spartan Splash that looks like it might just be what we're looking for! It's supposed to be gold skin with gold flesh, but what sets it apart is the splashes of purple on the exterior. We only had a little bit of seed for this variety, but it should be enough to at least take a look at it. Later in the season we'll be digging our one fingerling variety—a potato characterized by a long slender shape that

is excellent for pan-frying. We have a few other trial varieties as well including a pink skin, pink fleshed variety called Terra Rosa and a purple skin, white flesh variety called Colonial Purple. Many potatoes have old heirloom names, but do you ever wonder how they come up with these names and who gets the fun job of choosing the names?

Potatoes are best stored in a cool, dark, dry place at about 50-55°F. If exposed to light, the potato will produce solanine which is a bitter alkaloid that gives the exposed portion of the potato a green color. If you see this on a potato, trim that portion of the potato away.

Potatoes are such a versatile food, that there are many ways you can prepare them: roasted, boiled, baked, pan-fried, deep-fried, in soups, gratins or even breads and rolls. Potatoes pair well with any kind of dairy—cream, cheese, milk, sour cream. They also pair well with other vegetables in summer and fall including tomatoes, peppers, onions, garlic, winter squash and many root vegetables.

We hope you'll find some interesting ways to enjoy the potatoes in your shares this year. Take a moment to admire the diversity of the varieties and pay attention to what makes each variety unique.

Buttermilk Summer Squash & Potato Soup

This recipe was borrowed from 101cookbooks.com. This is a quick, simple recipe to prepare and gives you an alternative recipe for using zucchini during the peak season!

Serves 6-8

- A generous splash of olive oil or 3 Tbsp of butter
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- A couple pinches of sea salt
- Pinch of crushed red pepper flakes
- 3-inch sprig of rosemary
- 1 ½ pounds of yellow or green zucchini or summer squash, cut into ½-inch thick chunks
- ¾ pound potatoes, un-peeled, cut into ¼ inch thick pieces
- 3 medium cloves garlic, chopped
- 3 cups lightly flavored vegetable stock or water
- ¾ cup buttermilk



Garnish with: fresh herbs, toasted almonds, a generous drizzle of olive oil, crumbled feta or diced green beans

1. Heat olive oil or butter in a large thick-bottomed pan over medium heat. Stir in the onions, salt, red pepper flakes, and rosemary. Sauté until onions are tender, a couple minutes. Stir in the squash and potatoes, and cook until the squash starts to get a bit tender—a few minutes.
2. Stir in the garlic, remove the sprig of rosemary and then add the stock (or water) to the pot. Bring to a boil, and then reduce the heat to a simmer, stirring occasionally until potatoes are tender, about 15 minutes.
3. Puree the soup with a hand blender or carefully transfer it to a blender. Blend until the soup is smooth, then slowly add the buttermilk. Taste and adjust the seasoning, adding more salt if needed.
4. Garnish with desired toppings and enjoy either hot or at room temperature.