



# Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

November 8-9, 2013

## Sweet Potatoes and Brussels Sprouts...Fall Favorites!

by Andrea Yoder

Despite the changing of the seasons, with winter right around the corner, there are still a lot of great things available to eat in Wisconsin. This week we want to focus on two of our favorite fall crops, Brussels sprouts and sweet potatoes. Both of these crops are challenging to grow, but we're up for a good challenge and the benefits we reap from eating these veggies far outweigh the challenges.

Over the next couple of weeks, you are going to get quite a few sweet potatoes, so it's best to plan for how you will use them! For those of you who are first time members, know that these sweet potatoes are not like the grocery store sweet potatoes...they are actually sweet! When first harvested, they have very thin, delicate skin and are actually very starchy. If you were to eat one right away, it wouldn't be a very good experience. For the first week after harvest, we hold the sweet potatoes in one of our greenhouses. We control the temperature and humidity and maintain an environment of 85°F and 95% humidity. After about 7 days, we lower the heat and humidity and start packing the potatoes in your boxes. This process is called "curing" and it helps to convert the starches in the sweet potatoes to sugars as well as sets the skins so the potatoes will store better. The ideal storage temperature for sweet potatoes after they are cured is 55-65°F. Don't worry if your sweet potatoes start to pile up at your house, they will keep for quite awhile if stored properly. Find a cool place in your home that is away from direct sunlight. You might choose to put them in a cool basement, closet or entryway. Store your potatoes in this location and check them periodically.

Sweet potatoes are a tropical plant and are found in many different parts of the world. This is great from a culinary standpoint because it means there are a lot of different resources you can tap into to find some great recipes. The most basic way to prepare a sweet potato is to put it in a baking pan with a small amount of water and bake it in the oven at a low temperature until it is soft and tender. You can also cut the sweet potato into chunks or wedges and roast them in the oven. Slice them thinly and fry them in a low temperature oil for tasty sweet potato fries. If you put the flesh of cooked sweet potatoes in a

food processor or run them through a food mill, you can make a very smooth puree that can be used for baby food, baked goods (pie, bread, cookies, etc) or flavored, seasoned and reheated. Sweet potatoes pair well with a lot of different ingredients including coconut, citrus fruits, nuts, maple syrup, honey, hard cheeses (such as Parmesan), bacon, cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, paprika, pears, apples, pecans, raisins, rum, vanilla, walnuts and hazelnuts. While the flavors of honey and maple syrup are great with sweet potatoes, I'd caution you to use them sparingly for the flavor as opposed to adding them for the sweetness. Candied sweet potatoes are a Thanksgiving favorite in this country, but our sweet potatoes are pretty sweet on their own and can cross the line from good to sickeningly sweet if too much brown sugar, syrup or honey is added.

Brussels sprouts are a pretty cool plant unlike anything else. They are often described as "Dr. Seuss" like because they grow on a whimsical stalk that can get to be as tall as 4 feet. The sprouts grow off the main stalk and look like little heads of cabbage. The leaves on the top of the plant closely resemble

collards and can be eaten similarly. Brussels sprouts can have a strong cabbage-like flavor which can either be good or not so desirable.

Here are a few keys to the best Brussels sprouts eating experience. First, don't eat Brussels sprouts until they've gone through a couple frosty mornings. The cold temperatures help to sweeten the sprouts and balance out their flavors. If you buy Brussels sprouts in the grocery store, you will notice a marked difference in their flavor as they were likely grown in a warmer climate. The second important key to success with Brussels sprouts is DO NOT OVERCOOK them! They can quickly cross the line from bright green and tasty to olive green, mushy and unpleasant. Brussels sprouts can be eaten raw or cooked. If you are eating them raw, slice them thinly or marinate them in a vinaigrette or dressing to soften the leaves. If you are cooking them, it is best to cut larger sprouts in half or quarters so they cook more evenly. If roasting sprouts, the smaller sprouts can be roasted whole. Larger sprouts are better if they are lightly blanched (cooked briefly in boiling water and then shocked in cold water) first and then roasted. I like to cook Brussels

## This Week's Box

**BRUSSELS SPROUTS:** See this week's main article and recipes for great ideas.

**CARROTS:** Carrots are incredibly versatile. Add them to soups and stir-frys, roast them, or enjoy raw.

**CELERIAC:** Make a crunchy celeriac and apple slaw. Make a vinaigrette by mixing the juice from a tangerine with 1 Tbsp of both olive oil and ground mustard, and add salt and pepper to taste. Cut the celeriac and an apple into matchstick pieces and toss with the vinaigrette.

**GARLIC:** Make a simple, homemade garlic bread this week.

**GINGER:** Add ginger to tea or grate it into a stir-fry dish for an added flavor kick.

**RED ONIONS:** Chop up onions and add them to the top of a homemade, veggie-topped pizza.

**BEAUTY HEART RADISHES:** These may be white on the outside but inside they have a bright magenta color. Add these to a stir-fry for a colorful splash or grate them onto the top of a winter salad.

**KABOCHA SQUASH:** These are the bright orange squash in your box. Roast the squash and make a creamy roasted kabocha squash soup.

**SWEET POTATOES:** Make delicious garlic mashed sweet potatoes for a sweet twist on traditional mashed potatoes. For added flavor, add in crumbled bacon as well. See this week's main article and recipes for more great ideas.

**GOLDEN POTATOES:** Make homemade, oven roasted potato chips with this week's potatoes and flavor them with your favorite seasonings such as paprika, chili powder, garlic powder and cumin.

**TAT SOI:** This Asian green has spoon-shaped leaves and a mild mustard flavor. Tat soi is great when sautéed in sesame oil, topped with soy sauce and added to rice dishes.

**HONEYNUT BUTTERNUT OR SWEET DUMPLING:** Cube and roast honeynut or sweet dumpling squash and add to the top of a spinach salad.

sprouts so they are tender, but still have a little bit of crunch left. This is the point right before you cross the line to olive green, mushy and overcooked.

Brussels sprouts pair well with dairy products (cheese, butter, cream) as well as nuts, pork, mustard, onions, garlic, apples, chestnuts, eggs, lemon, mushrooms, vinegar and walnuts. An interesting fact about Brussels sprouts is that they actually contain nutrients that can attack and kill cancer cells! This is a true example of "let food be thy medicine."

### Roasted Brussels Sprouts with Toasted Pecans and Avocado

Borrowed from *Food & Wine Magazine* in December 2011

Serves 4

- ¼ - ½ cup pecans
- 1 ¼ pounds Brussels sprouts
- 2 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1 Hass avocado, cut into ½ -inch dice
- ½ tsp chopped thyme, fresh or ¼ tsp dried thyme
- 1 Tbsp balsamic vinegar

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Spread the pecans in a pie plate and bake for 5 minutes or until toasted. Let cool, then coarsely chop.
2. Bring a large saucepan of salted water to a boil. Add the Brussels sprouts and cook just until bright green, about 3 minutes. Drain, cut in half and pat dry with paper towels.
3. On a large rimmed baking sheet, toss the Brussels sprouts with the olive oil. Season with salt and pepper and turn them cut sides down. Roast in the oven for about 20 minutes, until nicely browned on the bottom.
4. Remove the roasted Brussels sprouts from the oven and put in a large bowl. Toss the Brussels sprouts with the pecans, avocado and thyme. Season with salt and pepper and drizzle with the vinegar just before serving.

### Ginger-Coconut Sweet Potatoes

This recipe was adapted from [www.101cookbooks.com](http://www.101cookbooks.com). It is easy to make, very flavorful, and I've never had anyone turn down seconds! It is also good with a little bit of added orange zest and juice.

Serves 6

- 2 ½ pounds sweet potatoes
- ½ cup coconut milk
- 1 Tbsp fresh ginger, grated
- 1 Tbsp maple syrup
- ½ tsp sea salt
- ½ cup raw, unsweetened grated coconut
- 2 Tbsp olive oil or melted butter
- ½ cup toasted macadamia nuts or hazelnuts, chopped

1. Preheat your oven to 350°F. Butter or oil medium-sized casserole dish.
2. Place sweet potatoes in a baking pan with about ½ inch of water in the bottom. Place in the oven for somewhere between an hour and an hour and a half, or until each is baked through. Times vary greatly depending on the size of your sweet potatoes - in the end you should be able to cut through the center flesh as if it were soft butter.
3. Remove the potatoes from the oven, let them cool for a few minutes, and cut each sweet potato in half. Scrape out the flesh. You should have about three cups of sweet potatoes. In a food processor, puree the sweet potatoes with the coconut milk until well-combined and smooth. Stir in the ginger, maple syrup and salt. Let it sit for a few minutes, stir again and taste - adjust the seasoning if you need to - this is your chance to get the right amount of salt and ginger in the sweet potatoes before they go in the oven.
4. Spoon the sweet potato mixture into the baking dish, sprinkle with coconut, drizzle with olive oil or butter and bake uncovered until warmed through and the coconut has turned golden. This will take approximately 30 - 40 minutes. Remove and sprinkle with the toasted nuts just before serving.

### Sweet Potato Kimchi Pancakes

A CSA member shared this recipe with me (Andrea) several years ago and it has become one of our favorites that we look forward to making every fall and winter. It was created by one of my favorite chefs, Andrea Reusing from Lantern Restaurant in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The recipe was published in *Gourmet* magazine in October 2008 and can be found at [www.epicurious.com](http://www.epicurious.com).

Serves 8

- 1 pound sweet potatoes
- 1 cup packed kimchi (approximately 7 ounces), chopped finely
- 1 ½ tsp finely chopped garlic
- 1 to 2 Tbsp chopped fresh Serrano chiles (The amount of chile pepper you use may be adjusted to your liking and will also be dependent upon the heat of the kimchi. If you do not have fresh chiles available, you may also substitute pickled jalapeño or a pinch of dried red pepper flakes.)
- 1 cup thinly sliced onions
- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- ¾ cup all-purpose flour
- About ½ cup vegetable oil

1. Peel sweet potatoes and julienne (very small strips) using a mandolin or the shredding attachment on a food processor. You should have about 6 cups of sweet potatoes once they are cut.
2. Stir the potato together with the remaining ingredients except for the oil. Let the mixture stand at room temperature until wilted and moist, about 5 minutes, then stir again.
3. Heat 2 Tbsp of the oil in a 12-inch heavy skillet over medium-high heat until it shimmers. Using 2 serving spoons, scoop up some of the sweet potato mixture in one spoon and use the other one to compress the mixture and form a rough patty. Carefully slide the patty off the spoon and into the hot pan. Repeat the process to add another 4 or 5 pancakes to the pan. You will need to do several batches to cook all the pancakes.
4. Cook until golden brown, 1 ½ to 2 minutes, then flip the pancake. Add a little more oil if necessary. Cook until golden brown, 1 to 2 minutes more. Transfer to a plate lined with paper towels or to a baking rack on a sheet pan. Hold the pancakes in a warm oven (set at 150-200°F) until you are finished frying the pancakes and are ready to serve them. Add oil to skillet between batches as needed.
5. Serve warm with a dipping sauce of your choice. The original recipe was accompanied by a soy-vinegar dipping sauce (recipe available at [www.epicurious.com](http://www.epicurious.com)), but I prefer to serve them with a dollop of sour cream or sour cream mixed with lime juice and cilantro.
6. If you have extra pancakes leftover, they can easily be cooled and frozen. When you are ready to use them, reheat the unfrozen pancakes in a 375°F oven.