



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com

October 6 - 7, 2017

Cover Crops 101: Keep It Covered!

By Farmer Richard

In our newsletter article two weeks ago entitled "Soil....Our Hope for a Climate Solution," we briefly discussed the importance of using cover crops as a means of "regenerative farming" to not only build soil, but also as a means of capturing atmospheric carbon through plants and storing it in the soil. This week we want to share more about what it means to plant cover crops on our farm and why we consider them to be an important part of our production system. We've been using cover crops for over 40 years, mainly as a means of enhancing soil quality. Only recently have we learned that cover crops are an important tool we can use to help mitigate climate change, both by reducing excessive atmospheric carbon as well as their role in making our soils more resilient to erratic weather conditions. We know that soils with high organic matter hold water better in drought conditions and are able to drain better in times of excess moisture. There are many benefits to including cover crops in farming systems and, from a farmer's perspective, I can't understand why every farmer wouldn't want to plant them!

Cover crops are crops we plant in our fields before and after our vegetable cash crops. While we plant vegetable crops with the intention of harvesting them for sale, we seldom ever sell a cover crop. There are other reasons why we plant cover crops. Our farming system developed from the work of Rudolf Steiner, J.I. Rodale, and William Albrecht, early advocates of using cover crops in organic systems as a means of keeping the ground covered at all times. In theory, this is a basic principle of nature that allows us to use plants to capture solar energy from the sun to enrich the soil and prevent erosion. . We don't like to have bare ground over the winter as it is very vulnerable to winter winds, etc and we don't want to lose our precious topsoil!

(See our **blog** for the rest of Farmer Richard's article)

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What's In The Box?

GARLIC: Check out the recipe for roasted squash in this week's newsletter. Combine chopped garlic with fresh herbs to pour over sweet roasted orange kabocha squash!

JALAPEÑO PEPPERS: There are two jalapeños in this week's box, not to be confused with the mini-sweet peppers! The jalapeños are green and packed loose in the box whereas the mini-sweet peppers are packaged in a brown paper bag.

ORANGE ITALIAN FRYING PEPPERS: This is the slender, bright orange pepper in this week's box and it is a sweet pepper. Use this in the curry recipe featured in the newsletter.

BROCCOLI OR CAULIFLOWER: Both of these crops are starting to slow down in production and will be done within the next few weeks. Enjoy them while we have them or blanch them and freeze them to enjoy during the winter!

VARIETY OF TOMATOES: If you're looking for something to take the chill off a cool evening, use them to make homemade cream of tomato soup!

ORANGE CARROTS: Use this week's carrots to make a jar of Italian giardiniera, also known as pickled vegetables. Combine the carrots with cauliflower, sweet peppers and the jalapeños to make a nice blend. There's a recipe at cooking.nytimes.com.

SALAD MIX: Our salad mix season may be short this fall. Enjoy the convenience of this mix to make quick salads when you're short on time!

JICAMA: See last week's newsletter and/or blog post for more information about jicama as well as recipes. Do not store jicama in the fridge, but rather keep it at room temperature on your counter top until you're ready to eat it within the next week or two.

MINI SWEET PEPPERS: These sweet, multi-colored peppers are packed in a brown paper bag. Eat them raw for snacks or toss them onto the grill or in the oven to cook them and further enhance their natural sweetness.

TOMATILLOS: While tomatillos are most often used to make salsa, they can also be used in other dishes. Check out our recipe archive on our website where you will find other recipes including tomatillos such as salads, stews and soups.

RED ONIONS: Store onions in a cool, dry place out of direct sunlight.

ORANGE KABOCHA SQUASH: Read more about this vegetable in this week's featured vegetable article in our newsletter and on our blog.

BABY WHITE TURNIPS: These mild, tender turnips may be eaten raw or cooked. Don't forget to use the greens as a cooking green or incorporate them into raw salads this week.

RED CHARD: Chard is delicious both raw and cooked. You may eat both the stem and the leaves.

Featured Vegetable: Kabocha Squash

This week we're featuring the first of several different varieties of winter squash we grew for you this year. This week's selection, orange kabocha squash, is shaped like a plump round disc and has a stunning bright orange skin with deep orange flesh inside. This is one of our favorite squash varieties because of its excellent eating quality, and in most years, its ability to store for several months. While we typically don't deliver this squash until November at the earliest, we're including it in your boxes earlier because we suspect it may not store as well this year. We've already noticed some spots forming on some of the squash and have been removing them from our storage bins at a greater rate than we normally see at this point in the season. The storage-ability of a squash is directly related to the growing conditions in the field.

(See our **blog** for the rest of this vegetable feature article to learn more about Kabocha Squash!)

Cooking With This Week's Box!

This week's box has a burst of color with the gorgeous orange kabocha squash! There are a lot of things you can do with this squash, but this week I'm going to use it to make a simple, seasonal **One-Pot Kabocha Squash and Chickpea Curry** (See below). This is very easy to make and uses the sweet peppers and tomatoes in this week's box as well as some of the swiss chard. Either mini sweet peppers or orange Italian frying peppers will work in this recipe. This is actually better the second day, so it's a great dish to make on the weekend and serve for dinner on a night during the week when you know you won't have a lot of time to cook.

(See our **blog** for the rest of this article & Chef Andrea's suggestions for utilizing every item in your box including recipe links!)

Roasted Winter Squash with Parsley, Sage, and Rosemary

Yield: 6 Servings

2 pounds kabocha or butternut winter squash

Olive oil

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste

1 plump clove garlic, finely chopped

1 heaping tsp chopped fresh sage

1 heaping tsp finely chopped fresh rosemary

3 Tbsp chopped fresh parsley

1. Heat the oven to 375°F.
2. Cut the squash in half and remove the seeds. Scoop out the seed cavity and slice the squash into crescent moon slices. Peel the squash and cut into 1-inch chunks; you should have about 4 cups.
3. Toss the squash in enough olive oil to moisten it, then season with ½ tsp salt and freshly ground black pepper. Loosely arrange the squash in a single layer in a large baking dish or on a sheet pan lined with parchment paper.
4. Roast the squash until the pieces are tender and browned here and there, about 35 minutes. Every 10 minutes or so, give them a turn so that they color evenly.
5. When the squash is tender and golden, warm 4 tsp oil in a small skillet over medium heat. Add the garlic, sage, and rosemary and cook just long enough to remove the raw taste of the garlic, a minute should do. Turn off the heat, and add the parsley. Next, toss this mixture with the cooked squash. Transfer to a serving dish, season with salt and pepper, and serve.

Recipe adapted from Deborah Madison's *Vegetable Literacy*.

One-Pot Kabocha Squash & Chickpea Curry

Yield 4-6 servings

3 Tbsp vegetable oil

2 cloves garlic, minced

1 Tbsp minced fresh ginger

½-1 jalapeño, finely chopped (quantity to your liking)

2 tsp ground turmeric

2 tsp ground cumin

3 cups fresh or canned tomatoes, diced

2 cups diced sweet peppers

3 cups peeled, diced kabocha squash

1 can (15 oz) chickpeas, drained and rinsed

2 cans (13.5 fl oz each) coconut milk

2 Tbsp tamari or soy sauce

½ cup water

3 cups thinly sliced Swiss chard or spinach

Salt & Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

½ bunch cilantro, chopped (optional)

1 oz fresh basil, thinly sliced (optional)

Cooked brown rice, to serve

1. Heat a Dutch oven or other deep saucepan over medium heat. Add 2 tbsp of the oil to the pan. When the oil is hot, add the minced garlic, ginger and jalapeno. Saute over medium heat for about 2 minutes. Add one more tablespoon of oil along with the turmeric and cumin. Stir to combine and saute for another minute. Add the diced tomatoes, peppers, squash, chickpeas, coconut milk, tamari and water to the pan. Stir well to combine and then bring the mixture to a boil.
2. Once the mixture has been brought to a boil, reduce the heat just slightly so as to maintain a rapid simmer. Cover the pan and simmer for about 15 minutes. Remove the cover and simmer an additional 15-20 minutes or until the squash is tender and the liquid portion of the curry has reduced a little bit.
3. Stir in the chard or spinach leaves and simmer an additional 5-8 minutes. Remove from the heat.
4. Taste the curry and adjust the seasoning to your liking by adding salt and freshly ground black pepper. Serve over rice and garnish with fresh basil and/or cilantro.

(Note: This curry is even better the second day, making this a great recipe to use for batch cooking at the beginning of the week for meals throughout the week!)

This recipe was adapted from a similar recipe for One-Pot Eggplant, Pumpkin and Chickpea Curry featured at www.heavenlynnhealthy.com.