



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com

June 1 -2, 2018

Vitality...Eat Your Greens Every Day!

By Chef Andrea

Farmer Richard says "Eat your greens every day!" Yes, this is a direct quote and a message we try to follow in our own lives for our own health and well-being. "Greens" is a general term we use to refer to a wide category of vegetables that includes leafy vegetables such as kale, collards and Swiss chard. This group also includes "salad" type greens such as lettuce, arugula, baby kale mix, and spinach. Of course, we can't forget the Asian greens including bok choy, tat soi, hon tsai tai, mizuna, komatsuna, and the list goes on! I've already listed twelve different vegetables and I didn't even mention some of the unique greens we grow such as the pea vine in this week's box, sorrel, amaranth greens, Egyptian spinach, nettles and Portuguese kale. Of course we can't forget the bonus greens we get when we harvest root crops with their green tops still attached. This would include things such as turnip greens, radish tops, carrot tops and beet greens. In this short paragraph alone I've listed over twenty different vegetables that could be loosely categorized as "greens." Oh man, I totally forgot to mention sweetheart cabbage, kohlrabi leaves, mustard, mibuna, broccoli raab, escarole, radicchio, and endive! If you're eating out of a CSA box, you can see that it's actually very easy to follow Farmer Richard's advice to eat greens every day! I've listed thirty different greens and this list still isn't all-inclusive!

Greens are not just something we grow as a "box filler." We believe they are an important part of a seasonal diet and we try to provide a minimum of a salad green and a cooking green in most boxes over the course of the season. Of course there are some challenging times of the year when we are more limited in what's available. For example, spinach and lettuce are challenging crops to grow in the heat of the summer.

See our **blog** for the rest of this article!

What's In The Box?

POTATO ONIONS: This is an overwintered green onion, planted last fall for harvest this spring. Use both the lower white portion as well as the green tops.

ASPARAGUS: Asparagus harvest yields have been up this week due to the warmth we've seen. We're hoping to get at least one more week of harvest before we reach the end of asparagus season.

RHUBARB: Some of this week's rhubarb is courtesy of our friends Mat & Cate from Ridgeland Harvest. We're supplementing our harvests this week with rhubarb from their fields as we wait for our new rhubarb field to reach full production. Their farm is certified organic by MClA

RED RADISHES: Don't forget to eat the radish greens as well! Save the tops from the radishes and use them within a few days. Read this week's newsletter article for more information about using and eating "greens."

MINI RED OAK, MINI RED BOSTON AND/OR MINI RED ROMAINE: These are the first of our field planted head lettuce. They make a great snack if you use it as a wrapper for a piece of cheese!

GREEN GARLIC: Green garlic and green onions look very similar, but green garlic has flat leaves and green onions have green tops that are rounded.

PEA VINE: Read this week's newsletter article for more information about using pea vine. This is the large bunch of crazy looking greens that have small rounded leaves on a main stem that has a vine-like appearance.

HON TSAI TAI: This is the bunched green with yellow flowers and purple stems, both of which are edible. It has a mild mustard flavor and may be eaten either raw or lightly cooked.

SALAD MIX: Salad mix is a blend of baby greens and baby lettuce and is best eaten raw. The key to longer shelf life is to keep the salad mix cold! Store salad mix in the refrigerator when not in use.

Cooking With This Week's Box!

Welcome back for another week of spring cooking! This week we'll make the transition into the month of June which means strawberries and summer vegetables are just around the corner! Mark your calendars for **June 17** and join us at the farm for our annual **Strawberry Day** event!

The theme of this week's newsletter and box is "Greens." This week I used the pea vine to create a new recipe for **Pea Vine & Asparagus Soup with Buttermilk and Mint**. This is a simple, brothy, light soup to prepare. The thing that's so striking about it though is the bright pea flavor and aroma you experience when it's freshly made. You can taste the vitality in this soup!

I enjoy the flavor of hon tsai tai most when it's raw. So this week I'm going to make this **Sesame-Soy and Hon Tsai Tai Chicken Salad** that we featured in a 2014 newsletter. The recipe calls for baby white turnips, which aren't quite ready. In their place, you can substitute roasted asparagus.

This week I'm going to make Melissa Clark's recipe for **Skillet Chicken with Rhubarb and Green Garlic**. There's even a video you can watch where Melissa shows you how to make this dish!

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

Featured Vegetable: Hon Tsai Tai & Pea Vine

By Chef Andrea

Hon tsai tai and pea vine hold an important place in our spring vegetable line-up. We rely on them to bridge the gap between the long winter and greater availability of other crops coming in from the fields. Hon tsai tai is in a group of plants referred to as “flowering brassicas.” While it is related to such vegetables as mustard greens and bok choy, what sets it apart is that it has beautiful purple stems that produce a sweet, delicate, edible yellow flower. The sweetness of the buds and flowers is the part we love the most! While other vegetables in the *brassica* family also produce flowers, they do so towards the end of their life cycle and at that point there are often undesirable flavor changes in the edible portion of the plant. Hon tsai tai is unique in that it produces the flower early in its life when all the parts of the plant still taste good.

Hon tsai tai has a mild mustard flavor. The entire plant is edible and may be eaten raw or cooked. The thin purple stems are more tender when the plant is young. While still flavorful, they may become more coarse as the plant matures, so should be cut very finely at this stage. Hon tsai tai is delicious in stir-fries or lightly steamed or sautéed, but also makes a stunning and flavorful addition to raw salads. A common preparation in Chinese cuisine is to quickly stir-fry hon tsai tai with garlic, onions, and ginger, then add oyster sauce. Store hon tsai tai loosely wrapped in a plastic bag in the crisper drawer of your refrigerator until ready for use.

Pea Vine is actually an immature heirloom snow pea plant that is harvested before the vine starts to develop blossoms. It has a mild, sweet pea flavor and may be eaten raw or lightly cooked. While the tendrils and leaves are tender, the main stem can sometimes get tough depending on how mature the plant is at harvest. This week's pea vine may be a bit more mature and you may find some of the lower stem is a bit more coarse. If you find this to be the case, pick the leaves, tendrils and thin, tender stems off the main stem. I must admit that I don't like to spend a lot of time sorting through a bunch of pea vine and I prefer to use as much of the bunch as I can...plus there is a lot of flavor and nutrition in the stem!

*(See our **blog** for the rest of this vegetable feature article!)*

Pea Vine & Asparagus Soup with Buttermilk & Mint

Yield: 3-4 servings

¾ cup buttermilk	1 quart chicken or vegetable broth
2 Tbsp olive oil or butter	1 bunch pea vine
1-2 pieces green garlic	Salt and black pepper, to taste
2-4 green onions	Fresh mint, to garnish (optional)
½ pound asparagus, cut into 1 inch pieces	

1. First, measure out the buttermilk and set it aside. You want to allow it to come to room temperature while you prepare the soup.
2. Heat olive oil or butter in a medium saucepot over medium heat. Separate the green tops from the lower white base of both the green garlic and green onions. Finely chop the white part of both the garlic and onions. You will need about ¾ cup total. Thinly slice the green tops and set aside.
3. Add the chopped garlic and onions to the pan and saute them briefly, just until softened.
4. Next, add the asparagus and broth to the pan along with freshly ground black pepper and a bit of salt. Bring the soup to a simmer. Cook, uncovered, for about 10 minutes or until the asparagus is bright green and tender. Be careful not to overcook the asparagus!
5. While the soup is simmering, prepare the pea vine. Remove the lower 1-2 inches of stem from the bunch and then roughly chop the remainder.
6. Once the asparagus is tender, transfer the soup to a blender and add the chopped pea vine. If you have a large enough blender container you can puree the soup in one batch, otherwise you may need to puree it in two batches. Be careful when blending the hot soup.
7. Blend the soup until all of the vegetables are incorporated and you have a smooth soup. You can choose to either strain the soup or leave it as is. If you like a silky, smooth soup, strain it through a fine mesh strainer. If you don't mind a thicker soup, just move on to the next step and skip the step of straining.
8. Once the soup is blended (and strained if you choose to do so), return the soup to the pan and reheat it just enough to bring it to the temperature you'd like to serve it at. Please note this soup is good when eaten hot, room temperature or as a chilled soup. The soup should be a bright green color at this point. You want to minimize any further cooking time so you can keep the bright green color and the perky pea flavor of the broth.
9. Just before serving, stir in the buttermilk. Portion the soup into bowls and garnish with the sliced green onion and green garlic tops as well as fresh mint.

We enjoyed this soup served very simply with crackers, sliced radishes and a hard-boiled egg. As mentioned in the method, this soup is delicious eaten at any temperature. Recipe created by Chef Andrea Yoder