



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

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VEGETABLE FEATURE: Purple Daikon

by Andrea Yoder

It's been several years since we included daikon radish in CSA boxes, but you know we have an obsession with gorgeous purple vegetables and couldn't resist trying this purple daikon! This is our first year growing this variety, called bora king. Its beautiful purple color, which extends through to the center, is what first caught our attention, but it has some other great qualities as well. First of all, it's much smaller than traditional white daikon radish that can grow to be more than 12 inches long! It's hard for a small family to eat that much radish and white daikon is one vegetable I don't like to have remnants of hanging out in my refrigerator due to its pungent aroma. This purple daikon, however, is much smaller which makes it more manageable to use. It also has a delicious, slightly sweet, balanced radish flavor. It does still taste like daikon, but I think it's a little more balanced flavor than some white daikon that can be pretty pungent.

Daikon radishes are classified as a winter storage radish and are an important part of many traditional cultures throughout Asia. Because of its ability to be stored, it's an important winter food both because it's available but also because it is high in nutrients including vitamin C which can help keep us strong and healthy throughout the cold winter. Radishes are actually one of the oldest cultivated food crops and there are literally thousands of different varieties. In the book, *Roots*, by Diane Morgan, she cites the following history: "Radishes are likely indigenous to Europe and Asia and are believed to have been first cultivated in the eastern Mediterranean before 2000 B.C., probably in Egypt, where they were reportedly included in the daily rations, along with onions and garlic, given to the workers who built the pyramids."

Daikon radish can be used in a variety of ways, both raw and cooked. In Chinese and Japanese culture daikon radish is often pickled, another tactic to help preserve this food and so it is available throughout the winter. Pickled daikon radishes, such as the recipe included in this week's newsletter, are often served as a condiment. One of this week's recipes is for **Soy-Pickled Daikon**, borrowed from the book *Phoenix Claw and Jade Trees*, a book about traditional Chinese cooking. The author explains that pickled vegetables, including daikon, are often served with rice porridge. After reading this I had to go do a little research and found that congee is the name given to rice porridge. I am by no means an expert on Chinese food, culture or history, but I am always intrigued to find out about traditional dishes. Congee is often eaten for breakfast, but it really can be eaten at any meal of the day. It is a dish that came from peasant food and is a way to make a small amount of rice go a long way. My understanding is that there is no one or right recipe for congee, rather everyone has their own version they identify with and the one they like is probably the one their grandmother made! This week I have included a recipe for **Congee with Chicken**

What's In The Box?

YELLOW ONIONS: Turn this week's onions into Caramelized Onion Dip! There's a link to a tasty recipe in this week's **Cooking With the Box** article.

ITALIAN GARLIC: Use some of this week's garlic to make Roasted Garlic Brussels sprouts—simple but tasty!

BRUSSELS SPROUTS: You'll find one pound of these cute little cabbage-like vegetables in your box this week. The key to a tasty Brussels sprout is proper cooking. Cook them just until tender, while they are still bright green. Overcooking brings out the sulfur compounds in this vegetable giving it a strong, less than pleasing flavor. If this is the reason you don't like brussels sprouts, we encourage you to try them properly cooked...you just might like them!

ORANGE CARROTS: Here's a spinoff on roasted carrots—turn them into fries! This week's **Cooking With the Box** article features a recipe for **Carrot Fries with Curry Dipping Sauce**.

BURGUNDY SWEET POTATOES: Sweet potatoes are tasty in soups and chili, adding both depth of flavor and sweetness. Black bean and sweet potato chili or a silky sweet potato and ginger soup are good options. You'll find recipe links on our blog!

BUTTERSCOTCH BUTTERNUT SQUASH: This variety is a mini butternut, sweet and delicious! Use them as you would use any other butternut.

BABY BOK CHOI: This sweet, tasty bok choy is truly baby! This was harvested from our final crop of bok choy for the season, which we covered to protect from frost so we could harvest it this week!

RED MUSTARD: Eaten raw, red mustard can have a spicy bite. However, when you cook it the flavor mellows and melts into a dish. Give it a try in this week's featured recipe for **Congee with Chicken and Greens**.

LACINATO KALE TOPS: This is the final kale for the year. We went through the field and cut the tops off the plants. This is some of the tastiest kale of the season, sweetened by the recent cold weather! Use it in a hearty Italian minestrone or turn it into kale pesto.

CILANTRO: Is this a new variety of purple cilantro? Good question, but no. It's the same variety we always plant, but it's from our final crop of the year. When it gets cold, biology in the soil slows down and nutrient uptake by the plant changes. Sometimes this can cause leaves to turn purple like this. The leaves are still good to eat.

PURPLE DAIKON RADISH: This stunning purple root is this week's Vegetable of the Week! Read more about this and check out our recipe for **Soy Pickled Daikon** in this week's newsletter. It's a super simple recipe and the pickles are delicious!

and Greens. This is a fitting recipe to go along with the **Soy-Pickled Purple Daikon** which can be served as a condiment alongside this dish. This week's box also has plenty of greens to choose from (bok choy, red mustard or kale), all of which are appropriate for this recipe.

Now that we've talked about congee, let's get back to daikon! Daikon radish may also be used in salads and other fresh condiments, often paired with other vegetables and dressed with a light sauce or vinaigrette. Daikon radishes are also used in stir-fries and braised dishes. It was interesting to learn that in some areas of China daikon is used in braised stews and soups, such as what would be equivalent to our beef stew. Whereas we would use potatoes, they often use chunks of daikon radish. Of course, remember daikon has a lot of nutritive value, so adding it to hearty broths and stews is a great way to fortify the soup. Daikon radishes are also traditionally used in Korean kim chi, which is once again an important food to eat both for nourishment and health throughout the winter.

Store daikon radish in the refrigerator, loosely wrapped in plastic to keep it from dehydrating. It will store for at least 4-6 weeks if not longer.

Soy-Pickled Daikon Radish

"Pickling in soy brine is one of China's ancient methods of preserving vegetables. Any firm vegetable can be used for pickling once its moisture is leached out using salt and sugar."

Yield: 4 servings as an appetizer, or more as a condiment

1 medium or 2 small purple daikon radish (12 oz)
2 tsp salt
1 Tbsp sugar

Soy Pickling Brine

3 Tbsp soy sauce
2 tsp white rice vinegar
2 Tbsp sugar

1. Peel the daikon radish (just remove a thin outer layer) and slice it very thin (for the best results, use a mandoline to slice them). Put the daikon slices in a medium bowl and sprinkle with the salt. Stir the daikon well to make sure the salt is applied evenly and let it marinate for about 30 minutes at room temperature. At this point the moisture will have bled out of the daikon and collected in the bottom of the bowl. Squeeze as much of the liquid out of the daikon as possible and discard all the liquid.
2. Sprinkle the sugar over the daikon and mix well. Let the daikon marinate for another 30 minutes at room temperature. As with the salt, a pool of liquid will form at the bottom of the bowl. Once again squeeze out as much of the liquid as possible and discard all the liquid.
3. Add the ingredients for the soy pickling brine to the daikon and mix well. Transfer the daikon and brine to a storage container, cover, and refrigerate at least overnight or for up to a month.
4. Serve the pickled radish in a small bowl with some of the soy brine.

Recipe borrowed from *Phoenix Claw and Jade Trees*, by Kian Lam Kho.

Congee with Chicken and Greens

"Congee is a smooth rice porridge, and it's really all about the toppings. Even in its plainest form, however, it's wonderful. Top with hot sesame oil, Kimchi, scallions, soy sauce, sesame seeds, cilantro, or anything else that calls to you."

Yield: 4 to 5 servings

1 cup white rice
10 cups water, stock, or whey
1 Tbsp kosher salt
2 boneless, skinless single chicken breasts (4 to 6 oz each)

1 ½ cups tender greens, cut into thin ribbons (spinach, tatsoi, bok choy, mustard greens, or any other green you have on hand)

1. Combine the rice and water in a large pot. Bring to a boil, lower the heat to medium low, and cover. Cook for 1 ½ hours, stirring every so often. It will seem like there is too much liquid and not enough rice, but it will thicken. When it does, add 2 tsp of the salt.
2. Rub the remaining tsp of salt over the chicken breasts. Using a sharp knife, cut the chicken into thin slices, about ½ inch. Add them to the pot, stirring the chicken into the hot rice. Stir in the greens. Continue to cook until the chicken turns white and the greens are soft, about 5 minutes.

Note from Chef Andrea: As indicated in the introduction, you can garnish congee with any additional ingredients you'd like. I'd recommend some chopped cilantro on top and serve it with the **Soy-Pickled Purple Daikon Radishes** on the side!

Variations:

- For a coconut congee, replace 2 cups of the liquid with a can of coconut milk.
- Replace the chicken with sliced pork tenderloin or tofu.

Recipe borrowed from *The Homemade Kitchen*, by Alana Chernila.