



# Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com

July 29 - 30, 2022

## What's In The Box?

**EGGPLANT:** You can learn more about this week's featured vegetable in our newsletter or on our blog. You'll find descriptions about the different varieties we grow so you can figure out the best use for the kind you receive in your box this week as well as recipe ideas (**links on the blog**)! It is also important to note that eggplant is one vegetable that requires cooking and should not be eaten raw.

**SIERRA BLANCA ONIONS:** Remember, thicker slices of onion are great for making onion rings, but very thin slices are more appropriate for salads and sandwiches. The other key to successfully cutting an onion is to remember to keep the tips of your fingers curled and tucked back as you hold the onion, so you don't accidentally cut your finger!

**WHITE CAULIFLOWER OR RED CABBAGE:** We have reached the end of our spring planted cauliflower, this some boxes will receive red cabbage in its place.

**ORANGE CARROTS:** Start your day off with a nutrient boost and eat carrots for breakfast! You'll find links to two breakfast recipes using carrots in this week's **Cooking With the Box** article on our blog.

**ZUCCHINI AND/OR SUNBURST SCALLOPINI SQUASH:** You may notice some surface scarring on some zucchini this week, a result of the leaves brushing up against the fruit during storms over the weekend. The scarring is only on the surface and should not affect the overall eating quality of the zucchini.

**LARGE TOMATOES:** It's best to ripen tomatoes at room temperature and then eat them when they are in their prime. Keep your eye on them and if you notice a spot starting to form, it's time to eat that tomato!

**RED NEW POTATOES:** If you missed **last week's feature article** about New Potatoes, we encourage you to take a moment and check it out! These potatoes are dug fresh, and their skins are very delicate. Handle them with care and eat within about a week after receiving them.

**FRESH ITALIAN GARLIC:** This garlic has been drying in the greenhouse for almost two weeks now, but it's still not fully dry. As such, you may notice the skin surround the cloves is still a little tough and can sometimes be challenging to peel away. It's worth the extra effort though to access the juicy, flavorful cloves behind that protective layer!

**SUNORANGE TOMATOES:** We are just starting to see more ripening in the tomato field and thus far we have been impressed with the flavor and sweetness!

**BROCCOLI:** The key to tasty broccoli is to make sure you don't overcook it! The tender stems are denser and require a little longer cooking time than the florets. Cook broccoli just until it turns bright green and is tender with a touch of firmness. It's also important to allow steam to dissipate when cooking broccoli, so either cook it without a cover or only partially cover the pan during cooking. If you cook it fully covered it will cause the broccoli to turn olive green.

**GREEN BEANS:** We are picking a different kind of green bean this week and you may notice they have a darker, more glossy appearance than the beans we delivered over the past few weeks. They are also a bit more tender, which makes them a candidate for using in fresh vegetable or pasta salads. It is still a good idea to blanch them first as it helps develop the flavor and tenderizes them a bit.

**SWEETNESS SWEET CORN:** This is one of our early varieties of sweet corn that is known to have the ability to germinate in cold soil. You'll find this variety has smaller ears that are sweet and flavorful. We ask that you be diligent about storing your corn in the refrigerator to preserve the sugars. We also recommend eating it within a few days of receiving for the best eating experience. We did find some corn borer worms in this first planting. Our crew picked very carefully, but it is possible we missed a few. If you do find an affected ear, please consider cutting away the affected portion and using the remainder as the damage is usually localized.

**CHOICE ITALIAN BASIL:** We hope you are enjoying the option to add a handful of basil to your share each week. Thank you for being respectful of the other members picking up at your site and only taking an appropriate amount. Everything has been working well with reintroducing this option at our sites and we'll try to do a few more offerings in the future!

## VEGETABLE FEATURE: EGGPLANT

by Andrea Yoder

Eggplant is a member of the nightshade family, along with potatoes and tomatoes. It is one of the most beautiful crops we grow, and, in their peak, the plants can be loaded with beautiful glossy fruit hanging heavy on the plant. There are many varieties of eggplant ranging in size from small round eggplant the size of a golf ball to large globe eggplant weighing several pounds. They also come in a variety of colors ranging from various shades of purple to black, green, lavender, white and orange. While there are many varieties to choose from, we have narrowed our lineup of eggplant to our four favorite varieties including Lilac Bride, Purple Dancer, Listada and the traditional Black eggplant. Each variety has slightly different characteristics which may impact your decision as to how you want to prepare them. If you're not familiar with the different varieties, I've included a brief description of each one below. I encourage you to refer to these descriptions each week to

help you identify which eggplant you receive as this information will also help you choose the most fitting recipe for what you have received!

**Black Globe Eggplant:** This is the most familiar variety of eggplant. It is characterized by a dark purple skin that looks black. It is best used in dishes like Eggplant Parmesan, lasagna or to make dips, etc. This variety will also hold up on the grill or if roasted.

**Lilac Bride Eggplant:** Lilac bride eggplant is long and slender with lavender to dark purple skin and white flesh. It is best used in Thai curry dishes, stews, or any other preparation where you want the eggplant to hold its shape better. The skin is tender enough you don't need to peel it.

**Listada Eggplant:** Listada is characterized by a small globe shape with dark purple/ magenta skin streaked with white stripes. It is characterized by dense "meaty" flesh that holds up very well with grilling or roasting.

**Purple Dancer Eggplant:** This superb variety is characterized by an elongated tear drop shape and a bright purple skin. Purple Dancer eggplant is an all-purpose eggplant that has creamy, white flesh. It is firm enough that it keeps its shape if you grill it or use it in curries, soups, or stews. The flesh is also soft enough when cooked to use in dips, etc.

Eggplant is grown all around the world and is a part of the cuisine in many different cultures. As such, there are many different options for how you may choose to prepare it. It is important to note that eggplant should be cooked before eating it. In fact, while I'm typically standing on a soapbox preaching with a pointed finger to not overcook vegetables, this is one vegetable that you may want to slightly overcook to ensure the flesh is very soft and silky as this is when it is the best. Eggplant has a mild flavor and soft, silky texture when cooked, which is what makes it unique. The more it smooshes, the better! While eggplant doesn't have a striking flavor, its texture is what makes it a sponge that is able to absorb other flavors. Eggplant pairs well with other vegetables including tomatoes, onions, garlic, peppers, zucchini, potatoes, lentils, and chickpeas. It also goes well with flavorful olive oil, tahini, herbs such as basil, parsley and mint, and spices including cumin, coriander, sumac, and cinnamon. It is a friend to dairy products including yogurt, cheese (feta, Parmesan and mozzarella), and cream and fruits including lemons and pomegranate.

Eggplant can be prepared using a variety of cooking methods including pan-frying, baking, grilling, and roasting. Many resources will tell you to salt eggplant before cooking it to remove bitterness. While some older varieties were bitter, the new varieties we grow have been selected because they are not bitter, thus you can skip the salting step for that reason. You may still choose to salt eggplant to soften the flesh, so it doesn't absorb too much oil. Most of our varieties of eggplant have skin that is tender enough to eat, thus you do not need to peel them.

## CHECK OUT THE REST OF THIS EGGPLANT FEATURE AS WELL AS A LIST OF RECIPES ON OUR BLOG THIS WEEK!

### Grilled Eggplant & Quinoa Salad with Dates & Almonds

Yield: 4 servings as a side dish or 2-3 as a main dish

½ cup dry quinoa	Red Pepper flakes, a few pinches	¼ cup chopped or sliced almonds, toasted
½- ¾ cup Extra-virgin olive oil, divided	Sea salt, to taste	¼ cup mint leaves, thinly sliced (optional)
1 garlic clove, minced finely	Freshly ground black pepper, to taste	
1-2 Tbsp lemon juice	1-2 medium eggplants, sliced into ¼-inch thick rounds	
Zest from one lemon	¼ cup finely chopped parsley	
¼ cup diced Medjool dates		

1. Cook the quinoa according to package instructions in salted water. Once cooked, fluff the hot quinoa with a fork and allow the steam to dissipate. Transfer to a medium bowl.
2. Add 1 tsp olive oil, minced garlic, 1 Tbsp lemon juice, lemon zest, dates, and red pepper flakes. Season with salt and black pepper. Set aside.
3. Grill the eggplant. Heat a grill to medium-high heat or use a grill pan on a stove top. Using a pastry brush, lightly brush each slice of eggplant with olive oil on both sides and season with a touch of salt and black pepper. Grill 2 to 3 minutes per side, or until there are distinct grill marks. You want the eggplant to be very soft and tender. Thus, if it needs to cook a little longer, you may need to move the slices to a cooler part of the grill to finish cooking, or finish cooking them in a 350°F oven. If you do not have a grill or a grill pan, you can also cook the eggplant using the broiler in your oven.
4. Once the eggplant is fully cooked, cut the slices into bite-sized diced pieces. You want about 1 ½ cups of eggplant for this salad. If your eggplant yielded more than that, save it and store in the refrigerator for another use.
5. Add the grilled eggplant to the bowl with the quinoa. At this time you can also add the parsley, almonds and mint (if using) to the bowl. Stir gently to combine all the ingredients and take a moment to taste the salad. Add additional lemon juice, salt and/or olive oil as needed.
6. Serve at room temperature.

Optional Add-Ins: This salad is delicious just as written, but you can also adapt it to your liking. If you're eating this as a main dish salad, you may want to add some cooked chickpeas or diced cooked chicken. A crumbling of feta may also be a nice addition.

Recipe inspired by a recipe for "Grilled Eggplant" published by [loveandlemons.com](http://loveandlemons.com).