News from

Harmony Valley Farm

An Update for Our Community Supported Agriculture Members

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This Week's Box

Baby Arugula - see Matt's Comments and the recipes on the back of the bag.
Asparagus
Ramps (Wild Leeks)
Rhubarb
Winter Spinach

Choice Box (or in your box) - Saute Mix - Quite tender this week, use as salad or like you would arugula.

No Salad Shares yet, probably next week.

Arugula, Walnut and Blue Cheese Crostini Idea

Oven toast, on a baking sheet, thin-sliced french bread brushed with olive oil and seasoned with salt and pepper. Then mix (or chop) together, arugula, toasted walnuts and blue cheese together. When the toasts have cooled, spread mixture onto the toasts. Return to oven to melt the cheese. Top with a single leaf of fresh arugula to doll it up.

10 Ways to Make the Transition

What motivated you to become a CSA member? There are as many answers to that as there are members, but they all follow a familiar theme -- a desire for good, wholesome food. Beyond that the answers go in many directions; political, social, ethical reasons, health reasons, and economic and environmental reasons, or "just because." Still, over riding it all are the tantalizingly fresh, delicious fruits and vegetables from your very own farmer! So, why, at the end of a season full of beautiful, organic farm produce do some members decide it just didn't work out? If it wasn't the produce that didn't live up to expectations, what was it? Did the member discover there were no health benefits to eating seasonally? Was it revealed to be less socially, environmentally, or economically beneficial than expected? No -- there was something else. It was the new approach a CSA member has to take toward food and cooking. The process that takes place when your produce is picked *for you* is quite different than the process of picking (out) your own food. Let's face it, deciding what to buy in a grocery store full of food, not all of it seasonal, is quite different than the CSA experience.

If you don't make the transition to the "CSA way" certain unexpected things happen. People feel guilty for "wasting" what they have been given. People feel guilty for buying other produce even when there are items from the box looking lonely and forgotten in the crisper drawer. People feel resentful when they spend more time than they feel they have trying to cook with what's in the box, or trying to convince the picky eater in the family to try something new, or having to be the only one in the house that even knows where to pick up the box! Yikes! Who knew it would be like this!

Well, we can't solve the problem of who is responsible for box pick up, or who is willing to try new foods, but we do recognize we can play a role in reducing food guilt and food resentment. We want to help new and not so new members make, or continue to make, the transition to seasonal eating the CSA way.

Did you know that 80 - 85% of people who have been members for at least 2 years choose to rejoin our farm again the following season? However, only between 60 and 65% of first year members choose to join for a second year. What's that about? We think it is partly about the new way of thinking about what to cook, not what to buy. If you are an "Alice Waters" type, already eating seasonally and with a wide range of experience with vegetables, you probably have no trouble with the transition. If, however, you have little free time to put toward your new life in the kitchen, you might find the learning curve quite steep. Realizing that, we make the following suggestions so that your enthusiasm for the "best produce ever" will NOT wane by September, you'll feel enriched by the box, you'll successfully cook and enjoy new, seasonal foods, and you'll be able to appreciate what local agriculture can bring to you and want to do it all over again next year! So, try these things:

1. New members, turn in your A-Z Food book coupon by coming to our market stand. Pick up 1 free copy and buy one at cost if you share your box but don't want to share your book. Members in Viroqua, Mazo, La Crosse and Onalaska, return your coupon in the mail and we'll get a book to you. Old members, we'd sell you one at cost, too, if you haven't acquired one yet.

2. Check out some of the food related websites with searchable recipe files. Here's a few: happycookers.com recipesource.com cyber-kitchen.com recipes.alastra.com epicurious.com ivu.com and a website that finds lots of articles, world wide, including food info and recipes -- findarticles.com. Also,

continued on back

Matt's Comments - Arugula (AKA Rocket)

Arugula is a relatively new American name for what is known in other parts of the world as rocket. Rocket has been grown in the US since colonial times, but with the resurgence of traditional ethnic foods such as Italian and Spanish the green has been brought back into the spotlight. Arugula is one of the most versatile greens grown today, balancing sweet (figs, pomegranates, dried tomatoes, raisins), sharp (blue cheese or goat cheese), salty (olives, capers, and prosciutto), rich (creamy and mild cheeses, nuts, avocado) acid (grapefruit, lemon, wine vinegar), or bland (eggs, potatoes, beans). The reason arugula is so versatile is the peppery flavor it has. Rather than having a bland green flavor it stands out in a dish giving it room to take bold and diverse flavor contrasts. The flavor matches above can be used together in various combinations, as you will see in the recipes.

Grilled Portabella, Chevre and Arugula Sandwich

Serves 4
4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
3 cloves of garlic, minced
4 large portabella mushrooms, stems removed
1 medium red onion, sliced
1 loaf of crust bread, thick sliced (or sandwich buns)
4 ounces chevre (fresh goat cheese)
8 ounces arugula
1.Mix the olive oil and garlic together and brush the mushrooms with it. Grill on both sides and season with salt and pepper when done.
2. Grill bread then spread about an ounce of the chevre on one side. Add the mushroom cap, onion and arugula. If the sandwich seems dry, add a little mayonnaise to the side without cheese.

Arugula and Hard Cheese Salad with Toasted Garlic Vinaigrette

(This is one of my all time favorite simple salads.)
Ingredients for the Vinaigrette:
2cloves garlic, minced
1 cup olive oil
1/3 cup Champagne vinegar
1. Heat the olive oil in a small pot till you can see ribbons forming in the bottom. Have ready a strainer and a metal bowl. Add the garlic to the oil and watch for it to brown. As soon as it is brown (about 10-15 seconds), pour off the oil through the strainer into the bowl. If you wait too long the garlic will burn. Cool the oil and save the garlic. Put the vinegar, a pinch of salt and a dash of pepper into a blender. Turn it on the lowest speed and add the cooled oil. Stop the blender as soon as the mixture is emulsified. Add the garlic and set aside.
2. Dress a salad made from Arugula, thin sliced crimini mushrooms and shaved fresh parmesan.

From the front page

check out our website (address in masthead). There are a few recipes, but mostly you will find the old newsletters useful. For example, if it is June, then a June newsletter from 1999 will probably have recipes useful to what was in your box in June 2002. (That's how this seasonal stuff works!)

3. If you have been a member for several years and have saved your newsletters you can use this incredible index created by a CSA member. It can be accessed on our website. You can look up all sorts of recipes and ingredients by year in which they were published. The index gives you the issue and volume. You go to your stash of newsletters and look it up. Great for those recipes you tried before and liked, but can't find now. New members -- no this isn't helpful for you, but it does provide you with a reason to start hanging on to your newsletters in an organized way. Take a pocket folder, file folder or 3 ring binder and start saving today.

4. Consider joining our Harmony Valley Farm electronic discussion group. (Send an e-mail to: harmonyvalleycsa-subscribe@yahoogroups.com).Veteran members often post a favorite recipe or food tip, and members are seemingly very willing to answer other members questions about what something is, what to do with it, what works, what didn't. It is sometimes very active, sometimes not, but always worth reading when we get a message.

5. OK, if you do not use the internet or e-mail, you can still get some good resources at the book store. If you do not have a few good cookbooks with a focus on vegetables, get some! We like the following, but there are many others out there. The Victory Garden Cookbook, Marian Morash; The Joy of Cooking, by Rombauer, Cooking with the Seasons, Monique Hooker; Chez Panisse Vegetables, Alice Waters. I also am really glad I invested in Vegetables From Amaranth to Zucchini, by Elizabeth Schneider. It is as much a reference book as a source of recipes, but it has many of the more unusual vegetables we grow. It is short on some of the more common ones, so it wouldn't be your only resource, but I find it very fascinating as a farmer and a cook!

6. Get inspired by reading this month's copy of the Utne Reader. It is all about food -- local, organic, sustainable, fresh! It may not help you know what to do with watercress, but it will make you feel good about having gotten it in your box from your farmers.

7. Open your mind. By the time we are adults we've gathered a lot of food baggage. We are convinced that this or that tastes bad. Since someone must like them or they wouldn't be considered food, open your mind to the thought that you, too, could possibly like them if you prepared them well and tried them again. (You know, the organically grown, freshly picked, selected for flavor varieties that we grow really *are* different than the over cooked, 4-week old, picked with no thought to flavor brussel sprout you hated so badly, and remember so well!)

8. Cultivate a mentoring relationship with another member, (how about the member who first told you about Harmony Valley Farm?) You'll be surprised at the tips a veteran member can give you -- strategies for cleaning out the crisper on Fridays, what freezes easily, the best loved "put anything into it" soup recipe, etc. And, you will soon find excitement in sharing your own successes --"You won't believe what my kids ate tonight!" or "I never knew I loved _____!"

9. Use your box to make friends. Give some extra produce (or the produce your family doesn't care for so much) to neighbors, family or friends. The beets you hate are beloved by someone. Ask how they prepare them and you may find you like them too. Who can feel food guilt when you've made someone happy?

10. Don't forget to read the newslettter. Each week we put in a couple recipes and tips to help you out.

Linda