Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993
Local & Madison Edition - Brown Week Delivery

May 29-30, 2009

Herbs: Your Ticket To a Taste Adventure by Andrea Yoder

I can still remember the first time I helped Richard water the plants in the green houses soon after I arrived at the farm. When we watered the benches of herb packs, my senses took me to herbal heaven! Planting the herbs you had the opportunity to receive with your boxes is a great way to have a piece of Harmony Valley Farm with you in your own backyard. I hope you have prepared your herb garden, either in your garden or in pots on your patio. Throughout the season, we will be using the same herbs you are growing, so be looking for ways to utilize them in recipes in upcoming newsletters.

Fresh herbs have the power to transform a good dish into a fabulous dish. The addition of a fresh herb has the ability to stimulate the taste buds, awakening them and bringing a whole new element to the food. If you haven't used many fresh herbs heretofore, you are in for a real taste adventure. The flavor in herbs comes from the essential oils in their leaves which impact both flavor and aroma. With time and cooking, the oils can dissipate into the air and be lost. Once the leaves are bruised or cut, the flavor and aroma will be released. When cooking with most fresh herbs, it is best to cut them and add them to the dish near the end of cooking or right before serving. Having the herb plants right outside your door guarantees you the freshest flavor possible. When you are ready to use a herb, snip off the amount you will need with scissors. Cut the stems right above the first joint of tender growth to promote more rapid regrowth. If you harvest more than you need, or want to share with a friend, wrap the herbs in a damp paper towel and place in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Change the paper towel and remoisten as needed.

You may look at your plants as they continue to grow and think, "I'll never be able to use all these herbs!" Don't be afraid to cut your herb plants back and preserve the cuttings for use throughout the year. Drying and freezing herbs are a great way to enjoy your herbs when there is snow on the ground and no site of green around you. To dry herbs, wash in cool water and shake off as much water as you can. Bunch the stems together and wrap with a rubberband. Hang in a cool, dry, minimally dusty place (or cover with a paper bag) until the leaves and stem are brittle. Store in a dry, airtight container. The dried leaves may have a different flavor from the fresh herbs, but they will still be welcomed additions to cooking and can also be used in teas, herbal sachets for a warm winter bath, or as a potpourri. If you are substituting dried and fresh herbs in recipes, keep in mind that 1 tablespoon of fresh herbs is equivalent to 1 teaspoon of dried herbs. Dried herbs are best added earlier in cooking so their flavor can be rehydrated and develop with the dish. Herbs such as basil can also be preserved by freezing. You can harvest, wash and dry the leaves. Lay out in a single layer on a cookie sheet and freeze until solid. Pack into Ziploc bags for stor-

Garden Herb Pack
Identification Key

Rosemary	Thyme	Savory
Oregano	Sage	Giant of Italy Parsley
Basil	Basil	Krausa Parsley

This Week's Box

Green garlic: Chop and blend with oil in a food processor to make a flavorful garlic base for pizza sauce or marinades.

Green onion: Chop and use to garnish soup or chili.

Parsnips: Shave thin slices with a vegetable peeler and fry until golden brown; use as a topping for salads or soups.

Sunchokes: Sunchokes store well, so save them for a rainy day and make a stew or soup.

Spinach: Enjoy these tender young leaves with a creamy dressing that won't overwhelm their delicate flavor.

Salad mix: Top with toasted walnuts or pine nuts and crumbled goat feta.

Easter Egg or Red radish: Slice thinly and make a spring veggie sandwich with cream cheese and chopped pea vine.

Pea vine: See feature article.

Rhubarb: Kelly's latest culinary creation: make a rhubarb vinaigrette with cooked rhubarb and a splash of red wine.

Asparagus: Brush with oil and cook on the grill until char marks begin to appear, but not long enough to blacken completely. Serve al dente with a squeeze of lemon.

Hon tsai tai: Flavorful Asian cooking green that is delicious sautéed or raw as a salad. Make a quick dressing with sesame oil, cider vinegar, green garlic, and toasted sesame seeds. Serve as a side with grilled meat or poultry.

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age in the freezer. The leaves will be limp when you use them, but the flavor will still be delicious. You can also blend fresh herbs with oil or make into pesto and freeze it in ice cube trays.

Take advantage of your fresh herbs when cooking this season. Enjoy basil in pesto with pasta or make a fresh Margherita pizza on the grill with the first tomatoes in your box. Rosemary pairs well with roasted meats such as chicken or tossed with roasted root vegetables in the fall. You will find sage to be tasty in poultry dishes such as stuffing or casseroles. Don't forget to add a couple sprigs of thyme to soups, stews or sauces. It also adds a nice aroma and flavor to rice and grain pilafs. Summer savory, known as the "bean's herb" in German, rounds out legumes and veggie dishes. You can't go wrong adding oregano to pizzas, tomato sauces, or meatballs for an earthy aroma. Finally, if you reach the end of your meal and you still haven't found a use for parsley, chew on a couple sprigs as a natural breath freshener!

Featured Veggie: Pea Vine

Harvesting plants at different stages of development allows us to experience their flavors in more ways. As with the green garlic that we featured last week, this week's featured veggie, pea vine, is a familiar favorite served up in a less-familiar way. When we are planting peas, some of them are designated specifically for early harvest, so that we may enjoy their delicious flavor sooner! The pea vine that you find bunched in your box this week is a pea plant that hasn't grown big enough to develop flowers or pods yet. If this is your first time eating pea vine, you'll be surprised to discover that the tender little leaves and stems have the same flavor as fresh sweet peas, weeks before peas are in season!

The young, tender pea vine that we first get is great raw, in salads or sandwiches. As the plant continues to grow and is harvested in subsequent weeks, the vine becomes tougher and stringier. We suggest that you remove the bottom 1-2 inches of your pea vine if you plan to use it raw. If the stem seems a little tough, you can remove the leaves and use the stems to make a flavorful broth. To cook pea vine, rinse in cool water and chop it into bite-sized pieces. Steam or sauté over medium-low heat just until wilted. Pea vine is traditionally an Asian cooking green used in stir fries and can be added to just about any stir fry recipe you have. It's also great tossed with pasta and other spring veggies in a light olive oil sauce.

Store your pea vine covered in the refrigerator; it is delicate, and becomes damaged or dried out easily. Use within 2-3 days.

Pea Vine Steak Salad with Horseradish

Serves 2-3

8 oz. beef tenderloin steaks
1 bunch pea vine, any tough vine at the bottom end removed
½ bag spinach
2 Tbsp olive oil
1 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
2 Tbsp fresh-grated horseradish
1 Tbsp red wine vinegar
¼ cup heavy cream
Salt and pepper to taste

1. Season steaks with salt and pepper and grill just until rare. Remove from heat and allow steaks to rest.
2. Grate fresh horseradish and mix with vinegar until completely moistened. Stir in cream and a little salt and pepper.
3. Chop pea vine to bite-size pieces and toss with spinach. Drizzle with lemon juice and olive oil and toss to coat.
4. Equally divide pea vine salad among 2 or 3 dinner plates. Slice the warm steaks into ½" wide strips and add to the top of the salads. Top each plate with a dollop of horseradish cream.

CHECK YOUR EMAIL FOR A BONUS ASPARAGUS BROCCOLINI SALAD RECIPE!

strawberry day
sunday, june 21
noon-6pm at the farm
potluck, wagon tour,
u-pick strawberries

Coming Soon:
Bok Choi
Kohlrabi
Cilantro
White Turnips
Yukina Savoy

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