



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

November 1-2, 2013

Wisconsin Ginger!

by Andrea Yoder

We are very excited to have the opportunity this week to deliver possibly the freshest ginger you may ever have experienced! It will be less than 48 hours out of the ground by the time you open your CSA box. We first entertained the idea of growing ginger several years ago when a company called East Branch Ginger partnered with Puna Organics, a certified organic farm in Hawaii producing ginger seed. Now, keep in mind ginger is a tropical plant typically grown in much warmer climates so why would they market to northern growers? Given our shorter growing season, we may never reach a full-sized ginger, so they told us we would actually be growing "Baby Ginger." We ordered some seed and gave it a try. Now, several years later, we've gotten brave enough to make a substantial investment in seed and we've expanded our planting so hopefully we'll have enough ginger for your boxes for two deliveries! Ginger is a very interesting and unique crop, unlike anything else we grow on the farm. It is actually a rhizome, which is a stem that grows horizontally underground. It produces roots to anchor it and sends up shoots to grow into foliage above ground as it grows and expands. We grow the plant in one of our greenhouses that has a dirt floor. Ginger grows best in an ideal soil temperature of about 65°F, so trapping heat within the greenhouse helps us provide a longer period of warmth so we can maximize growth. We have produced ginger in the field as well, however the ginger was small and the yields were very low.

Ginger is actually a sterile plant and does not produce actual seed like other crops. It is vegetatively propagated meaning you plant a piece of the ginger rhizome and it grows and spreads to produce more ginger. We receive our ginger "seed" pieces in March. The first thing we do is put the ginger in trays of potting soil in our warmest greenhouse. We water the trays once or twice a week and keep them warm. This is the pre-sprouting phase. We wait impatiently for 3-4 weeks, watching for signs of soil cracking which is a clue that the ginger is actually doing something and a sprout is about to immerge. During this

This Week's Box

YELLOW ONIONS: Make a delicious cheese and onion dip for a perfect appetizer at parties.

POTATOES: Cut potatoes into small, bite-sized pieces and combine together with garlic, spinach, onions, breakfast sausage and eggs on the stove for a satisfying breakfast.

GREEN KALE: Sauté kale with sweet potatoes and garlic and season with salt. Great on its own or as a side dish with chicken.

SALAD MIX OR SPINACH: Greens won't last much longer! Enjoy these greens in your favorite, crisp salad!

SWEET DUMPLING SQUASH: Enjoy this sweet squash stuffed with quinoa, sautéed onions, chopped pistachios, and salt and pepper. The seeds in this squash are tender and can be cleaned and toasted for a crunchy, bonus snack.

SWEET POTATOES: Whether it is your first or second delivery of sweet potatoes, they are just as exciting to find in the box! Try some delicious sweet potato pancakes this week. Sweet potatoes will store well in a cool, dark place, so don't feel like you have to eat them all this week. Start stocking up for winter!

GARLIC: Check out the cheese newsletter this week for a flavorful garlic soup recipe.

CARROTS: Chop up carrots and add them to your next pot of potato soup.

BRUSSELS SPROUTS: Sauté halved Brussels sprouts in olive oil with shiitake mushrooms and garlic. For added flavor, add in soy sauce as well and season with salt and pepper. Snap the sprouts off the main stalk and discard the stalk.

CHIOGGIA BEETS: These beets have beautiful rings on the inside that can be retained by roasting them. Add roasted beets to a mixed greens salad.

FRESH GINGER: See this week's feature and recipes on the back!

DAIKON RADISHES: Shred daikon radishes and carrots and toss together with shaved almonds. Top with a dressing made of apple cider vinegar, olive oil, and a touch of maple syrup and sesame oil.

BABY BOK CHOI: Baby bok choy and ginger are commonly used together in recipes. Sauté bok choy with freshly grated ginger, garlic and mushrooms.

pre-sprouting phase, the ginger piece starts to swell and produce shoots. Once we have established some good sized plants, we prepare trenches in the greenhouse and load them up with plenty of compost. Then we transplant the ginger into the greenhouse and give it a nice drink of water.

As the ginger gets established and grows in the greenhouse, it produces beautiful foliage, continues to send out more shoots, and changes in appearance nearly every day. Sometimes they produce what I call "one day flowers." The plants will randomly shoot up a flower stalk which produces a delicate, tropical-looking purple flower. I haven't quite figured out how this fits into the grand scheme, but it's cool to find one on occasion. The other main management requirement is weed control. Conventional ginger growers use herbicides, we use our hands. We also re-

vived the old, antique wheel hoe earlier this summer, which actually works well as a one-man cultivating set-up!

In conventionally produced ginger, disease problems are treated with chemicals—fungicides and the like. Some of the diseases live in the soil and can persist from year to year, making them a real challenge to manage. One of the keys to organic ginger production is to prevent the onset or spread of disease by using "clean" seed. We get our seed stock from Puna Organics in Hawaii. They have a process for producing certified organic, disease free seed. It isn't a quick process, and can take up to 5 years to produce actual seed. They start with tissue which they grow in a lab for the first year. They then take the initial small rhizome and plant it into raised beds for the next 3-4 years. Every year during the propagation process the new rhizomes are planted into new

media and grown above ground to produce the best seed stock possible. As with many other crops, we understand the importance of good quality seed and feel it is an important first step to producing a healthy crop.

Now it's time to use it! Ginger is used as both medicine and food. As a medicine, it is said to be an anti-inflammatory ingredient, can soothe a whole host of gastrointestinal maladies, and can also be an effective pain reliever and part of a treatment plan for cancer. It is a common ingredient in many Asian cultures, often pairing with garlic and scallions in Chinese stir-frys or combine it with chiles, lemongrass and a variety of other ingredients to make Thai curry pastes. Ginger has a spicy, warm flavor which also makes it an excellent ingredient to pair with other spices and rich, comforting foods such as sweet potatoes, winter squash, mushrooms, broccoli, etc. It can be used extensively to make beverages, teas, baked goods, stir-frys, salad dressings, vegetable dishes, curries, and much much more! To use your ginger, simply cut off a piece from the main chunk and peel it. Remember, this is very fresh ginger and thus it still has a very thin, delicate skin so you don't have to peel very deep.

You can store your ginger pieces for several days at room temperature or if you aren't going to use it right away you can store it in the refrigerator or put it in the freezer. Regardless of the storage location, you'll notice the skin start to change in both color as well as texture. It will start to develop a skin that will look more similar to what you are accustomed to seeing on ginger in the stores.

You will find this fresh ginger to be very juicy and crisp with a bright flavor. It won't take a lot of ginger to flavor a dish. Depending on what you may be using it for, you may want to extract more of the ginger juice. You can do this by pressing a small piece through a garlic press. This will remove the most fibrous portion and leave you with tender flesh and juice. The long green stems attached to the lower portion contain a mild ginger flavor as well. I cut them into 5-6 inch pieces and use them to infuse a little more ginger flavor into soups, stocks, curries, tea, etc. We hope you have as much fun experimenting with and experiencing the delicious flavors of fresh ginger. We've had a lot of fun growing this crop for you and hope to continue to do so again next year....the seed is already on order!

Ginger Cardamom Tea

I (Andrea) was talking with longtime CSA member and good friend, Carol Wilson, at the farmers' market last week. In the course of our conversation Carol shared with me her recipe for making Ginger Cardamom Tea. On a cold, windy market morning, a hot cup of tea sounded like a great idea. Carol was kind enough to share her recipe with me and now I share it with all of you as well! Make a cup of this warm, cozy tea and curl up with a good book..... it's one of life's small luxuries. Recipe originally sourced from Taste of Home Magazine

Serves 2-3

2 cups water
4 tsp honey
1 Tbsp minced fresh ginger root
½ tsp ground cardamom
6 individual tea bags (black tea)
1 ½ cups milk

1. Combine water, honey, ginger, and cardamom in a saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for about 10 minutes.
2. Put tea bags in a 2-cup glass measuring cup. Pour water mixture over tea bags and allow to steep for 3-5 minutes, or to taste. Strain tea back into saucepan, discarding ginger and tea bags.
3. Stir in milk and heat through. Serve immediately.

Pickled Ginger

David Griffeath is a longtime CSA member and friend of the farm who has contributed to our CSA community in many ways over the years. In this week's newsletter David shares his method for making pickled ginger. It's a simple way to preserve ginger and a delightful condiment to have on your shelf.

"Pickled ginger is a fabulous condiment, easy to make yourself from fresh, young ginger. This is the side typically served with wasabi at sushi restaurants. Last season I used all my Harmony Valley ginger for this application and the result was delicious, so I will do so again this year. Once it's all gone I plan to make more from some of the young Hawaiian ginger that the Willy St Coop has started carrying recently. (I do not recommend trying to pickle conventional, woody ginger.)

The preparation is quite simple. First carefully remove the skin using a vegetable peeler, or knife, or even a spoon if possible. Then slice the bulbs as thinly as you can with a sharp knife or mandoline such as a Japanese Benriner. Put the slices in a small bowl, sprinkle lightly with salt, and let set for 20 minutes or so. Next, pat the slices with paper towel to remove excess water and some of the salt. Now put the slices in an 8- or 16-oz canning jar. Prepare enough pickling liquid to cover the ginger in the jar by thoroughly combining 3 parts good rice vinegar with one part cane sugar or palm sugar and bring it to a boil. Pour the pickling liquid over the ginger. After the liquid in the jar has cooled to room temperature, close with a lid and refrigerate for at least a week (if you have the patience). Made with especially young ginger of certain varieties, the pieces and pickling liquid will turn a light pink.

These pickles last at least a couple of months in principle, but they won't because you will finish them much sooner. They are delicious with any fish preparation, in spring rolls and other veggie wraps, in salads, stir fries, diced as a topping for warm or cold soups, etc."

Chai Spiced Squash Bread

This recipe is courtesy of Pam Stevenson. Pam hosts one of our CSA pickup sites in Minneapolis and is a good friend of the farm and fully embraces the CSA experience by creating a lot of good food from her box. Pam shared this recipe with me last fall and I haven't forgotten about it. Pam's original version called for 1 tsp ground ginger, but we thought we'd try it with fresh ginger and see how it turns out. Personally....I think it's pretty good!

Serves 4

½ cup sugar	2 cups all-purpose flour
½ cup butter, room temperature	2 tsp baking powder
2 large eggs	½ tsp baking soda
1 tsp vanilla	1 ½ tsp salt
1 cup cooked, pureed winter squash	3 tsp ground cinnamon
½ cup plain yogurt or sour cream	2 tsp ground cardamom
⅓ cup brown sugar (or ¼ cup maple syrup)	½ tsp ground cloves
1 Tbsp pressed fresh ginger with juice	½ tsp ground allspice
	¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper

1. Preheat oven to 350°F and butter an 8- or 9-inch loaf pan.
2. Cream the sugar and butter together until light and fluffy. Add the eggs, one at a time, incorporating well after each addition. Add the vanilla, squash, yogurt/sour cream, brown sugar or maple syrup and mix well. Peel a 1 ½- 2 inch piece of ginger and press it in a garlic press. Collect 1 tbsp of the ginger juice and flesh that is pressed out. Add to the squash mixture and stir well.
3. In a separate bowl, combine the dry ingredients.
4. Add the dry ingredients to the squash mixture and stir just until evenly moistened.
5. Pour batter into a loaf pan and bake until a tester comes out clean, 45-55 minutes. Cool at least 15 minutes, then slice and serve.