



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our CSA Members - Since 1993

May 6, 2017

www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com

Welcome to the 2017 CSA Season!

Spring is an exciting time in our valley as we watch nature unfold around us. The trees are putting on leaves, wildflowers are blooming, and we found our first morel mushrooms this week! We hope you're ready to embark on your seasonal eating adventure because this week's box contains some tasty treasures. If you are new to seasonal eating, some of these vegetables might be unfamiliar to you. Sorrel, ramps, nettles....what are these things? Where are the carrots and broccoli? Eating with the season means taking advantage of what nature has to offer at different times of the year, and often these vegetables contain just the nutrients our bodies need at that time in the season. While these vegetables may be new to you, they are by no means new vegetables. In fact, many of our grandparents and great-grandparents likely ate these vegetables and considered them to be a "normal" part of their seasonal diet!

In this week's newsletter we are highlighting one of the most nutritious spring vegetables we have, nettles. Yes, they are the stinging kind, but please don't let that deter you. Take a few minutes and read the article Jean Schneider, herbalist and CSA member, wrote for you. The introduction is featured in the newsletter, but we hope you'll go to our blog to read Jean's full article about nettles. It will help you understand more about how nettles fit well into our spring diet. On our blog, you'll also find step-by-step instructions for how to handle nettles so they don't sting you! We've also provided several recipes using nettles that you may choose to try this week. We're glad you've chosen to be part of our farm this year and hope you enjoy this week's seasonal selections.

---Farmer Richard and Chef Andrea

Peddle to the Nettle: Now What Do I Do with It?!

By: Jean Schneider, Herbalist & HVF CSA Member

Nettle is an extremely useful spring plant as an herb and a food that tastes like spinach when cooked. This abundant plant grows where soil fertility is high, accumulating nutrients within the plant.

What's In The Box?

NETTLES: Yes, these are stinging nettles and should be handled with care as they may cause skin irritation if touched with bare hands before they are cooked. There is one bunch of this dark, leafy green vegetable in your box and we've put it in a clear plastic bag. Please read this week's newsletter article and refer to the handling instructions on our blog before you open your bag and use the nettles.

RAMPS: There are two bunches in your box, recognizable by their slender lily-like leaves and onion-like bulbs. The bulb of the ramp will store longer than the leaves, which will have a shorter shelf life given the rain we've had recently. Use within a few days.

CHIVES: These are the long slender, spiky vegetable with a bold onion flavor.

SORREL: Sorrel is a bunched green with arrow-shaped leaves and a lime green color. It has a citrusy taste when eaten raw.

OVERWINTERED SPINACH: It survived the winter and is the sweetest spinach of the season with thick, tender leaves.

ASPARAGUS: Store asparagus in the refrigerator, upright in a glass of water to keep it fresh and crisp.

CHOICE ITEM--DECORATIVE WILLOW BUNCHES: These trimmings came from our fields where we have planted them to provide habitat. While these are not edible, they will add beauty to your home or office and do not require water!

What does this mean for a CSA member finding this treasure in the box? This plant gives you a boost of energy. Here is more motivation to use nettle, it is:

- anti-inflammatory
- anti-histamine (seasonal allergies)
- high in protein
- high in carotenoids, chlorophyll, iron, calcium, magnesium, zinc, potassium, selenium, silicon, vitamins: B, C, D, and K
- removes uric acid (gout, gravel in the kidneys)

Nettle is a nutritious spring tonic plant and is a part of eating with the seasons. It helps our bodies awaken after the long, cold, wet winter by warming and drying up excess fluid. Nettle tea warms the kidneys and inspires them to work more efficiently and detoxify the blood and body. Nettle is a blood building, iron rich plant. Now, let's eat some nettle!

First, there are tiny "hairs" all over the plant that produce a sting when they come in contact with your skin. Lucky for you the farm pre-washes the nettle to remove most of the hairs, so what you have in your box should only have a few hairs left on it. The nettle is bunched together and wrapped in a clear plastic bag. Use the plastic bag,

gloves or tongs to handle the nettle. You can use kitchen scissors to snip the leaves right from the bunch in the bag or other container (eg a canning jar if you're making tea). Once the nettles are cooked, chopped in a food processor, or made into tea with hot water, the hairs have been broken down and no longer sting...

(See our **Blog** for remainder of article)

The Times They Are A'Changin

As the new season begins, we're taking all of the great feedback we received in last year's member survey, and shaking things up a bit! We asked and you answered, so we're making some key changes what we hope will make our CSA even better.

First and foremost, we're streamlining our paper newsletter, to have the most important and useful items on it. Here you will find the "What's In The Box" list, an intro to the article of the week, a featured vegetable and a few tasty recipes. The full article as well as some new features will now live online on our blog at www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com. **blogspot.com/**

So what might be offered on this new and improved blog? Well, we're glad

you asked! First we're going to be highlighting all of the vegetables in our boxes, with pictures and detailed descriptions so that they are more easily identifiable. Hopefully before long, that age-old question of "Is that a parsnip, turnip or rutabaga?" will be forever laid to rest!

We are also going to be helping our members to feel more comfortable getting hands on with items that might not be as familiar to you, with a new "Cooking with This Week's Box" piece. Going a few steps further than the traditional recipe format, which has focused on the Vegetable of the Week; we will share ideas for usage of every item in your box! Hopefully this will help with your meal planning and serve to better utilize all of the delicious ingredients you receive each week.

Last but not least, we have created a great online community group on Facebook, at www.facebook.com/groups/HVFCSAdeliveringinspiration. This is for CSA members only, to ask questions, give feedback, meet other members, share recipes and just about anything else one might think of throughout the season! We've already seen it grow and are excited to have another way to stay connected.

Please take some time and check out our Blog and Facebook, this is truly where most of our best content will live, so take advantage of the beautiful photos, produce highlights and farm stories there We hope you find them as informative and fun as we do, please let us know what you think!

Easy and Tasty Nettle Tea

1 quart canning jar
1 cup loosely packed, fresh nettle leaves
Hot water
Apple juice or honey, to taste

1. Put nettle leaves into a quart canning jar and pour hot water over them. Let set for 4 hours or overnight (for a long infusion).
2. Strain leaves out, sweeten, if desired, with apple juice or honey to taste. Store tea in the refrigerator. Drink one cup per day, either cold or warmed up. Use within 3 days.

Recipe courtesy of Jean Schneider

Curried Nettle Stew with Chickpeas & Chicken

Yield: 4-6 servings

1 Tbsp coconut oil or sunflower oil
4 pieces chicken legs and/or thighs, skin removed
1 tsp mustard seeds
1 Tbsp curry powder
3 cups chicken broth or stock
1 can (15 oz) chickpeas, drained and rinsed
1 bunch nettles, blanched*
3 Tbsp raisins
Salt, to taste
3-4 cups cooked rice for serving (Jasmine is my favorite)



1. Heat oil in a medium sauté pan over medium-high heat. When the oil shimmers, add the chicken pieces. Brown on one side for several minutes, then turn and brown the other side. Once the chicken pieces are nicely browned, set them to one side of the pan.
2. Add the mustard seeds and curry powder. Stir the spices into the oil and cook for a minute or so until they are fragrant. Add the chicken broth and chickpeas.
3. Bring the mixture to a simmer, then reduce heat just a little bit and cover. You do not want the stew to boil, just gently simmer. Adjust the heat accordingly. Simmer for about 15-20 minutes or until the chicken is tender and cooked through. Remove the cover and take the pieces of chicken out of the pan. Set them aside to cool. Once cool enough to handle, pull the meat off the bones and cut into bite-sized pieces. Set aside.
4. While the chicken is cooking, prepare the nettles. Remove the leaves and small stems from the main stem. Discard the main stem and roughly chop the remaining leaves and small stems. When you remove the chicken from the pan, it is time to add the nettles and the raisins to the broth. Return the stew to a gentle simmer and partially cover the pan. Simmer for about 12 minutes, then add the chicken back to the pan. Simmer for an additional 5 minutes.
5. Remove the pan from the heat and taste a bit of the stew. Season to your liking with more salt. Serve the stew with hot rice.

*Blanch: Cook 1-2 minutes in boiling water, remove and place into ice water bath to stop the cooking process.

Recipe by Chef Andrea Yoder