



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com

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Just what does it take to grow a strawberry?

By Laurel Blomquist

Strawberry season is upon us! For those of you who have been eating with the seasons for some time now, you know that this time of year is one of the most highly anticipated. What you may not know is that in order for us to provide you with as many great-tasting strawberries as we can for as long as possible, we have to plan years in advance. I sat down with Farmer Richard to get the scoop on how we grow strawberries, from start to finish.

Step 1: It all starts with genetics. We carefully select varieties based on trials we do at the farm, along with information received from Nourse Farms in Massachusetts, which is where we get our strawberry crowns for planting. We choose varieties with excellent flavor and disease resistance. Many of the plants at Nourse were bred in Canada, while other varieties were developed in the US and Germany.

The early season varieties that we are currently growing include Earliglow and AC Wendy. Earliglow is a favorite among CSA members and market patrons alike, known for its excellent flavor. It's an heirloom variety that produces a large amount of small berries. AC Wendy is highly prolific, providing the bulk of the first crop of berries.

Midseason varieties include Darselect, Flavorfest, and Jewel. Darselect is high-yielding and dependable. Flavorfest is a new favorite, with excellent flavor and large, disease-resistant berries. Jewel was developed at Cornell University and is our best main-season plant and a reliable performer...

(See our [blog](#) for the rest of this article & pictures fresh from the fields)



What's In The Box?

ASPARAGUS: This will be our last week of asparagus. It's time to give our field a rest.

POTATO ONIONS: This will likely be our last week of overwintered onions before we start harvesting spring-planted scallions.

GREEN GARLIC OR GARLIC SCAPES: Green Garlic and Garlic Scapes may be used interchangeably in recipes and both may serve as a substitute for clove garlic. You'll know if you got a scape in your box because it will be the super-curly green vegetable!

GREEN TOP RED RADISHES: These have been growing very fast in the heat of the summer, yet you'll still find them more mild than when summer heat really sets in!

ETHIOPIAN KALE: This is the bunching green in this week's box. Read this week's vegetable feature for more information.

SALAD MIX: We only plant salad mix in the spring and fall as it's hard to germinate lettuce when the soil temperature heats up. Enjoy the salad mix while we have it!

BABY WHITE TURNIPS: See last week's newsletter and blog for more information about this vegetable as well as recipes.

STRAWBERRIES: Keep your berries in the refrigerator to preserve the quality. If you think you're going to have trouble using them fast enough, think about freezing them so you don't lose them. Just wash them and pat dry, remove the green top on the stem end, and pop them in a freezer bag!

RHUBARB: Our rhubarb field is growing very slowly this year, so this week's rhubarb was sourced from Richard's friend, John Zehrer. John has maintained several acres of rhubarb for many years on his farm and you'll find his variety to be juicy with good flavor. It's been around so long he can't even remember what the original variety was!

PEA VINE: The pea vine is a bit more mature this week which means the flavor will be very good, but the stems might be a little more tough. Use the pea vine to make a flavorful broth or chop it finely to make pea vine cream cheese.

Cooking with This Week's Box!

Wow! We have a treat for you in this week's box: STRAWBERRIES! They started ripening at the end of last week, but with the warm days we've had they've been ripening fast. So what are you going to do with all these strawberries!? Well, of course you'll probably want to just eat some fresh, right out of the container. I like to have fresh strawberries with vanilla yogurt or on my morning bowl of cereal during strawberry season. If you are looking for some ideas for tasty desserts to make with your strawberries, check out [21 Recipes to Celebrate Strawberry Season on NYTimes.Com](#). They feature delicious recipes such as **Double Strawberry Cheesecake and Strawberries with Swedish Cream**. If you are afraid you can't eat all the strawberries before they go bad, give them a quick rinse, pat dry, remove the green top on the stem end and then pop the whole berries into a freezer bag and stick them in the freezer. You'll be glad you took a little bit of time to do so when you pull them out and enjoy them during the winter.

Ok, so what are we going to do with the rest of the box! Well, let's start with the rhubarb. You could make a pie, but I think **Rhubarb Vinaigrette** would be delicious tossed on the salad mix in this week's box. This recipe suggests adding fresh strawberries and almonds to the salad as well. You may not need all of the rhubarb to make a vinaigrette, so use the remainder to make **Rhubarb Chutney**...

(See our [blog](#) for the rest of this article & our suggestions for utilizing every item in your box!)

Featured Vegetable: Ethiopian Kale

The bunching green in your box this week is called Ethiopian Kale. It actually originated in Ethiopia where it is a very common green. It is known by other names as well including Amara Greens, Ethiopian Blue Mustard, Highland Kale and in Ethiopia the name is Gomenzer. So is it a mustard or a kale? Technically it's classified as a mustard, and if you eat a piece of it raw you'll get a pungent, spicy, peppery bite that is the characteristic mustard flavor. However, it does share some qualities that are more similar to that of kale and collards. It has a sturdy, thick leaf and a thicker stem that bears more resemblance to kale than traditional mustard greens. Nearly the entire portion of plant in your bunch is edible. The thick stems are still tender and just need to be chopped into bite-sized or smaller pieces. Both the stem and leaves require a little longer cooking time with some liquid to make them tender. When cooked, the flavor mellows significantly and you lose much of the sharpness you get if you try it raw.

We read about this vegetable several years ago in a culinary magazine, but it's just been within the last few years that seed has been available in the United States. Menkir Tamrat is the man credited with introducing this vegetable crop to the United States. His story was told in the Fall/Winter 2011 issue of *Edible Magazine* for the Bay Area of California. Tamrat came to the United States from Ethiopia in 1971 to go to school. He had every intention to return to his country, however a revolution occurred in that country in 1974 and came under the rule of a Soviet-backed military ruler. Tamrat was not able to return to his country and stayed in the U.S. He found it very hard to find his traditional foods in the U.S. and, after growing tired of trying to make substitutions, decided to start growing some of his traditional foods himself. Eventually he connected with Fred Hempel, a plant biologist and owner of a farm and nursery in California. Tamrat got seeds from Ethiopia and, together with Hempel, they started growing them out and producing more seed. While Ethiopian Kale was not the only crop they worked with, it was one of the crops Tamrat introduced to this continent.

From a growing perspective, Ethiopian Kale has some positive attributes. It is a very vigorous, fast growing plant and we have also found it to be resistant to leaf disease and it is less susceptible to pest pressure than other similar greens we grow. We hope you enjoy trying something different and, at the same time, experience a little taste of another part of our world!

Ethiopian Kale and Black Eyed Pea Gratin

Yield: 4-6 servings

By Chef Andrea Yoder

3 Tbsp butter

¾ cup chopped green onion

¾ cup chopped green garlic or garlic scapes

1 tsp salt, plus more to taste

1-2 tsp berbere (*see note below*)

1 bunch Ethiopian kale, stems and leaves chopped into small, bite-sized pieces

1 ½ cups diced canned tomatoes, with the juice

1 can (15 oz) black eyed peas, drained

¾ cup dry bread crumbs or cracker crumbs



1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. In a medium, oven-proof skillet, melt 1 Tbsp butter over medium heat. Once the butter is melted, add the green onions and green garlic or garlic scapes. Saute just until the onions and garlic start to soften.
3. Add the berbere and 1 tsp salt to the pan. If you enjoy some heat and spice in your food, add 2 tsp of berbere. If you prefer things a little less spicy, start with 1 tsp berbere and add more to your liking. Stir to combine the salt and berbere with the vegetables.
4. Add the Ethiopian kale to the pan and pour the tomatoes over the top. Put a lid on the pan and let the greens steam and wilt down for a few minutes. Once the greens are wilted, remove the lid and stir in the black eyed peas. At this point you should have enough liquid that the greens and beans are almost at the point of being covered with the liquid. If you don't have this much liquid in the pan, add a little bit of vegetable broth or water to the pan. Simmer, uncovered for 10-15 minutes or until nearly all the liquid has evaporated. At this point, remove the pan from the burner.
5. Melt 2 Tbsp of butter. Mix the melted butter and bread crumbs in a small bowl. Evenly spread the bread crumbs on top of the greens mixture.
6. Put the pan in the oven and bake for 10-15 minutes or until the topping is lightly toasted.

What is Berbere?

Berberere is a traditional chili-spice blend used extensively in Ethiopian cuisine to season meats and vegetables. It is an interesting blend that leaves you with the spicy heat of the chilies as well as warmth from some of the spices. Recipes vary from cook to cook, but the mix usually contains hot peppers, black pepper, fenugreek, ginger, cardamom, coriander, cinnamon, and cloves. Other ingredients may include ajwain, cumin, allspice, nutmeg, paprika, onion, or garlic. I usually find this mix in the bulk section at our local co-op. The other option is to make it yourself at home. You can find several different recipes online, but Marcus Samuelsson has one on his website. Check it out here! (<https://marcussamuelsson.squarespace.com/recipe/berbere-spice-blend-recipe>)