



BLUE HOUSE FARM

CSA Newsletter

Good Day, Sunshine

June 24, 2011

It is officially Summer...finally! Last Tuesday was the longest day of the year and also one the warmest days we've seen in awhile. This week it has really felt like summer, with perfect weather in the mid/upper 70's and very little wind in Pescadero. The crops are loving it (most of them, at least). It is incredible to witness the rapid growth that a plant can make when it receives full, long days of sun, has its feet in good soil, and has plenty of water to drink. Some crops are especially noticeable, like tomatoes, corn, and sunflowers. They grow inches a day and in a week can gain a foot in height. Other more sleepy crops like broccoli, cabbages, and cauliflower can gain an inch in girth every day and easily fill in the open space between rows with monster size leaves in very quick time.

The "heat" we've just experienced is not all positive though. This week after picking all of the strawberries, I went into the cooler and saw that they looked a bit strange, dark red and kind of mushy. At first I thought the temperature in the cooler accidentally dropped below freezing and the berries had freezer burn. So I asked part of the crew to pick some more from the field while the others sorted the damaged berries from the good ones, which is a sticky and slow process. But after looking at the fresh ones from the field, I noticed that they had a similar dark look even before going into the cooler. It turns out the plants were just going through heat stress. A strawberry plant can grow very well, even thrive, in 70-80 degree weather. But what a strawberry cannot do well is adjust from cool 60-degree days (as we have had all spring,) up to 80-degree days without going through some shock. That is a 20-degree difference that happened in a period of 24 hours. The good news is that the plants seem to have now acclimated to the warmer weather and the berries look great again.

We are finally starting to have more crops to select from in the field to put in your CSA boxes. This week, we're including some really nice broccoli; it will be followed in the next couple weeks by cabbage and cauliflower. We'll be taking a short break from the beets and anxiously awaiting the carrots, which are still a few weeks away, but when we have them, we will have a lot, and they will continue to be in your boxes on a more regular basis. The

Anticipated Harvest

Broccoli
Fava Beans
Tuscan Kale
Spring Onions
Baby Artichokes
Green Leaf Lettuce
Summer Savory
Cilantro
Strawberries

It's hard to imagine, but until the 1920s most Americans had never heard of broccoli, and those that had considered it a peculiar, Italian obsession. Less than a century later, there's no doubt that broccoli has become a thoroughly American obsession as well.

You might know that broccoli provides high levels of Vitamin C & Fiber, but recent studies have revealed that broccoli contains numerous health benefits (such as an improved ability to lower cholesterol) that are only realized through steaming. Conversely, boiling broccoli depletes its anticancer compounds impact, so avoid boiling but give your broccoli a quick steam before you sauté or stir fry it!

The broccoli stalk is as delicious as the rest of the plant...if not moreso! Just peel the tough, darker outer parts to get to the soft, pale interior.

garlic and onions are at an awkward stage. They are senescing from a fresh leafy crop to a dried crop. So the leaves on your onions are a little ugly for a spring onion, but the onion itself is great. And we are letting the garlic stay in the field to let it dry and cure into a garlic bulb, so no garlic for 3-4 weeks. This year we are growing a more diverse selection of herbs and since summer begins this week, Summer Savory is the featured herb.

Happy Summer,
Ryan

CSA News&Notes

Flower Bouquets: We are getting very close to having the flower field burst into color. I expect to have long-stemmed mixed bouquets next week. You can look forward to dahlias, larkspur, godetia, snapdragons, and statice. Up until now, sweet peas have been carrying most of the weight. Thank goodness for sweet peas, they are early bloomers, abundant, smell amazing, and are beautiful. This little heat wave we're having is not so good for those sweet peas, but the other summer flowers love it. So enjoy what will likely be the last of the sweet peas this week.



How To: String & Shell Fava Beans

1) First, snap off the stem end of the fava bean pod, towards the stringy side of the pod. Use the snapped off end like a zipper and “unzip” the bean pod.

2) Remove the beans from the pod.

3) Bring a pot of salted water to a boil (“as salty as the Mediterranean,” as my friend Sophie says), then add the fava beans and blanch for 1 minute. Prepare an ice bath.

4) As soon as the beans have completed their blanching time, drain the beans and then submerge them in the ice bath, 3 to 5 minutes or until cool.

5) Locate the dimple at one end of each bean, and using a fingernail break through the shell and pull up to remove the bean’s cap. Then squeeze the other end gently to pop the bean out of its shell.

Cavolo Nero E Fagioli Tuscan Kale & Fava Beans

1 Bunch Tuscan Kale

1.5 C Fava Beans, Stringed & Shelled

1/2 C Water or White Wine (or better yet, the water used to boil the fava beans for shelling)

2 - 3 Cloves Garlic

2 -3 Sprigs Summer Savory

Salt

Pepper

Olive Oil

Parmigiano Reggiano (to taste)

Destem the kale and tear or chop it. Send through salad spinner or pat dry with paper towel. Slice the garlic into rounds.

Heat some olive oil in a skillet over medium-high, then add the kale.

Cook until the kale wilts and sizzles in the oil, about 2 minutes, then reduce the heat to low or medium-low.

Add the garlic and cover. Cook until the leaves are tender, about 10 minutes; if the pan looks dry, add water/wine/bean water a tablespoon at a time.

When kale is tender, add the beans, salt, pepper, savory and enough liquid to keep things juicy. Cover & simmer for 5 minutes. Serve with parmesan and fresh black pepper.

Peasant Broccoli

1 Bunch Broccoli

2 -3 Cloves Garlic

2 T White Wine

Crushed Red Pepper

Olive Oil

Salt

Parmigiano-Reggiano (to taste)

Break up broccoli florets and peel and chop the stalk. Steam the broccoli for 5 - 10 minutes, then run under cold water.

Heat olive oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. When the oil is hot add the red pepper; it should sizzle in the pan.

Add the broccoli, and cook until it starts to brown, about 5 minutes.. Add the garlic and white wine and toss. Cook another 1 or 2 minutes or until liquid has mostly evaporated.

Serve with freshly grated parmesan cheese. Makes a fantastic side dish or, serve with spaghetti and crusty bread as an entrée.