



BLUE HOUSE FARM

CSA Newsletter

Playing The Changes

July 28, 2011

The CSA boxes are starting to get heavier and this is a reflection of the changing seasons. The strawberries are starting to slow down, as they usually do this time of year. The kales and chard continue to produce monster-size leaves, but are no longer necessary to fill the boxes, as we now have many other nice items to choose from in the field. And finally we have basil! We lost the first planting to the cold and the second planting just took forever to grow (also due to the cold.) Fresh basil is one of my most anticipated crops, I hope that you enjoy it as much as I do.

This week we dug up some beautiful golden potatoes called 'Nicola.' They are incredible prepared as homefries or in a potato salad. These potatoes were harvested a little young, so they should be eaten within the week and kept in the fridge. I'm growing about 8 different varieties of potatoes this year and we'll be shuffling the different types throughout the rest of the season.

In the coming weeks, we should have a round of beans and peas ready for harvest. The first crop of pears and apples are looking good, nice and big from all of the spring/summer rain. They look a little rough, cosmetically on the surface as a result of the same rains, but I am certain they will still taste great. About a month ago I put in a few beds of soybeans and sowed another few beds this week, so that will be another new one for this year, but we are still at least a month away from a harvest. And we have a few waves of broccoli, cauliflower, beets and carrots (our heavy hitters) in the ground and looking good.

Up at the warm field, the peppers are taking their sweet time. The plants are finally big and healthy looking, with tons of flowers, but very little fruit. So... it looks to be a late season for peppers. The cantaloupes and baby watermelons look great and are sprawling all over the field. They were totally overgrown with weeds as of a week ago, but after a solid afternoon with the whole crew hoeing and some tricky tractor work, the field now looks great. With some warm weather, we should have melons in 3 or 4 weeks. The tomatoes are also taking their time, but I do see lots of green, sized up 'Early Girls.' They just need a hot week to kick them into ripening mode. The cherry tomatoes are also very close, we should have some 'Sungolds' for you in about a week or two.

Anticipated Harvest

Fennel
Rainbow Carrots
Cheddar Cauliflower
New Potatoes
Summer Squash
Purple-Top Turnips
Salad Mix
Basil
Strawberries

No vegetable has worked its way deeper into my heart in recent years than Fennel. At first, I was uneasy about its licorice aroma and somewhat unusual appearance, a sentiment I've heard many others echo; but once you know its subtle charms, Fennel is a beguiling vegetable. Both the Fennel bulb (which is often called "Florence Fennel") and the frilly fronds are edible. The fronds are similar to dill in flavor with anise overtones; try adding it to salads or serving with boiled potatoes and butter. The bulb is wonderfully refreshing raw, with a bit of olive oil, lemon juice and salt. When cooked, it loses all traces of licorice flavor but adds a mysteriously rich quality to whatever it is cooked with, and works especially well with onions and/or potatoes.

A staple of Mediterranean cuisine since ancient times, Fennel is high in Vitamin C & Dietary fiber and contains unique antioxidants.



Apples sizing up.



Soybeans saying hello.

Riso Con Le Rape alla Milanese - Milanese Turnips & Rice

1 lb Turnips
1 Cup Short-Grained Rice (ex: Arborio)
5 C Broth, Stock or Water
2 Cloves Garlic
Parsley
Parmigiano-Reggiano
Salt & Pepper
1 T Butter (Optional)

Bring the broth/stock/water to a boil in a heavy-bottom pot. Shred the turnips with a box grater or chop it into very very fine shreds, then add it and the rice to the broth. Reduce the heat to a simmer then cook, stirring occasionally, until the rice is very nearly done.

Mince the garlic and parsley very fine, then when the rice is almost done cooking add it to the pot along with a handful of parmesan cheese (and the butter if you're using it). Stir; when the rice is done, the dish will still be somewhat soupy, so add another handful of cheese and serve with crusty bread.

Fennel & Potato Gratin

2 C Potato, Thinly Sliced
1 Medium Bulb Fennel
OR
2 Smaller Bulbs Fennel
2 C Half N Half
2 T Butter
Parmigiano-Reggiano
Salt & Pepper

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
Slice the fennel crosswise into 1/8-inch slices. Butter the bottom of a 2 quart baking dish.

Cover the bottom of the baking dish with a single layer of fennel slices, then cover that with a layer of potatoes, sprinkling a bit of salt & pepper as you go. Repeat the layers until you run out of ingredients.

Bring the half n half to a gentle boil in a saucepan over medium heat, then pour it over the fennel & potato. Press down the top layer of the gratin with a wooden spoon or spatula to submerge it. Dab tops with butter. Bake 1 hour; after about 45 minutes, top the gratin with the cheese.

Zahra Dukkah - Egyptian Cauliflower

1 Large or 2 Medium Head Cauliflower
2 T Olive Oil
1 T & 1 tsp Almonds
1/2 tsp Cumin
1/2 tsp Crushed Red Pepper
Zest of 1 Lemon
Salt & Pepper

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
In a dry skillet, toast the almonds, cumin, red pepper, a pinch of salt & the lemon zest over high heat until the nuts appear lightly browned and/or your kitchen smells nutty. Remove from heat and chop together, either in a food processor or by hand, blending the ingredients as you chop so that everything gets well mixed.

Chop the cauliflower into florets, then toss with olive oil in a baking dish. Sprinkle with a salt, then roast in the oven for about 15 - 20 minutes, or until the tops of the florets become golden brown. As soon as the cauliflower comes out of the oven, toss it with the nut/spice blend, then serve immediately.