



BLUE HOUSE FARM

CSA Newsletter

Corny

09.16.11

Yesterday we went through and harvested all of the sweet corn from the field. This year I only did one planting of corn, instead of two or three as I've done in previous years. Corn is a marginal crop for the coastside and unless we receive a warm summer it doesn't get as sweet as it should. So this year I decided to plant less corn and save the space in the field for other crops that perform better. Unfortunately, the single planting of corn did not germinate well in the spring. I planted the corn in the usual way: watered the field well, amended with a strong organic chicken fertilizer, worked up the soil with the tractor until it was nice and loose, made 3" tall beds, and then waited for a warm week to be forecasted to plant just prior. This last step is where I went wrong; or rather, the weather did not cooperate. After making the corn beds, I watched the long-range weather forecast for that warm spell and waited. And waited. But there appeared to be no warm spell in sight, so at last I decided to plant the seeds nice and deep into the slightly moist soil, about an inch down. Not surprisingly, when you take a large seed like a corn kernel and put it in a damp environment, it is very susceptible to rot. Conventional farmers typically use a treated corn seed that is coated with an anti-rot chemical to prevent this; as an organic grower, this is not an option. When it is warm enough, the corn will germinate quickly and sprout from the ground before rot can happen, but when it is cold it does not sprout, and rot happens.

This year we had a lot of rot and instead of having a corn plant every foot along the bed, we had a plant every two or three feet and sections of the field where nothing came up. When I have been giving farm tours I have been avoiding that part of the farm, as it is slightly embarrassing! So our corn harvest yesterday was a little disappointing; we picked everything in the field and divided it up by the number of CSA members this week and got 2-3 ears per member. Needless to say, the corn season will be very short-lived this year. The good news is that despite the cool summer and poor germination the corn does taste really good. Keep in mind that corn loses its sweetness by the hour; we pick it very fresh and recommend that you cook it as soon as you can after receiving your box.

We are waiting as patiently as we can for the orchard to start producing more apples and pears, but it also has been very slow to start. Normally around this time of the year, the strawberries start to decline in production just as the apples and pears start ripening and it is an easy shift in the fruit category. But this year the strawberries are shutting down a little early and the

Anticipated Harvest

Bell & Gypsy Peppers

Sweet Corn

Broccoli

Artichokes

Red Russian Kale

Butter Lettuce

Summer Squash

Cucumbers

Basil

Strawberries or Pears/Apples

*Pepper season is officially in full swing! We've planted nearly 20 different varieties of pepper this year, and if the deer can be held at bay you'll enjoy all manner of sweet, hot, stuffing, frying and roasting peppers. The pepper fruit (botanically speaking a "true berry") was first cultivated thousands of years ago in Central Mexico by the Aztecs: indeed, the word "chili" comes straight from Nahuatl, the Aztec language. That great genius Christopher Columbus, searching for Eastern Spices, misleadingly called them "peppers" due to their spicy kick; that kick is caused by a chemical called capsaicin, the analgesic and stimulative properties of which made peppers useful elements in both ancient and modern medicines. Delicate tongues fret not: the earliest young peppers all tend to have less capsaicin and be on the sweet (or at least "not that hot yet") side of things. In fact, the familiar **Bell Pepper** is completely devoid of capsaicin; Bell's color depend on their variety and change as they mature: you'll see Green, Yellow, Orange, Purple & Red at various times in your boxes. **Gypsy Peppers**, an offshoot of the Bell Pepper clan with a tapered end, are a Hungarian speciality. They are a greenish yellow when young, maturing to orange and then bright red.*



Hey Juan Carlos, hot date tonight?

tree fruit is taking longer than usual to come on. We are doing our best to include fruit in every box, but it is a little tight at the moment. Hang in there, more fruit is coming.

Good news with the tomatoes, sort of... it looked at first like the blight had wiped out everything, but some sections of the field have survived and are bearing some fruit. None of the heirloom tomatoes have made it, but some of the Early Girls are miraculously alive and kicking. So we will have some of our own tomatoes this year, just not a wide diversity of types. And pretty late in the year as well. We'll do our first picking this Monday and see what we get!

From the Field,
Ryan

Sweet Pepper Pasta

3 – 4 Sweet Peppers, any color
4 Cloves Garlic
15 – 20 Fresh Basil Leaves
2 T Butter
Salt
Olive Oil
2/3 C Parmigiano-Reggiano
1lb Pasta (I'd go Penne or Rigatoni)

Cut the peppers in half lengthwise and remove the seeds and cores. Use a swivel-head peeler to peel the bell peppers, or pierce the peppers with a skewer or fork and roast over the stovetop flame and, when cool, rub off the skin under a running faucet. Slice the pepper halves lengthwise, then halve them.

Add olive oil and whole garlic cloves to a large skillet and place over medium-high flame. Cook and stir the garlic until it is colored a pale nut brown, then remove it from the oil and discard the cloves. Add the peppers to the pan and cook till they are tender, but not mushy (the time depends on how you peeled your pepper). Season with salt then remove from heat.

Boil pasta. When it is nearly done, gently reheat peppers and, in separate sauce pan, melt butter but do not let it sizzle.

Drain the pasta, then toss it with peppers in their skillet. Add the butter, basil leaves (torn in half if exceptionally large), and parmesan and toss again. Serve immediately.

Lebanese Pears

4 Pears (or Apples)
2 T Pine Nuts (or Almonds)
2 T Raisins
2 T Honey
Juice & Zest of 1 Lemon
3 T Butter
1/2 tsp Vanilla Extract

Core pears (and peel if you wish), then halve and quarter them. Sprinkle with lemon juice.

Melt the butter in a heavy skillet over very low heat until it foams, then skim off the foam with a wooden spoon or mesh strainer. Add the pear pieces and raise heat to medium. Stir gently to coat, then add the raisins and nuts. Cook for a minute or two, shaking pan, then add the honey.

Once the honey is added, keep things moving in the pan frequently (but gently) to ensure even caramelization. Mix the vanilla and lemon juice with a little water, then add it to pears to deglaze the pan. Serve.

Baked Artichokes

2-4 Artichokes
2 Cloves Garlic
1 Lemon
2-3 Basil Leaves
½ C Stock, Broth or Water
1-2 T Olive Oil
Salt & Pepper

Preheat oven to 350°.

Trim the leaves and stem of the artichoke. Halve the artichokes; if there is any fluffy choke, scoop it out. Immediately rub the cut areas with lemon to prevent browning.

Mince the garlic, juice the lemon and chop the basil leaves. Combine the garlic, basil, olive oil, lemon juice, salt and pepper in a bowl or mortar and mash together with the back of a spoon or pestle until a paste is formed. Spread the paste all over the artichoke halves and inside the leaves.

Oil a baking pan, then arrange the artichokes in the dish cut-side down. Pour the stock/broth/water over the artichokes and cover with tin foil. Bake in the oven for about 45 minutes to an hour, or until soft and tender.