



BLUE HOUSE FARM

CSA Newsletter

Blue Skies, Believe It Or Not

09.23.2011

Summer came late this year, but it is here at last! It would have been an interesting experiment this year to measure the speed of growth during the long, foggy days in July versus the shorter sunny days of September. From my general observation, it seems as though the crops are growing faster now with 6-9 hours of sunlight and warmer temperatures than they were in the height of "summer," when they were getting 10-14 hours of diffused sun through the fog and overcast days. Just as the plants appreciate the sun and warmth, so have the farmers. The crew and I have enjoyed the opportunity to dig deep into our closets and find our work shorts. It has been nice to feel a little sunburn on our pale farmer legs!

The peppers are abundant in the field and this week we are going a little light on the harvest to allow them an extra week to ripen and turn from green or yellow to red. If we keep picking them hard each week, they will never fully mature. Green peppers are basically immature red peppers. As a pepper turns from green to red, it gets sweeter and higher in Vitamin C. The tricky part of this is not just being patient; it is that with time, comes more risk of damage to the peppers. In our case, it is deer and sunburn. We are growing our peppers at the new inland ranch in a field that is fairly remote amidst a giant population of deer. This time of year, as the grasses dry up, our peppers are obviously looking really good to them. We've put up a very strong electric fence to keep them at bay and this has worked pretty well up until now. The deer must have learned that the reward is worth the risk of shock, because a few brave ones have been visiting our peppers regularly. They are not so interested in the peppers themselves, just the leaves on the top of the plant. So what we have in the field are a ton of plants, loaded with fruit, with very little canopy of leaves. This is actually a big problem. Without a canopy, the fruit is susceptible to sunburn, especially at the point when they are turning from green to red. So last week we took a whole bunch of leftover thin, light cloth that we use to cover some of our beds with in the spring and attempted to cover as much of the field as we could. The cloth diffuses the sunlight and should create an artificial canopy. It also makes the field look really funny blanketed with cloth, which hopefully will make it look less enticing for the deer as well.

Those tomatoes that did survive the blight from the early summer are starting to produce some red fruit. We went through the entire four acres of tomatoes and picked four cases of tomatoes. One case per acre. That is not very much, but it does signal the

Anticipated Harvest

Early Girl Tomatoes

Beets

Broccoli

Islander & Gypsy Peppers

Artichokes

Wax Beans

Butter Lettuce

Chives

Oregano

Golden Delicious Apples

*Like so many apples beloved today, the Golden Delicious was a chance seedling; discovered in West Virginia just over a hundred years ago and given national prominence when the propagation rights were purchased by the same nursery that gave America the Red Delicious Apple. In fact, the name Gold Delicious is a result of brand-building rather than botany, as the Gold and Red are not related in any way aside from both being apples. The Golden Delicious went on to become one of the country's most popular apples, but here the story takes a darker turn. The Golden Delicious' productivity and versatility made it one of the few apples widely cultivated as growers industrialized, threatening to drown America's astounding apple diversity in three varieties, picked unripe, stored overlong, and thus increasingly bland and flavorless. But thanks to some dedicated small farmers and the consumers who supported them (yes, that's **you** dear CSA Member!), we're not only repopularizing nearly forgotten apple varieties but returning the old standbys to their previous glory. When left to ripen on the tree, Golden Delicious possess a honey-rich sweetness & a hint of spice, as well as lots of Vitamins A & C, Soluble Fiber and Potassium.*



beginning. We took the weight of those four cases and divided up by the number of CSA boxes for this week. It didn't amount to much, but it is at least something to slice up and put on top of your butter lettuce salad. Each week we hope to have more and that will be reflected in your box.

If you have not marked your calendar yet, the Harvest Festival is approaching on October 9th from 1-5!

From The Field,
Ryan

Apple-Beet Muffins

2/3 C Apple, Grated
2C Beets
1½C All-Purpose Flour
1½C + 2T Brown Sugar
½ C Butter
½ C Milk
1 tsp Baking Powder
1 tsp Baking Soda
1 tsp Vanilla
¼ tsp Salt
¼ tsp Cinnamon
¼ tsp Cloves, Ground

Preheat oven to 350°. Wrap beets in tin foil and place on middle rack of oven; roast for 30-45 minutes or until soft. Remove from oven and let cool. Peel and grate the beets.

In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, cinnamon. & cloves. In a separate bowl, cream the butter and the sugar, then add the milk and vanilla. Combine the wet and dry ingredients, then stir in the grated apple and beets.

Pour the batter into well-greased muffin tins, and sprinkle sugar on the top of each. Bake for 20-25 minutes, until a knife thrust into one of the muffins comes out clean.

Greek Oregano-Lemon Sauce

¼ C Olive Oil
2T Lemon Juice
1 T Oregano Leaves
2 Cloves Garlic
Salt & Pepper

Chop the oregano leaves; you should have at least two teaspoons of chopped oregano.

In a mortar & pestle, mash the garlic and a pinch of salt until it becomes paste-like. Slowly drizzle in the olive oil, stirring all the while to incorporate the oil into the garlic mash.

When fully blended, add the lemon juice, chopped oregano, another pinch of salt and several cranks of fresh ground pepper and whisk to combine thoroughly.

Oregano-Lemon sauce is delightful on fish, and excellent on roasted potatoes, but would also taste great on chicken or stir-fried vegetables.

***Chakchouka* Tunisian Egg & Pepper Ragout**

3 Sweet Peppers, Any Color
3 Tomatoes
1 Onion
3-6 Cloves Garlic
1 C Water
1 -2 T Paprika
1 T Cumin, Toasted & Ground
1 Bay Leaf
4 Eggs
Olive Oil
Salt & Pepper

Core and seed the peppers, then slice them lengthwise. Cut the tomatoes into big pieces. Slice the garlic.

Heat a generous amount of olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Stir in the paprika and cook until oil is colored, about 15 seconds. Add the onions and sauté until shiny, then add the garlic and continue cooking until the garlic turns a pale gold. Add cumin and stir to incorporate, then add the tomatoes and let them reduce a little. Add the peppers, water, salt, pepper & bay leaf. Bring to a boil then immediately reduce to a simmer and cover; cook for 10 minutes or until peppers are tender. Make four hollows in the sauce with a spoon, then crack an egg into a bowl and slide egg into a hollow: repeat for each egg. Cover and simmer until white sets but yolk still runs, about 10-15 minutes. Serve with crusty bread.