



BLUE HOUSE FARM

CSA Newsletter

Et Tu, Impromptu?

10.20.11

Yesterday as I was planning the contents of your CSA boxes, I was following my usual recipe of one herb, one or two salad items, one bunch of leafy greens, one to two pounds of a root vegetable, one or two pounds of a fruit item, one seasonal item (tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, beans, etc.), one Brassica item (cauliflower, broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, etc.). It was looking like a pretty nice Fall box, at least on paper - or actually on the computer screen. But this morning, we discovered one of those important items, the tomatoes, had undergone a dramatic and drastic change since we picked them on Monday. That dreaded Late Blight fungus that has been lingering in the tomato field all year came back with a vengeance after the rainfall we got last week. When we picked the tomatoes, they looked good, but after a few days in storage, the Blight just turned them to moldy mush. Big Bummer! I think this marks the end of our very brief tomato season. But to be honest, I am happy that we got a five week run of tomatoes, which is a lot more than I expected earlier in the year.

So we needed to find a substitute seasonal item and we needed to pick it this morning for the boxes to be packed and delivered by this afternoon. I walked the field searching, knowing that the item needed to be really good to replace the tomatoes. I got lucky and found something. The Cranberry Beans were ready! This is new crop for me, but a well-known crop for this Coastside region. We had a very small planting early this year that did not yield enough for the CSA, but did for a couple of the farmers markets. I learned a few important lessons then for this planting; 1) These beans are really tasty and worth all the hype, 2) To pick them fresh, there is a very short window of time when they must be picked. If picked too early, they are smaller and have less flavor and if picked too late, they start to dry and must be prepared as more of dry-bean. I've been watching these three long rows carefully for the last few weeks, waiting for the beans to size-up and start to turn a slight pink in color, which is an indicator that they are ready. They were taking forever and I was becoming worried that we would get hit by a frost before they matured. Seemingly overnight (last night, to be exact) they started to blush light pink. Technically, these are shelling beans, but we harvest these beans still fresh, before they are dried. They have an incredible creamy, slightly nutty flavor. And they look stunningly beautiful; the pods are streaked deep, dark red and the beans inside are creamy white with a mottling of light pink.

These beans are prepared differently than a dry bean. To prepare

Anticipated Harvest

Brussels Sprouts
Serrano Peppers
Cranberry Beans
Red Russian Kale
Candy Onions
Green Leaf Lettuce
Spinach
Oregano
Golden Delicious Apples

*Who is this mysterious and intimidating character that comes our way this week? Shine a bit of daylight and if you haven't already joined me in the **Brussels***

***Sprouts** Booster Society then you shortly will. History does not record the name or location of the mad genius who first cultivated a cabbage that produced not a single edible terminal bud (the "head" of the plant) but a multitude of edible lateral (or side) buds. Considering the cabbage proclivities of Northern Europe, it probably wasn't the Belgians, despite the name! The first American to champion these humble sprouts was Thomas Jefferson, who planted them in abundance at Monticello. From such prominent beginnings, however, Brussels Sprouts have become thought of as difficult, patrician, or sometimes just yucky. Fortunately, simple roast in the oven with a little balsamic vinegar will turn even the most doubt-riddled Thomas into a True Believer! And boy is it worth it; Brussels Sprouts are a rock star of cancer prevention, containing the DNA-protecting nutrient indole-3-carbinol as well as the colon cancer fighting compound sinigrin. Of course, they're also full of boring old Vitamins A, C, & E, Dietary Fiber and Folic Acid.*



Rogelio harvests Artichokes during a rare interval of sunshine.

them, shell the beans and place the beans in a couple inches of boiling water. Boil for 20-25 minutes or until very tender, then drain. Fresh shelling beans cook much faster than dried beans and do not need to be presoaked; they are ready when they are no longer mealy. After they are soft, they are very versatile; they can be added to pastas, soups, stir-fries, served cold over a salad, mashed into a dip or hummus, or simply enjoyed alone sautéed in olive oil or butter with salt and pepper. I hope you enjoy these beans as much as I have...I think they will become a permanent member of my crop plan!

From The Field, Ryan

Balsamic-Browned Brussels Sprouts

1 lb Brussels Sprouts
2 T Melted Butter
3 T Balsamic Vinegar
Salt & Pepper

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Make a little X-shaped incision on the butt of each Brussels Sprout, then add them to the boiling water. Blanch for 5-8 minutes, until the Brussels Sprouts become bright green and just slightly tender, then immediately drain them and shock them with cold water to stop cooking.

Place the Brussels Sprouts in a cast-iron skillet and add the melted butter, balsamic vinegar and a generous pinch of salt and pepper, then toss to coat evenly. Place on the stove over a moderately high flame until the pan starts to sizzle, then place in the middle of the heated oven. Bake for about 20 minutes, or until the sprouts are browned and tender. Serve immediately!

Wilted Kale Salad

1 Bunch Red Russian Kale
2 Cloves Garlic
1 Small Onion
2 T Olive Oil
2 T Balsamic Vinegar
¼ C Dried Cranberries
½ C Walnuts
1 tsp Orange Zest
Salt & Pepper

Destem kale and chop or tear into strips; send through salad spinner or dry thoroughly with paper towels. Thinly slice the onion, mince the garlic, toast and chop the walnuts.

Put the olive oil and onions in a large skillet set over medium heat. When the onion starts to get shiny, add the garlic and continue sautéing until onion is translucent and garlic is a pale gold. Add the kale and cook until wilted, which should only take a couple minutes. Remove from heat and let cool completely.

When cool, add the vinegar, cranberries, orange zest, walnuts, plus salt and pepper to taste and toss thoroughly.

Palak Pakora – Indian Spinach & Onion Fritters

1 Bunch Spinach
1 Medium Onion
2 Cloves Garlic
½ C Flour
1 Serrano Chile
1 tsp Turmeric
1 tsp Salt
1 tsp Sugar
Low Smoke-Point Oil for Frying (I like Grapeseed Oil)

Mince the garlic and very finely chop the spinach, serrano and onion. Combine the spinach, garlic, serrano, onion, turmeric, salt, sugar and flour in a bowl and combine well. The batter should be thick and sticky, but if it looks too dry add a tablespoon or too of water.

Heat the oil in a deep, heavy bottomed pan or skillet. When the oil sizzles on contact, reduce heat to medium then scoop out batter with a medium-large spoon (you want each fritter to contain about 2 tablespoons of batter) and drop it into the oil. Fry each fritter until golden brown, then scoop them out with a slotted spoon and let drain on a rack or on paper towels.

Serve with chili sauce or other spicy dipping sauce (like Sriracha), or better yet with Mint-Cilantro Chutney and/or Tamarind Chutney.