

Week 11-August 18, 2008

This is a Healthy Alternative A week

Farmer Tim Reports

Greetings from Erehwon!

Yesterday's beautiful weather brought out some hardy volunteers who helped rescue a long row of tomato plants that had been a bit neglected by Farmer T. They opened up holes in the plastic mulch to aerate the roots, fertilized with some quick-acting soybean meal, pulled off green fruit from some stunted plants to encourage new growth, and carefully stuffed errant vines back into their cages so they could climb. Today we will give them a good watering to complete the process. Also on the rescue list was our last row of sweet potatoes. Thanks to the Triskos, the Pouillys, Kathy Noftz, Candy and Ellee Crawford, and Chuck Wettergreen.

When the work was done, Beth and Chuck entertained the group with a program about preserving the harvest. Farmer T., who had been building a fire and snoozing in the hammock, nearly missed some delicious pickles brought to the affair. Supper consisted of chili (no beans), grilled corn and baby cabbages (sans butter, salt and pepper) delicious with its smoky flavor, fruit, and some fine Mexican and Wisconsin beer. .

Tom deBates dropped in with a large container of gazpacho made from ingredients from his garden – a spicy cold soup that quickly disappeared down our hatches. Turns out he installs solar systems for people and we discussed how we might apply these ideas to the farm for extending the season. Chuck (a different Chuck, last name unknown), a frequent volunteer at Garfield, also dropped by and explained the history of the Mongerson Farm. We had a full five-gallon bucket



of Japanese beetles from our traps and everyone guessed the number of beetles they in the bucket. Unfortunately, no willing person could be found who would conduct the official count! Said beetles are now headed to our compost pile.

Thanks to Jackie Kleck who came to the Wednesday subscriber pickup and cooked cabbage for the crowd to taste and also made a cold cabbage salad. Thanks Jackie for a great-tasting demo!

Last week we had a film crew out from Chicago Tonight filming a segment about the farm. They read about us in the *New York Times* last month and decided we were newsworthy! We don't know exactly when it will air, but we are expecting it to be some time this week, so keep watch.

At the farm we are still planting fall crops as beds become available, weeding like crazy, and waiting for summer crops to ripen before summer is over. Next week should bring more peppers, tomatoes. Tomatillos are filling out and winter squash are almost ready.

In your boxes this week

The theme this week is "Veggie Potpourri." You can expect to find

potatoes (various varieties), summer squash, corn, green salad mix, kale or Swiss chard, radish or green onions, garlic, and tomatoes. Tuesday subscribers should get beans, and possibly Friday as well.

Those who have the Healthy Plus share can expect kohlrabi, spinach, cress, beets, sweet potatoes (about 2 or 3), and peppers.

We Get Mail

Extra cabbage? We'll take it. I made a great wrap sandwich with last weeks cabbage. I got the recipe from a probiotic and prebiotic cookbook. Cabbage is great for the digestive system. The recipe is something like this. 3 cups chopped cabbage, 1 cup shredded carrots, 6 tablespoons of slivered almonds (baked at 250 for 2 min), 2 tablespoons of red onion, 2 tablespoons of lime juice and 3 tablespoons of canola oil mayo. mix and wrap in a whole wheat flat bread/tortilla. makes about 3-4 wraps. yum. Thanks for the recipes and veggie prep tips. I always look forward to trying something new.

Kristin

Kristin, thanks for trying something new and sharing your experiences!

Beth: I am reading this a bit late, but I would have to agree with Jeanine. I think any "excess" should be put in boxes to make up for the paucity of the spring boxes and simply as the equitable, expected arrangement. Just how do you determine there is an excess, anyway? My thinking is that there can be no such thing in a shareholder arrangement. I think all produce should be distributed to

shareholders. Otherwise, you will have to specify a certain amount, number, or poundage of produce in each box; that would be difficult to do.

I think your arrangements with Inglenook and others may be the problem. Inglenook should be treated as a regular shareholder if they so desire. Further, to purchase the "excess" as I understand it, I would have to drive out to your marketplace. Given the price of gas these days, that is not a good choice. There are farmers' markets closer to me, and I have to say, their produce items are larger and look more appealing than some of yours. Probably not organic, you might say, but I don't know. Some may be, some not. I agree you might do your shareholders justice by distributing the "excess" to us at our pick-up points! Isn't it ours to do with as we choose if amounts/numbers/poundage are not specified in the "contract"?

As first-time subscribers we have enjoyed the adventure of picking up a box and eagerly anticipating what is in it. However, the amount of some items has been disappointing and the amplitude of others has also been disappointing. For example, we have had no beets and only two small misshapen carrots, 3 small heads of garlic, and 4 ears of corn.

There are only so much greens one can eat, and I am not inclined to put up cabbage as sauerkraut! So far, the produce has been just OK, not quite what we expected in quality or quantity for the price we paid. (Yes we signed up "late" but we did sign up as soon as we found out about you. I'm not sure why the penalty for what you consider "late" sign-up. If you are still accepting sign-ups, they should be the same price as the others.) There should be an "open" time and then that is it! Somehow, it hasn't been an equitable situation, especially when we read about the "excess" and what you do with it.

Cliff

Cliff, we appreciate your taking the time to write you comments. There

were enough good points here to send Farmer T. off to the hammock to do some contemplation in order to write a reply.

First, if we do have "excess" (bumper crop might be a better term), we do try to share with subscribers. We have had quite a good crop of greens on the whole this year. The quantity of produce listed in our brochure is 1/2 to 3/4 bushel (delivery boxes are 3/4) and six to ten items. Quantities in the box tend to grow as the season progresses and we believe, on average, we meet the goal. As you correctly point out, the quality and quantity of some items is not as good as we all would like but I assure you we are working diligently to improve. However, all of the scarce items are going to subscribers, not to other outlets.

Inglenook is a regular subscriber—they have 2 shares. What they usually get in their shares are a few items we have in quantity and not so much of the items we don't have much of. (For example, they get several bags of Swiss chard.) In addition, they sometimes purchase extra quantities of a few items.

We started our farm doing Farmers Markets and we are not going to stop doing them. There are a lot of folks out there who want to buy our produce but for one reason or another don't want to do a CSA. We will continue to accommodate these people. But since the CSA business has grown, only about 7% of our produce ends up at the markets. The amount we sell to restaurants is less than 1%. So you see, this really doesn't affect the quantity the subscribers get.

As for selling vs distributing excess, suppose we have 25 heads of surplus cabbage. Which of our 165 subscribers would get these heads? Isn't it better to have them go to someone who wants to make sauerkraut then randomly give them to

people who will not want them? And if one or two people get all the excess cabbage, then how do we make it equitable for those who did not get the cabbage? In past years we have resolved this issue by selling to subscribers at below our market price.

As for corn and other crops grown on the Konen farm, we pay him for all the produce we get from him. We try to take only what we will need so there will be no waste, but sometimes Mike has extra which we make available to subscribers, again at a discounted price.

Lastly, you talk about a "penalty" for late subscribing when, actually, there is no penalty, only a bonus for early subscribing. That is because we are willing to take less money in order to get the money early. We spend over a third of the money to raise your veggies before the season starts and the discount is one way to get the money when we are spending it.

Delivery Schedule

12:30—van leaves farm
 1:00-1:30—delivery at Ball Hort
 1:30-2:00—delivery at Wheaton
 2:00-3:00—delivery at Lombard
 2:45-3:15—delivery at Bartlett
 3:00-3:30—delivery at Elgin

All times are approximate and may vary.

Farm pick-up times

Wednesday: 4:00-6:30
 Friday: 2:30-5:30

If you have problems or questions about the pick up, please call Beth (630-485-9964) or Tim (630-485-9963).

Grandma Beth's Cookbook

Cooking Demonstrations

We are still looking for volunteers to host cooking demonstrations at subscriber pick ups.

Spicy Cabbage

from Beth Stolarick

Saute 1 sweet onion in 2T olive oil.

Chop up the cabbage and add it to the sauteed onion.

Cook the cabbage until it is the consistency of how you like it - we like it almost soft - and a little brown.

Add in about 1/2 cup Trader Joes' Hot and Sweet mustard. (Any sort of honey mustard will work).

Serve warm.

Thanks, Beth.

Green Beans

Green beans, while quite low in calories (just 43.75 calories in a whole cup), are loaded with nutrients — an excellent source of vitamin K, vitamin C, manganese, vitamin A, dietary fiber, potassium, folate, and iron. And, green beans are a good source of magnesium, thiamin, riboflavin, copper, calcium, phosphorus, protein, omega-3 fatty acids and niacin.

The vitamin K provided by green beans — a spectacular 122.0% of the recommended daily allowance (RDA) in one cup — is important for maintaining strong bones. Vitamin K is known to be needed to maintain proper bone density and to coagulate blood. It plays a key role in proper development of the fetus.

Deficiencies of vitamin K have been linked to a number of bleeding and blood disorders as well as osteoporosis, fractures, hypercalciuria, and calcification of soft tissue, especially heart valves.

According to the website *The World's Healthiest Foods*, few foods compare to green beans in their number of helpful nutrients for atherosclerosis and diabetic heart disease. "Green beans are a very good source of vitamin A, notably through their concentration of beta-carotene, and an excellent source of vitamin C. These two nutrients are important antioxidants that work to reduce the amounts of free radicals in the body, vitamin C as a water-soluble antioxidant and beta-carotene as a fat-soluble one. This water-and-fat-soluble antioxidant team helps to prevent cholesterol from becoming oxidized. Oxidized cholesterol is able to stick to and build up in blood vessel

walls, where it can cause blocked arteries, heart attack or stroke. Getting plenty of beta-carotene and vitamin C can help prevent these complications, and a cup of green beans will provide you with 16.6% of the daily value for vitamin A along with 20.2% of the daily value for vitamin C.

Green beans are also a very good source of fiber, a very good source of potassium and folate, and a good source of magnesium and riboflavin. Each of these nutrients plays a significant cardio-protective role.

Ideas for raw green beans:

Personally I think green beans are so good raw that there is hardly any need to prepare them any other way. Serve them with dip as a snack or an appetizer or cut them up and add them to salad. You could probably use them raw in a three bean salad as well.

Ideas for cooked green beans:

If you feel you really must cook your green beans, my philosophy is to keep it as simple as possible. Bean casseroles are for canned or frozen beans, not fresh. Boil them or steam them (see below) and serve with herbed butter or grated cheese. (You can get kids to eat almost anything if you serve it under their favorite cheese!) Add sliced or slivered almonds for extra texture.

By the way, the purple beans turn bright green when you cook them, much to my disappointment.

Southern stir-fry green beans

1 ½ lb. fresh green beans, trimmed
2 TBS olive oil
3 gloves garlic, chopped
1 c chopped pecans
2 TBS packed brown sugar

Heat olive oil in pan over medium heat. Sauté garlic 1 minute.

Add green beans. Cover and reduce heat to medium low. Cook 8 minutes until tender, stirring occasionally.

Add pecans and brown sugar. Toss and serve at once. (Green beans for desert?)

Grandma Beth's Notes: Substitute almonds for pecans. For a less sweet taste, omit brown sugar.

Cashew green beans

Serves 2

¼ cup coarsely chopped salted cashews (as if you might accidentally find unsalted ones!)
1 ½ TBS unsalted butter (if you actually found unsalted cashews, you probably could use salted butter)
1 TBS honey
½ lb. fresh green beans blanched and drained

Cook cashews in butter over low heat about 5 minutes. (Okay, I'm liking this already.)

Add honey and cook 1 minute longer, stirring constantly. (Let's just forget the beans and eat it now.)

Pour sauce over beans and toss until coated.

Grandma Beth's Notes: Almonds might be a good substitute. Even pecans or walnuts. Maple syrup might be interesting instead of honey—but only if you use real 100% maple syrup. Never use that faux stuff that only has maple flavoring in it.

Cucumber Salad

This is a recipe my mother used to make, and is a real summer cooler.

Slice cucumbers thinly—the thinner the better. In a small bowl mix two tablespoons each of sugar and apple cider vinegar. Add two heaping tablespoons of mayonnaise and mix thoroughly. Add to the cucumbers and let it sit a while. Mix before serving.

Sometimes my mother would make a jello dish from the cucumber salad. After it had sat a while she would strain the juice out and use it as the liquid when she made a package of lime jello. Use a little less liquid overall than the package calls for, as there will be quite a bit of liquid left in the cucumbers. Add the cucumbers to jello mixture and refrigerate until set. Note that the cucumbers will settle to the bottom. If you are going to unmold it, then the cucumbers will be visible at the top of the mold. This can be very eye-catching. If you want your cucumbers mixed throughout the jello, you can add the cucumbers and jello in layers, letting each layer solidify before adding the next, or try adding the cucumbers after the jello has partially set. (I find this difficult to do because I usually forget about it and find that the jello has set completely and it is too late to add the cucumbers.)

Tomato Salad

Cut up a bunch of tomatoes. We like tomatoes, so I use lots. Mix the various colors for a beautiful looking dish. Chop up some herbs. I like lemon and lime basil. Use the dark opal basil with chives and lime basil and white, yellow and red tomatoes. Very beautiful. For a dressing, mix apple cider vinegar and sugar. My mother always said equal amounts, but the sugar spoonful was heaping and the vinegar spoonful was not, so I would say about 3 parts of sugar to 2 parts of vinegar by volume. You can use balsamic vinegar, although that can be pretty intense if you use it full strength. Mix the whole shebang (one of my dad's favorite words!) together and let it sit for a while. This allows the juice to flow out of the tomatoes and the tomatoes to absorb some of the vinegar-sugar flavor. I find an hour is just about right. Some people like to put mozzarella cheese balls in their tomato salad, but we like tomatoes and we have plenty, so we don't bother.

Tomato Basil Pasta Toss

Cut the tomatoes as for salad. Barely sauté some chopped garlic in a little olive oil. Toss freshly cooked pasta with the tomatoes, the garlic, chopped basil, and cheese. My sister likes it with cubed brie. I also like it with crumbled feta or crumbled blue. Sometime I add a dash or two of balsamic vinegar for a little extra spice.

Radish and Cucumber Salad with Yogurt Dressing

1 cup plain yogurt
1 cup finely diced radishes
1 cup finely diced cucumber
1 small garlic clove, minced and mashed to a paste with 1/2 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons minced fresh mint or parsley leaves
soft-leafed lettuce or pita bread for serving

In a cheesecloth-lined sieve set over a bowl let the yogurt drain for 2 hours. In a bowl stir together the drained yogurt, the radishes, the cucumber, the garlic paste, the mint or parsley, and salt and pepper to taste. Divide the salad among individual salad plates lined with the lettuce or serve it as a sandwich filling for the pita bread.