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Box #15
Odd Week
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Contents

Parsley
Brussels Sprout Tops
Cauliflower
Garlic
Leeks
Peppers: Italian Orange, Red and/or Yellow, Jalapeños
Potatoes: Mixed Types
Tomatillos
Tomatoes: Slicers

New Stuff: Brussels sprout tops, leeks, tomatillos

One of the techniques for growing large Brussels sprouts with nicely sized sprouts is to break off the top of the plant at a certain point in its development. Without its top, the plant puts more energy into forming the sprouts and not in growing upwards. Breaking the tops off of Brussels sprouts is rather labor intensive. Several years ago, we gave this job to our Hmong crew, and watched with amazement while they stuffed the tops into garbage bag after garbage bag, then hauled them all to their car. The next week, they brought lunch and we got to taste what all that hauling was about. Wow! We've been eating them ever since and sharing with our CSA members.

If you're new to our CSA family, you've probably never eaten the top of a Brussels sprout plant before. No worries: it may be unusual, but it's really delicious, especially the top of the stalk, which is tender and sweet. Eat everything: the leaves, the stems and especially the stalk. Store these greens in the plastic bag they come in, and enjoy them within 3-4 days. We've eaten them steamed, sautéed, stir fried and in soup. Steaming is my favorite. Choose your favorite method and enjoy!

Leeks are one of the best-tasting alliums around. Their flavor is sweet, mild, yet complex and delicious. Adding them to a dish improves the flavor. As leeks grow, we pile soil around the stalk to keep it white: sunlight causes photosynthesis, which turns the stalk green. It's still edible, but the white portion is sweeter. To clean leeks, chop off the floppy leaves and the root end, slice it down the middle and rinse under running water, getting between the layers as much as possible.

That soil we mound around the stalk tends to sift down between the leaves. Leeks cook faster than onions because the sections are thinner, so watch them carefully and use a lower heat. The floppy leaves are tough, but make an excellent addition to stock. The upper part of the green stalk will be tough also: let your knife tell you when it's time to stop cutting. Store leeks, unwashed, in a closed plastic bag in your vegetable drawer so their onion flavor doesn't travel to the other vegetables. They should keep 2 weeks or a bit longer.

Potato Leek Soup

Serves 4

In a pot or large saucepan over low heat, melt:

4 Tbsp. butter

Add: ½ lb. leeks, washed and chopped

¾ lb. potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced

-Cover and cook about 8 minutes.

Add: 4 cups chicken stock

1 bay leaf

1 Tbsp. chopped parsley stems (yes, stems)

½ tsp. freshly ground pepper

½ tsp. dried thyme

-Bring to a boil, lower heat to a simmer and cook until the potatoes are fork-tender, 20-30 minutes.

Remove pot from heat, fish out the bay leaf, and puree.

A hand blender is the easiest tool for this task, but a blender or food processor works as well. If you use a blender or food processor, be careful to cover the container so you avoid being splashed by hot liquid.

Return puree to pot and add:

1 cup heavy cream

-Bring to a simmer (heavy cream will not curdle when boiled). Serve with a sprinkling of chives, scallions, chopped cilantro or parsley.

If you prefer a chunky soup, simply dice up the potatoes, cook until they are tender, add the cream, heat to steaming and serve. You can substitute milk for cream, but heat the soup only to steaming—simmering will curdle the milk.

Tomatillo means "little tomato". It is shaped like a small tomato enclosed in a papery husk. The fruit starts out small and is completely hidden by the thin, green husk. As it grows, the fruit fills the husk and eventually splits it open. Tomatillos are a member of the nightshade family (*solanaceae*), as are tomatoes and potatoes. Its Latin name is *physalis philadelphica*. Another *physalis* member is the ground cherry, smaller, sweeter, and often used to make jam and pies. Tomatillos are a very good source of vitamins C, K, niacin, potassium, manganese and dietary fiber, and a good source of iron, magnesium, phosphorus and copper.

To store tomatillos, pull off the papery husk, wash off any dirt and the sticky residue from the husk under

warm water (I roll 3-4 around inside my cupped hands so they bump against each other). Then, drain them briefly and put inside a sealable plastic bag. They'll keep 2 weeks in your vegetable drawer, and still taste good. You can use them raw in salads, put them in stir fries, or in any number of Mexican dishes, like salsa verde or enchiladas.

The cultivar we're growing matures thru green to a light yellow-brown, getting sweeter as it gets older. Most Mexican cooks prefer to use tomatillos when they're green, as they believe tomatillos have the best tart-sweet contrast at this stage. I prefer mine on the sweeter, more mature side.

Raw Salsa Verde *Makes about 2 cups*

In a blender or food processor, put:

- 1 lb. tomatillos, husks removed, washed and cut into quarters
- 1 tsp. chopped garlic (or more as you wish)
- 1 shallot or small onion, coarsely chopped (yes, you can use part of a leek)
- 1/3 cup cilantro, roughly chopped, loosely packed
- 1/2 tsp. ground cumin
- 1/2 cup Anaheim or Italian pepper, roughly chopped, or 1-2 Tbsp. Jalapeño salt & freshly ground pepper

Process until the ingredients reach a fine consistency.

Serve with corn chips, in tacos, etc.

Freezing Tips: It's quick and easy to freeze most produce when you get more than you can use up.

Peppers: I wash and remove the core, which includes all seeds and ribs. Since I've usually cut the pepper in half at this point (and cut out any bad spot as these are the peppers that usually make it into my kitchen), I just put the halves into the freezer. The next time I go in there, I pop the frozen pepper into a freezer grade, zipper bag and I'm done.

Tomatoes: I wash them, dry them and put them right into the freezer. If there are a lot, I'll put them onto a half-sheet pan and put that into the freezer. Once frozen, the tomatoes get dumped into a freezer grade, zipper bag. Done! When you want tomatoes for a soup or stew or sauce, pull out what you need and run it under a little hot water. The skin splits immediately and can be peeled off (if you want to), and the tomato thaws just enough to handle. Since it's still mostly frozen, you can chop it up easily.

Field Notes

We added another 3/4" of rain to our already soggy soil this past week. More predicted for Wednesday. Despite the still-wet ground, we took advantage of a dry Thursday to dig potatoes with our new-to-us potato digger. This handy contraption is actually two tools: First, the digger that is lowered into the soil and

delivers a load of dirt and potatoes to a "belt" made of metal bars that shake, breaking up the soil and letting it fall back onto the ground, supporting all but the smallest potatoes. Connected to the digger is another, similar "belt" that contains a platform on each side where a person can stand and pick off potatoes as they go by and put them in boxes.

Despite a dank, rainy morning, Sunday afternoon turned dry with even a few, brief, spots of sunshine. We had about 30 folks drive out for Farm Day—a good crowd that included lots of families. Armed with buckets, everyone quickly picked 5 bushels of apples, then hiked back to the barn to wash hands and start cutting them up. Chuck manned the crusher, then turned it over to



one of our Worker Shares, Marie, who was ably assisted by her sons Ian and Cormack. Once we had the mash, the kids and I, with clean hands, filled cheesecloth bundle after cheesecloth bundle. Staked 3 high, the pressing began. In my opinion, this was some of the best cider we've ever made. It had a distinct reddish cast, an unusual and beautiful color. Chuck then took everyone out to the field for a tour. The kids got to pick peppers, eggplant, and everyone saw how broccoli and cauliflower grow, how beautiful chard is and the elegant kale plants with their curved leaves. All in all, a lovely day!



Have a great week!

Terry & Chuck