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Box #3
Newsletter #3
10 July 2013

Contents

Cilantro
Fennel
Garlic Scapes
Lettuce: Red and Green Romaine
Spinach: Couple Boxes only
Sugar Snap Peas
Swiss Chard: Family Boxes only
Summer Squash: Zephyr and/or Zucchini

New Stuff: cilantro, fennel, garlic scapes, summer squash.

Cilantro is that green leaf that looks a lot like parsley, but tastes very different. Sometimes called "Chinese parsley", it's used often in Asian cooking, and Mexican salsa wouldn't be the same without it! You can store this in a plastic bag in the frig, or snip off the ends of the stems and put the bunch in a glass with an inch or so of water in it. They seem to last longer this way.

We're starting you out with a small amount of fennel. Fennel has been used for hundreds of years as an aid to digestion, is high in vitamin A, calcium, potassium and iron. The bulb and leaves have a mild, black-licorice flavor that is very good in salads, vegetable dishes and with fish. Fennel is not well known in this country, altho it is widely used in Europe. The frugal cook likes it because all of fennel is edible: bulb, stalks and leaves. To use, cut off the top of the root from the bulb, which is tough, and chop off the leafy stalks for use later. Wash the bulb under cold, running water to get out any dirt that may have sifted down between the layers. Place the bulb flat on your cutting board and slice it in half. Set the cut side down on your board and slice lengthwise. Decide how small you want your pieces to be before slicing across the bulb. Use the feathery leaves as a fresh herb. They lose some flavor each day, so go thru them as quick as you can. Or, add them to your next batch of pesto, or potato salad. You can dry fennel leaves on paper towels in your microwave. Store the dried, chopped leaves with your other herbs. If you make stock, the fibrous stalks are an excellent flavoring. One of our site managers cuts the stalks into 4" lengths and stores them in a jar of water in her fridge: it's one of her children's favorite snacks. Like sugar cane, you chew on the stalks to get all the tasty, tender bits, then spit out the fibrous part. Making an infusion (think tea) is a way to use a small amount of something, and get good flavor out of it. Here's how you can do that with your fennel.

Fennel with Fish

Clean the fennel as described above, reserving some fronds to add later. In a 10" sauté pan, over medium heat, add:
2 Tbsp. butter
2 Tbsp. olive oil
1-2 fennel bulbs, cleaned and sliced thinly
- sauté just until the fennel begins to brown.
Add: ½ cup water, stock or dry white wine
-add the stalks, cut into 4" lengths (so you can remove them later), cover the pan, turn the heat to low, and cook the fennel until it is completely soft, about 15 minutes. While the fennel cooks slowly and flavors the liquid, snip off the rest of the leaves and chop them up. When the fennel is done, push the pieces toward the sides. You should have a thin layer of fennel-infused liquid on the bottom of the pan. If you don't, add more water, stock or wine. Scrape the bottom of the pan to loosen any stuck-on bits (this is called "de-glazing"). Add enough fish to fill up the area inside the cooked ring of fennel, season with salt, freshly ground pepper, and half of the chopped fennel leaves if you intend to turn the fish over. If you're using thin fillets, like Tilapia, you won't need to turn them over, so sprinkle all of the chopped fennel over the top. Cover the pan again, and simmer slowly, just until the fish is no longer transparent in the middle, but is still moist. The length of time will depend on the thickness of the fish. The best rule I've found is the simplest: Measure the fish at its thickest point, and cook it 10 minutes per inch, regardless of the cooking method. The fennel bulb is tender and delicious, but the stalk will be too fibrous for eating, so remove the stalks before serving.

Fennel Tapenade

Puree in blender:

1/2 cup pitted calamata olives
1 small fennel bulb
1 small clove garlic, chopped –or a scape
1 Tbsp. red wine vinegar
2 Tbsp. red onion, chopped
1-2 Tbsp. olive oil (or flaxseed oil)

Spread tapenade on bread, toast or crackers as an hors d'oeuvres, or on sandwiches like mayonnaise.

Garlic scapes come from hardneck garlic. They are the plant's graceful way of forming a seed sack, called a "bulbil", the rounded part near the end. Altho the seeds are viable, it can take 2-3 years for them to

produce a bulb of garlic, whereas planting one clove will result in a whole bulb the next summer. The entire scape is edible and delicious. You can use them like scallions, in anything you want the taste of garlic in, like the tapenade recipe above. They're also great in pesto.

We grow 2 types of zucchini: the green kind that everyone knows, and a cultivar called "zephyr", which is mostly yellow with a green end. We find these tasty and a lovely color. The summer squash is just beginning, so you're not getting much yet. Next week should be better.

The first 2 spinach crops have either gone to seed, or are well on their way. There isn't as much out there as we hoped, so only the Couple boxes are getting it this week.

The sugar snap peas are producing very well at present, so this week's box has a lot more. Mixed in, you may find some snow peas, which you'll recognize because of their flatter pod.

Field Notes

Monday's rain gave us a little moisture, .2". Since the morning was rainy, the crew worked inside the barn, cleaning and sterilizing bins, wash tanks, and hosing down the concrete floor. Tuesday dropped about .25", not enough to make it very sloppy outside, although it wasn't fun harvesting in the rain.

Last week we baled hay on our fields that are planted in rye grass and alfalfa. We use this to mulch our tomatoes, and other crops. After the grass and alfalfa grows high again, we'll cut it and bale more hay that'll cover next year's garlic crop.

We have the greatest potato crop we've ever grown out there! The rains have encouraged them to grow really tall and green. Half the crop is flowering, some purple, some white, depending on the cultivar. You should find new potatoes in your boxes in a few weeks.

Monday, the crew uncovered the winter squash plants, and they look great. Chuck hauled out some row cover, a white, polyester fabric that acts like a mini greenhouse, earlier in the season to help the winter squash along. Row cover keeps some of the heat underneath it and close to the plant, while also admitting some rain and wind. We did the same to our summer squash, since it needed an extra boost due to our cool spring.

The sweet corn is better than knee high, and starting to tassel, which means it'll be forming ears soon.

When communicating with the farm, please give us your full name and pickup site. If you're letting us know that someone else will be picking up your box, please give both your site manager and us their name and phone number or email address so we can contact them, if necessary.

The produce in your box: Most of the produce in your box has been minimally washed to remove the worst of the dirt, and keep it fresh, like lettuce, spinach, chard, etc. Some may not be washed at all, like potatoes, garlic, storage carrots. It is up to you to wash your produce before eating it, and store it properly for maximum shelf life.

We're looking forward to a week of dry weather, lower humidity and moderate temperatures. We have a lot of planting and cultivating to do, and Canadian thistle to cut down. . . . *I hate thistle* . . .

Have a good week!

TERRY & CHUCK