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Box #5
Newsletter #5
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New Stuff: carrots, cucumbers.

One of the vegetables we're known for is our carrots. Somehow, we got lucky and have the right kind of soil to grow great-tasting carrots. Chuck also chooses to grow especially delicious cultivars. Last year, we trialed 2 kinds of yellow carrots. One was better than the other, with a mild but excellent flavor, so we're growing it again this year. Some of your bunches will have both kinds, some will contain only orange.

The field cucumbers are growing by leaps and bounds. Cucumbers are high in vitamin E (probably why they're so soothing on the eyes), and low in calories. Few vegetables are as satisfying on a hot summer day for replenishing liquids and filling you up. Here's a tip on storing cucumbers so they don't get mushy: put them in your refrigerator's vegetable drawer, but **DO NOT** PUT CUCUMBERS INTO A PLASTIC BAG. Just place them in the drawer, cut or uncut. They'll keep for at least a week, often two. I discovered this by mistake one night, when I was too tired to dig up a plastic bag. I just tossed a half-used cucumber into my vegetable drawer, figuring it could fend for itself. 3 days later, I opened my frig to find a cool cucumber whose cut end was only slightly dried out and skin perfect. It was a thin-skinned, burpless variety, the kind that can go mushy overnight. I was amazed. You will be, too.

Here's our basic, basil pesto sauce. If your plant is growing well, you can probably pick enough for the all-basil version when combined with the bunch in your box.

Basil Pesto

makes approx. 2 cups pesto

In the bowl of a food processor, put:

2 cups, packed, fresh, basil leaves, washed and spun
4 medium cloves garlic, halved
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
½ tsp. salt
½ tsp. freshly-ground pepper
¼ cup almonds, walnuts, pine nuts, etc.
¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese

Process all ingredients just until uniform in size. Add more salt, pepper, etc. to suit your taste. You can also freeze this pesto, altho the flavor and texture are better if you leave out the cheese. Pesto is a pretty potent sauce on pasta, so use sparingly. Start with about 1 Tbsp. per serving, taste, then increase the amount, if desired. Pesto can be frozen easily. I buy a package of ½ cup containers and put the finished paste in those. To thaw, take a container out of the freezer the night before and put it into your refrigerator. Do NOT try to thaw it in the microwave: it'll turn black. Basil oxidizes easily (turns black and doesn't taste nearly as good), so always cover it when you're not actually spooning some out. If you can, pour a thin film of olive oil over the top of the paste to protect it from the air.

"Pesto" simply means "paste". You can make pesto with other herbs besides basil. People often substitute parsley when they're a bit short on basil--some folks even prefer the combination. I've made delicious herb pestos using tarragon, thyme, parsley, fennel, sage, lovage, oregano, rosemary, cilantro, marjoram, Summer savory and sorrel. Use one quarter to half as much of the stronger herbs: sage, rosemary and lovage. If you do not use any basil, the black color will not occur. If you use some basil, that pesto will turn color, but will appear to do so more slowly.

To prevent basil from oxidizing, blanch the leaves in boiling water for 10 seconds, then plunge into cold water to stop the cooking. Drain the worst of the water off, then use for pesto.

Here's a variation that uses most of your fennel and a bunch of basil:

Basil/Fennel Pesto

Into your food processor, put:

1 fennel bulb, washed and coarsely chopped
all the leaves from one fennel bulb
1 cup basil leaves, loosely packed
4 medium cloves garlic, halved
½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
½ tsp. salt
½ tsp. freshly-ground pepper
¼ cup nuts
¼ cup grated hard cheese

Process until all ingredients are reduced to a puree. Add more oil as needed. Taste for salt and pepper, adding more if needed. If you want to freeze a portion of this pesto, omit the cheese: you can add it as you mix the pasta with the pesto.

The sugar snap pea patch is just about done, so these are probably the last you'll receive this season. Relieved?

There is another green bean patch out there, but you may have a break between the end of one and the beginning of the other.

And, just when you were wondering what in the world you would do with more zucchini:

Auntie Anne's Zucchini Fritters

Set a cast iron skillet over low heat to warm up.

In a medium bowl, whisk together:

2 eggs
2 Tbsp. mayonnaise
1 clove garlic, minced
salt & pepper to taste

Now whisk in: 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
½ tsp. baking powder

Stir in: 1 ½ cups grated zucchini

To the now-hot skillet, add: ¼ cup oil
-and turn the heat up to medium.

Drop the batter into the hot oil by the spoonful. Let brown on one side, flip and brown the other. Transfer the fritters to paper towels. Serve hot.

Field Notes

Sunday afternoon gave us some much-needed rain: about ¾". Monday evening saw a bit more rain. The ground has been dry, so it was absorbed right away. Happy plants!

The sweet corn has proved irresistible to the raccoons. Chuck installed not one, but two electric fences around the field, and they still got in! They did a lot of damage, but we have lots of corn out there. For now. We'll see how the next week or so progresses. There may be sweet corn as soon as next week's box.

We've been able to plant tomatillos and eggplant, more lettuce, broccoli and cauliflower. When the first green bean field peters out, we'll plow that down and put in something else, possibly more spinach, carrots, beets, cabbage or kohlrabi. And kale, don't forget about kale.

The beautiful potato crop has produced another flush of Colorado potato beetles. Chuck did battle Sunday, so most of them should be late Colorado potato beetles. You should find some of the beautiful new potatoes in next week's box.

Thank you to those who have been returning their wax boxes to the pickup site on a regular basis. And, an extra BIG thank-you to those who have been carefully unfolding their boxes so no tabs are ripped, and they lay flat. Here's the link to our short video on how to unfold wax boxes:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEaBFTlnGdo
It is an enormous help to our finances when we can re-use the wax boxes for several weeks before they wear out and find their way to the burn pile.

Enjoy the cooler, drier weather—I am!
Take Care,
Terry & Chuck