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Box #11
Odd Week
9 September 2020

Contents
Cauliflower: Orange or White
Garlic
Kale: Red Curly or Green Curly
Melons: Canary, Muskmelon or Watermelon
Peppers: Bell and/or Carmen, Hungarian Hot Wax
Potatoes: Red Norland and Rose Gold
Tomatoes: Juliets, Slicers
Zucchini: Green, Yellow, Zephyr

New Stuff: muskmelon, canary melon, zucchini
Choice Box: tomatoes, ??

Melons, so good when they're ripe, so-so when they're not. This season, we grew 3 kinds: muskmelon, canary melon and watermelon. Muskmelon is like cantaloupe, but has lobes instead of a smooth skin, and orange flesh. We prefer it to cantaloupe, flavor-wise. Canary melons are bright yellow, football-shaped and have light-green flesh. We grow seeded watermelons, and like the yellow-fleshed "Peace" cultivar. Chuck and I feel that seeded watermelons have better flavor. People ask us "How do you know when a melon is ripe?" There are a couple of ways. First, look for the "ground spot", it should be yellow. A "ground spot" or "field spot" is the place where a melon's skin rests on the ground while it grows. When a green melon matures, its ground spot turns from green to yellow. The deeper the yellow, the more mature the melon. Even yellow melons have yellow ground spots, they're just a different shade. The next way is overall color. Muskmelons have a green undercolor that turns to beige when it's ripe. If a melon has ribs, like a muskmelon does, those ribs should be brown or beige instead of green. Canary melons turn a deeper shade of yellow. Color is tough to use as a measure on watermelon, tho. Look for a yellow ground spot on those, not white or light green. The last way is smell. A ripe muskmelon or canary or honeydew should smell wonderful. Again, this is a hard one to use on watermelons because it doesn't have a strong smell and that thick rind blocks some scent, but experts say a ripe watermelon will smell slightly sweet. Lots of people say to thump a melon with your finger and listen for a "plunk" sound. This would be easier if you had melons of different ripenesses to test all at the same time for comparison. However, one source recommends you ask the farmer or grocery produce manager to demonstrate this technique.
We did not care for our melon patch as well as we usually do, and the weeds overran it. Chuck saw that the vines were almost dead, and decided he needed to pick anything that might be edible since they could not grow anymore. We've sorted thru them and set aside those we feel are still green. Melons do not ripen off the vine, like other fruits do, altho they will get a little softer after a few days. The sugar they have when they're picked is the sugar they'll have when you cut them open.

Zucchini contains a lot of water—about 94%--is low in calories, easily digested, and a good source of vitamins A, C, potassium and calcium. Store zucchini in the vegetable drawer in your frig—it should keep 4-5 days or longer.
A common problem with zucchini is poor pollination. Since insects move the pollen from the male flowers to the female flowers, plenty of insects mean plenty of pollination. Many of you know that the bee population has decreased dramatically in the last 10 years due to neonicotinoid insecticides, parasites and habitat loss. When the insect population is low, pollination suffers causing some fruits to be badly formed, with one end narrow and pointy instead of sausage shaped. Some of you may get zucchini with this configuration. Simply cut off the pointy, soft end and use the rest.
We're growing a few different kinds of zucchini. "Goldy" is a bright yellow one, "Dunja" is dark green, "Costata Romana" is a speckled, dark green squash with raised, lighter green ribs and "Zephyr" is light green on one or both ends and light yellow everywhere else. Whichever you get, they all taste great, especially on the grill. Simply brush with olive oil, sprinkle with salt and pepper and grill until soft. Or, try this recipe:

Baked Parmesan Zucchini Sticks
Preheat your oven to 350 degrees F.
In a small bowl, put:
½ cup grated Parmesan
½ tsp. dried thyme
½ tsp. dried oregano
½ tsp. dried basil
¼ tsp. garlic powder
In a medium bowl put:
2 Tbsp. olive oil
Add: 4 small zucchini (or the equivalent), quartered lengthwise

Toss to coat zucchini evenly. Add cheese/herb mixture to zucchini and toss together.
Place zucchini on a rimmed baking sheet lined with aluminum foil or parchment paper, spreading them out in a single layer. Place in oven and bake until tender, about 15 minutes. Then, broil 2-3 minutes until crisp and golden brown. Serve immediately. Garnish with parsley, if desired.

We have 2, long beds of kale coming on strong, so get ready for a steady supply. I've compiled many delicious recipes that include kale. Here's this week's:

"Caldo Verde", which means "green broth", is a traditional Portuguese soup often eaten at weddings, birthdays, etc. "Black" kale, the kind used in Portugal, is not grown much in this country, but any kale will work, as will collard greens, chard, beet greens, mustard greens or spinach—or any combination of these.

Caldo Verde *serves 6-8*

In a Dutch oven over medium-high heat, put:
1 Tbsp. olive oil
Add: 12 oz. sausage, cut into pieces (use whatever you prefer)
-Cook, stirring occasionally, until lightly browned, 4-5 minutes. Remove sausage to a bowl.
Add to the pot: 1 onion, chopped
4 cloves garlic, chopped
1 tsp. salt
¼ tsp. red pepper flakes (*optional*)
-Cook, stirring often, until onion is transparent.
Add: 2 lbs. potatoes, cut into ¾" pieces
8 cups chicken broth
1 bunch kale, washed, stems removed, and chopped into 1" pieces (approx.)
-Bring to a boil, turn down heat and simmer, until potatoes are just tender, 10-15 minutes.
If you use a tenderer green, like spinach, wait until the potatoes are done, then add the spinach, cook until just wilted.
To make a thicker soup, put about 1 cup solids and 1 cup broth into a blender and process until very smooth. Put the puree back into the soup.
Stir in: sausage pieces
salt and pepper to taste
2 tsp. white vinegar (*optional*)
Serve with a crusty bread.

Most of you will get Rose Gold potatoes in your bags. These have dusky rose skins with yellow flesh. Red Norlands are redder with white flesh. We've left the dirt on them to protect the skins and help them keep longer. Soak them for 10-15 minutes to soften the dirt and make it easier to remove.

Field Notes

Looks like we're having a bit of a rainy spell. So far, we've seen dry weather between rainy, and the soil has had a change to firm up again. Crops we planted in July and early August are progressing very well, gaining size almost daily. For example:
Green cabbage that had only loose heads last week are firming up, getting denser, and will be ready to harvest in about 2 weeks.
The kale in this week's box has provided us with 120 bunches last week, 120 bunches this week, and will do so again next week. From 2 beds. Okay, they're long beds.
The 2nd zucchini patch looks great at the moment.
There are more diseases around at this time of year: powdery mildew, mosaic virus, etc., so we're not sure how long these plants will remain productive, but let's hope for the best.

In past years, we've hosted Farm Day, and invited all our CSA members and their families to come out, make apple cider and tour the farm. Due to Covid-19, we are not having Farm Day this year, but hope to hold one again next year. Fingers crossed.

Have a great week everyone!

Terry & Chuck