In the Share

Green Cabbage, 1 head
Green Beans, 1 bag
Yellow Beans, 1 bag
Cucumbers, 5 pieces
Eggplant OR fennel, 1 piece
Lettuce, 1 head
Summer Squash, 5 pieces
Choice of Herb, 1 bunch

Claire’s Comments

To Spray or Not to Spray

As vegetable lovers, I expect that most of you remember the late blight epidemic that hit tomatoes last year. It came on after the harvest had started sometime in August and moved through one tomato field after another leaving only ruin in its wake. Though potatoes were generally spared in 2009, late blight is most famous for its role in the Irish potato famine. Both tomatoes and potatoes are in the solanaceae family and both are susceptible to this disease. One reason the late blight was so devastating last year is because it was not late at all. It cut off our tomato harvest in its prime.

The first report of late blight for 2010 came in June. It was identified on tomatoes in Pennsylvania. By the end of June it was also in Connecticut, New York, Kentucky, Michigan and other states. As our intern Rosemary (who works in a plant pathology lab) explained, the most dangerous outbreak for us was in Manitoba, Canada, where the wind currents were more likely to bring it down to Wisconsin. Whether it came from Manitoba or not, as of yesterday, late blight was confirmed on potatoes in Marquette county, Wisconsin.

From the beginning of these outbreaks in 2009, the advise to growers has been to spray with fungicides. The only spray that works (at least somewhat) and is approved for use in organic production is copper. The copper will not stop or heal the disease, but if used before plants are infected, it can prevent it for a time. The copper coats the foliage and makes it more difficult for the blight to get a hold. A few weeks ago as the outbreaks were getting closer, I both researched and ordered some copper spray for the tomatoes.

The day I intended to first spray the copper, as I poured the green powder from the bag, I stopped. I couldn’t do it. I was dressed in coveralls over my clothes and gloves on my hands (to prevent contact with the powder and make removing and washing contaminated clothing easier), a mask on my face (to prevent inhalation), and goggles on my eyes (copper is a severe eye irritant). In my head I was thinking on the requirement that workers not enter the field for 24 hours after an application and that they should be sure not to touch the plants and rub their eyes even then. I was thinking of telling all of you to make sure that you wash your copper sprayed tomatoes before eating them. I was thinking that no one on the farm would be able to just eat a tomato fresh and warm from the field this year. I just couldn’t do it. I am an organic vegetable farmer. I have never farmed any other way. I have never sprayed anything on my plants that I could not also rub on my own skin without worry. And even more, I have not sprayed anything, not even compost tea on my plants in seven years. Though the copper is approved for use on organic vegetables, I just couldn’t do it.

Two weeks later, late blight has been discovered in Wisconsin and I am forced to examine my options again. 1. Let the blight kill our tomatoes again, perhaps even before we harvest this time. Or 2. Spray the copper and hope to hold off the blight long enough to get some kind of crop. Honestly, I don’t know what to do, and I must make a decision now. There is no more time to dither.

What do you want me to do? Should I suit up and spray? Are you willing to wash every tomato you get from the farm? Or are you willing to risk having no tomatoes at all this year? I really do want to hear what you have to say. Please write to my e-mail address (on the back of this newsletter) soon.
Recipe

Zucchini and summer squash are in their hay day. Though squash does seem to be a favorite in most households, we started to worry that you might run out of things to do with them sooner or later. Our farm intern Jenna came to the rescue with this family recipe. Though the title names zucchini, Jenna includes instructions for other summer squashes as well.

Tulman Family
Potato Zucchini Kugel
from Jenna Tulman

Make the kugel thin (1" or so, more like a latke) or thick (3") in a 9x9" or 9x13" glass pan.

1. Heat oven to 425 degrees F
2. Pour olive oil into glass pan and rotate the pan so that bottom and sides are covered (NOTE: place pan in heated oven 5 minutes prior to adding the kugel mixture so the pan is hot)
3. Chop 1/2 – 1 cup onion, medium chop
4. Whisk 2-3 eggs in separate bowl
5. Measure 1/2 - 2/3 cup matzo or bread crumbs; mix in 1 tsp. onion salt
6. Grate scrubbed potatoes and summer squash into a colander (remove seeds from yellow summer squash). I grate 1:1 or 2:1 (more zucc/summer squash if you have it). Sprinkle on a little salt. Let sit 3 - 5 minutes.
7. Squeeze out juice from grated veggies handful by handful and throw into a large bowl.
8. Add onion, eggs, breadcrumbs and 2-3 tbs. olive oil. Blend. Mixture should be wet and a bit sticky...
9. Pour mixture into heated pan.
10. Bake 25-40 minutes depending upon size and thickness of the kugel. Enjoy with sour cream and applesauce!

Do you have a recipe to share? Please send it to my e-mail address below. If you are willing, also include where it came from and why you like it. When it comes to best uses for CSA vegetables, there is nothing better than member-tested and member-recommended recipes!

(continued from “In the Share”) be so glad to have them when the CSA season is over and the winter is upon us. Just snap the stem ends off and snap the beans in half. Steam or boil them in about quart-sized batches for two minutes. Then take them out of the steamer and submerge them in cold water to stop the cooking process. Once cool, remove them from the water, and drain in a colander. Pat them dry (or dryish) on a towel. Finally load them into freezer bags and put them in the freezer. It is easy once you set up your system.

Cucumbers are the next big news. They just started to mature a couple weeks ago and we had a small number of them at the farm stand last week. But this week they are producing like mad. You have FIVE in your share today and should expect more next week. They are so delicious and so well loved by our intern crew that we have to carefully parcel out any “farmer food” cucumbers over lunch so that everyone gets a share. (“Farmer food” is what we call the blemished or otherwise unmarketable vegetables that are a necessary part of most every harvest. Some weeks we eat well off the farmer food!]

The green cabbage is a new item this week also. This variety is called Tendersweet, and it is well named. It is the best tasting spring cabbage I have had. I also like the flattened shape – makes it easier to pack! The obvious choice for green cabbage at this time of year is coleslaw.

Eggplant is just starting to come on and it is lovely. For some reason the potato beetles that usually devastate our eggplant seem to be mostly in hiding this year. That will be good news for the eggplant lovers! The eggplant in your share today (if you choose it over the last of the lovely fennel), is a Japanese type. It is longer and thinner than the usual globe eggplants and it is also much less bitter. Sarah makes a delicious dish with eggplant and we had it for the first time this season the other night. I will put the recipe in the newsletter in the next few weeks when eggplants really start to come on.

Summer squash, lettuce, and herbs are all familiar items by now, so I will not spend time on those except to say that you can expect more of each of them next week.

Also next week: More beans! Kale, scallions, garlic, and possibly the first of the salsa baskets. I know I have also been promising you beets for a few weeks now. I think next week could finally be the one.