In the Share

Delicata Squash, 1 piece
Salsa Basket, 1 bag
Edamame, 1 bag
Red Bell Pepper, 1 piece
Leeks, 1 bunch
Carmen Red Peppers, 3 pieces
Eggplant, 1 OR Summer Squash, 3
Roma Tomatoes, 1 bag
Choice of Herb, 1 bunch
Garlic, 1 bulb
Tomatoes, see signs on crates

Claire’s Comments

Preservation Season

We have a term at the farm that refers to all the food that is unfit for CSA distribution or sale. It could be too small or too blemished or too old or just plain too much. We call all those edible, but unsalable, vegetables “farmer food.” We farmers love farmer food. It feeds us in the summer and also fills our freezers and shelves for winter. Now that the tomatoes are in serious decline, we seem to harvest about as much farmer food as we do salable fruits. The peppers too are producing plenty of sub-standard specimens as they ripen to red. Carrots, beets, squash, all of them come in with their fair share of splits and nibles and spots. As the buckets of farmer food pile up each harvest, we spend more and more time in our kitchens in the heat of preservation season.

Jake and I do our best to ply the farmer food onto the interns, with helpful hints on how to freeze or can or dehydrate it all to use later. It is what we can give them for all their hard work. But after a while they claim small kitchens or lack of freezer space or (most commonly) a lack of canning knowledge or supplies. It turns out very few of us learn how to can from our mothers any more. I learned from a farmer. Many folks learn from books or classes. And as we learn the skills, we also learn why our mothers never taught us. It turns out preserving the summer’s bounty is a lot of work.

As much as I struggle with staying up late canning the latest crate of blemished tomatoes that have to be used NOW before they rot, I have just come to accept that’s the way it is in preservation season. In early summer I make a list of what I want to preserve for the year based on what we ate from our supply during the winter: so many jars of salsa and stewed tomatoes, so many bags of frozen broccoli and corn, so many dehydrated strawberries and peaches (which Sarah and I grow in our yard). Then, when the farmer food comes in, I make notes of what I have done and track how much I have left to do. Some years I end up with more of something than I wanted because that’s what we had in farmer food. Some years I end up with less for the same reason. Our menus change to accommodate it, either way.

Jake and I compare notes as we go. We have a similar philosophy about food preservation and we both tend to be a little obsessive about it. We are both savers, more worried about scarcity than confident of future abundance. We do our best to support each other during preservation season as our partners ask us to put down the canning jars and take a walk or go to bed. We remind each other why it is so important to us to preserve and eat the food we grow. And lately, we are also trying to help each other be a little less obsessive about it. Three times so far this season Jake has said, “I don’t think I am going to can salsa this year. I think I can make it through on what I canned last year.” I reply, “Yeah. I think I am going to do the same with pizza sauce.” It keeps coming up because the future is hard to know and the tomatoes are here now. Maybe we should do a few canner loads just to be safe? Or maybe we should put down the canning jars and go to bed?

Sarah and I have a new system for this preservation season. I do as much canning and freezing as I want on the weeknights. Likewise, Sarah is in charge of dehydrating in the solar dehydrators she built. And then on the weekends, we have one work day and one play day. There is no food preservation on the play day. Though the last few tomatoes may rot, we will be fed with a lovely walk to the lake.
hang on to these, eat them up! You can cook them as you would any other winter squash (roasted, stuffed, mashed) or you can do something unique. The skin on the delicata is good enough to eat, so what I usually do is cut them into ½ inch rounds, scoop out the seeds from the centers, and then roast the rounds with garlic and olive oil. Once soft, you can eat them skin and all. Easy and delicious.

Leeks are usually a signature item for us at Troy. Our leeks are generally long and fat and just plain impressive. While they are still long this year, the fat and impressive really do not apply. The same disease that caused much of our garlic to rot in the ground moved into the onions and took down about half of that crop. Now it is in the leeks. Our first harvest was on Wednesday, and we were very sad to see that many of the outer leaves are so far gone that they have to be stripped down to the core. Rain is usually a good thing for the water-loving alliums. But this year’s rains have just been too much.

It looks like the peppers are never going to reach the heights of productivity we saw last year. Still, there are enough sweet red peppers in your share to make the roasted red pepper sauce this week. See my own recipe for it below. If you still have a few unused peppers kicking around the fridge from previous weeks, just roast them, skin them, and freeze them. Then in the winter you can pull this recipe out along with the peppers to make a delicious summer meal, which you will likely need in all the cold that is to come.

Next week: Spaghetti squash, carrots, onions, tomatoes (maybe the last), hot peppers, and possibly radishes.

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Event Invitation

Martinis & Zucchinis
an evening celebrating the bounty of Troy Gardens

Wednesday, September 15, 2010
5:00-8:00 pm

Troy Gardens, 500 Block of Troy Drive, Madison, WI 53704

Cocktails and delicious food by Marigold Kitchen/Sardine, featuring locally sourced products like produce from our certified organic Troy Community Farm and spirits from Yahara Bay Distillery

Tickets: $65

Proceeds support Community GroundWorks’ work to nurture meaningful relationships between people and the land.

To purchase tickets or to get more information, please call 608.240.0409, or visit our website at www.communitygroundworks.org

Recipe

Roasted Red Pepper Sauce

1. Roast the peppers by setting them on a baking sheet under the broiler. Turn them periodically until all sides are blistered/blackened. Remove the peppers and set them in a bowl to cool. Remove the skins. Don’t worry about getting off every tiny piece of burnt skin, leaving in a few tidbits will add to the flavor. After they are peeled, chop the peppers finely.

2. Melt the butter in a saucepan over medium-low heat. Whisk in the flour and cook, whisking constantly, for 2 minutes. Whisk in the milk and bouillon and continue whisking until the sauce thickens, about 5 minutes. Add the cheese and whisk until it melts. Add the roasted peppers, salt, and pepper and whisk until combined. Remove the sauce from the heat.

3. Serve over your favorite pasta and garnish with sliced tomatoes and chopped basil or parsley.

4 to 6 red peppers
1 Tbs. butter
1 Tbs. flour
1 cup milk
½ Tbs. bouillon
½ cup grated Parmesan salt and pepper

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