In the Share

Spinach, 1 bag  
Garlic Scapes, 1 bunch  
Kohlrabi, 2 bulbs  
Turnips, 1 bunch  
Radishes, 1 bunch  
Lettuce, 1 head  
Lettuce Mix, 1 bag  
Dill or Cilantro, 1 bunch

We at the farm usually place two different kinds of values on our crops. One, of course is the monetary value, its price. The second is the perceived value, its usefulness and familiarity to members. As you may guess, those two values are not always the same for any given crop. Onions, for instance, usually fetch a relatively low price at market, but have a very high perceived value to members because they are so familiar and useful.

We generally think of spinach as a crop that has both high monetary value and perceived value. It is expensive to buy and most folks know how to prepare it and really like to eat it. This week you have a full pound of spinach in your share and we wonder if we are pushing the perceived value of this crop down a bit just because it is so bountiful. (You will likely get another pound of spinach next week.) It’s time to think of both cooking and freezing spinach!

Use cooked spinach in quiche, lasagna, or even soup. Or if you want to save some spinach for later in the year, freeze it by first blanching it in boiling water for 1 or 2 minutes, then plunging it in cold water to stop the cooking process. Dry the blanched and cooled leaves in a salad spinner and/or on a dry towel. Then pack into airtight containers and freeze. If you freeze it, you can enjoy that quiche or lasagna even in a season when fresh spinach is scarce.

Claire’s Comments

The Organic Inspection

As you know, Troy Community Farm is certified organic. That means we follow all the federal organic standards and that we are inspected annually by an outside agency to confirm that our crops meet the requirements to be called organic. While being organic means using production practices that promote a healthy farm ecosystem and not using synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, fungicides, etc.; being certified organic means proving it to an outside inspector.

Our annual organic inspection was on Wednesday afternoon. The fields were extremely wet from all the rain on Tuesday evening, so we could not do much field work on those saturated soils. It was the perfect time to take four hours out of the workday and answer the inspector’s many questions.

We started out with a field tour. I was happy to hear the inspector say that our weed control is definitely above average compared to the other farms he has visited this spring. On a day when we were feeling frustrated because we could not weed in the wet soil, it was good to hear that maybe we were not falling so far behind as we thought. We also received high praise for our fertility building program which focuses on cover cropping and mulch. Cover crops are crops that we grow in order to suppress weeds, improve soil structure, and increase fertility and they have been a pet interest of mine for the last couple of years. We have been experimenting both with new varieties and we new ways to grow them. Our latest experiment is to grow field peas under broccoli. The peas add nitrogen to the soil as the broccoli sucks it out. In a perfect situation the peas also help suppress weeds. I could go on and on about cover crops, but after the pea experiment it was time to move on to the sprout room and the greenhouse.

Julie happened to be rinsing sprouts when we arrived, so the inspector was able to observe our process. He also inspected all our seed to make sure it was organic, and checked our audit trail to make sure we could track back from the finished sprout to the invoice to the exact source and lot number of the seed. In the greenhouse he verified our potting soil, the health of our plants, and even the building materials used in the structure.

Finally we moved on to the paperwork. In this last part of the inspection we went over all my seed sources from planting plan, to seed order, to receipts, and even to empty seed packets. We examined the farm maps and verified that I record planting dates, weeding dates, harvest dates and amounts, etc. This paperwork portion of the inspection takes a full two of the four hours we spend. This portion is where I prove that I am doing what I say I’m doing.

Each year I look forward to our inspection – I always learn something new. And each year I’m glad when it is over – it does take a good deal of time. I think being certified organic is important because it helps me stay current with best production practices. I don’t mind all the paperwork because most of it (with the exception of having to keep my empty seed packets) makes me a better and more informed farmer. I also think it is important because it gives you as members of our CSA outside assurance that the food we produce is at least organic. We strive to exceed the organic regulations by using intensive cover crops and avoiding all sprays (even those allowed by organic rules), because we think those practices produce cleaner, healthier food. But in the end, your taste buds are our most important inspectors. We hope you can taste all the care and attention that comes along with the “certified organic” label.
Recipe

Knowing my affinity for kohlrabi, Claire asked me to write this week’s recipe column. For a couple months straight one farm season, I ate a kohlrabi every day for lunch. This speaks to two things: one, there are few things I enjoy more than a fresh kohlrabi, and two, I grossly overplanted kohlrabies that year!

Most of you will receive red bulbs this week though a few of you will take home green. The taste is very similar. The biggest difference between the two is that the red have a tendency to mature more quickly.

The simplest way to eat these beauties (and by far my favorite) is to remove the leaves, peel away the tough skin and eat them raw, like you would an apple. Kohlrabies are excellent grated into salads or sliced onto sandwiches. Diced kohlrabi can also be steamed, put in soups, or used as a radish replacement. Hope you grow to love these less familiar vegetables half as much as I do!

-- Jake

Kohlrabi and Turnips with Mustard Vinaigrette

(Adapted by Jake from Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone, by Deborah Madison)

2 Kohlrabi bulbs
1 bunch of turnips
3 or 4 inner celery ribs
2 Tbs. red wine vinegar or lemon juice
2 shallots, finely diced
3 or 4 garlic scapes, finely minced
salt and pepper
1 Tbs. Dijon mustard
2 Tbs. sour cream
1/3 cup olive oil
2 Tbs. minced chives
1 Tbs. chopped parsley
3 Tbs. capers, rinsed

1. Peel the thick outer skin from two kohlrabi and cut into fine julienne strips.
2. Thinly slice the turnips and celery ribs.
3. Combine vinegar, shallots, garlic, and ¼ teaspoon salt in a small bowl. Let stand for 15 minutes, then vigorously whisk in mustard, sour cream, and oil until thick and smooth. Grind in fresh pepper and stir in the herbs and capers.
4. Toss the kohlrabi and turnips with enough mustard vinaigrette to moisten.

(continued from “In the Share”)

Turnips are an exciting new addition to the share this week. They are beautiful and sweet and sport the most lovely turnip greens we have ever grown. Use the white roots in Jake’s recipe on the left, or just slice them raw into your salads. Use the greens as you would use mustard greens or kale. They are a bit spicy and are perfectly delicious when lightly sautéed with garlic and flavored with tamari and vinegar.

The kohlrabi is another exciting addition. I cannot add much to Jake’s description on the left, except to emphasize their beauty. Both their color and their unusual shape are uniquely attractive. We included the leaves so that you can eat those as well if you like. Think of them as a type of kale.

My favorite new salad idea for this week is to add roasted nuts and snips of dill or cilantro. The herbs add a fresh new flavor and the nuts make the salad filling enough to be a meal in and of itself. Using whole lettuce leaves as a wrap around humus, carrots, a bit of cheese and other vegetables of your choosing is another easy, fun, and yummy way to use up these large spring lettuce heads!

Coming next week: more spinach, salad mix, and radishes. Also romaine lettuce and perhaps broccoli (we hope!), fennel, and/or that lovely kale.