In the Share

Carnival Squash, 2 pieces, see signs
Beets, 1 bag
Onions, 1 bag
Radishes, 1 bunch
Red Bell Pepper, 1 piece
Carmen Red Peppers, 2 pieces
Poblano Peppers, 2 pieces
Jalapeno Peppers, 4 pieces
French or Italian Beans, 1 bag
Red Salsa Basket, 1 bag
Lettuce, 1 head
Kohlrabi, 1 bulb
Choice of Herb, 1 bunch
Tomatoes, see signs

We do a field tour every Monday morning with our whole intern crew. We take a look at what is happening in the field, make a list of what we need to get done that week, and make another list of what we expect to put in the CSA share. As the share list came together this week, it was feeling to me like a bunch of mismatched vegetables and overlapping seasons that I was struggling to fit together. Finally, it helped me to group them as follows:

First, the salad items. Batavian lettuce is back this week, large and lovely and delicious. Combined with the radishes and the kohlrabi, it feels like spring all over again. If you want to shake it up a bit, throw some sweet red peppers and some tomatoes into your salad as well.

Next, the summer vegetables: There are many peppers in the share this week. Some are sweet and some are hot, so be sure you can tell them apart before you cut into them! The sweet peppers are all red and are generally larger than the hot peppers. The red bell should be recognizable to most folks.

Claire’s Comments

The Fall of the Year

Though the threatened frost did not actually happen last night, still we had a little tizzy of preparation for it on Wednesday. Our average fall frost date is September 25th, but often we don’t get a frost until early October. When the frost comes in late September or early October, I welcome it. By that time the tomatoes are mostly dead anyway, there are virtually no fruits left on the peppers, and we are more than ready to be done with the sensitive summer crops. But September 14th? That feels way too early.

Our main frost prep priority yesterday was the winter squash. Though pumpkins and butternuts are definitely fall crops, their fruits and vines are just as sensitive to frost as their sisters zucchini and summer squash. One year we were hit by an unexpected frost and ended up with several rows of butternut still in the field. When we harvested them, we saw that they had patches of frost burn which seriously diminished their storage life. I vowed, never again! So, yesterday Julie led the crew in harvesting, cleaning, and sorting all the winter squash we still had in the field. You can see photos of the harvest on the back of this newsletter. Once all the squash were stacked, Julie covered the harvest with three layers of row cover to protect them overnight.

Meanwhile, Jake and I covered all our pepper plants with row cover as well. Never before have I covered anything in the field to protect it from a fall frost. Like I said, I usually welcome the killing frost that comes later in the month. But this year there are still so many peppers on those plants that I just could not see losing them. We should have one more week of red peppers! Then we will strip the plants and deliver the last of the green peppers as well.

Tomatoes are the other summer crop that is quickly killed when the temperatures drop. I must admit, these were my last priority yesterday. We have had so many tomatoes this year, I felt okay saying goodbye to them. Still we harvested all the fruits we could before leaving the plants to fend for themselves. You have another heavy delivery of tomatoes today and will likely have a few more next week as well. Then the plants will be done, frost or not.

The other crops that are affected by frost include potatoes and sweet potatoes. Lucky for us, those tubers are already protected under a layer of soil and mulch in the field right where they grow. So, though the vines are killed in a frost, the parts we eat can be safely left in the ground for now. Our basil and beans and cucumbers, all of which can also be killed by frost have already been harvested for the last time and are ready to be tilled in anyway.

All that leaves are the lettuces, brassicas, leeks, and herbs which will happily survive the cold and in some cases be improved by it. Brussels sprouts and kale are always sweeter after a frost, as is spinach. Unfortunately, I am not one to sweeten in the cold. I much prefer the heat of summer. Still, it is time to put away my shorts and pull out my long underwear as we enter the fall of the year.
Peppered Polenta with Fresh Red Salsa
modified by Claire Strader from Classic Vegetarian Cooking

5 cups light vegetable stock
2 cups fine polenta
2 sweet Carmen red peppers
2 hot Poblano green peppers
lettuce leaves, cleaned and ripped to bite sized pieces
1 red salsa basket

1. Roast and skin the red and green peppers: Put the whole peppers in the broiler. As the skin bubbles and blackens in spots, turn the peppers until all sides are blistered. Remove the peppers and let cool for several minutes. When cool enough to handle, carefully pull the skin from the peppers and remove the stems and seeds. Remember, the Poblano are hot peppers, so be cautious.
2. Lightly oil a 9-inch loaf pan.
3. Bring the vegetable stock to a simmer. Add the polenta in a steady stream, stirring continuously for about 2 to 3 minutes until thickened.
4. Pour a layer of polenta into the loaf pan. Add strips of one red pepper and one green pepper on opposite long sides of the pan. Pour in another layer of polenta; add another layer of peppers side by side. Finally pour in the last of the polenta.
5. Let the polenta loaf set for 10 to 15 minutes until firm.
6. Make the red salsa: Finely chop the garlic, cilantro, hot pepper (to taste), and a dash of salt in a food processor. Finely chop the tomatoes and onion separately and by hand. Combine all ingredients and allow all flavors to mingle.
7. Turn the polenta out onto a board and cut into thick slices with a large wet knife. Serve the slices of polenta on a bed of lettuce with the fresh red salsa on the side.
8. This recipe is a mix of Italian and Mexican flavors, so the polenta can be topped equally well with grated Parmesan or queso fresco, if you wish.

Thanks to Angela Richardson for these lovely photos of our squash harvest and sunflowers from the CSA flower garden.

Troy Community Farm
Claire Strader • 442-6760 • claire@troygardens.org
www.communitygroundworks.org