



In the Bag

Bok Choy, 1 bunch
Green Garlic, 1 bunch
Spinach, 1 bag
Radishes, 1 bunch
Pea Shoots, 1 bunch
Lettuce, 1 head
Mung or Lentil Sprouts, 1 bag

Those of you who did not choose the bok choy last week, get to have a taste this week. As you will see, it is not the most perfect example of bok choy you will find. The little holes in the leaves are caused by tiny little flea beetles. We have billions of flea beetles at Troy because of all the garlic and wild mustard we have in the open areas. Flea beetles love brassicas (a vegetable family that includes broccoli, cabbage, radishes, and others along with both bok choy and mustard). The beetles hang out munching the wild mustards until something better comes along, like our bok choy, and then they have a feast. We cover all our brassicas with a sort of blanket called remay to keep them out, but they are very tiny – like fleas – and they sometimes make their way in despite our best efforts, especially when the crop is as tasty as bok choy! Luckily, the little holes detract nothing from the flavor of this popular spring vegetable.

The classic use of bok choy is in stir fry. Just wash and cut the leaves along with the juicy white stems. Stir fry them in peanut oil for just a few minutes. Then serve topped with a cashew sauce made from 1/2 cup roasted cashews, 1/4 cup white wine vinegar, 1/4 cup sugar, 1/4 cup tamari (or soy sauce), 1 Tbs. minced gingerroot, a pinch of red pepper flakes, and just a bit of water pureed in the blender. You can add other veggies in with the bok choy also. Green garlic, mung bean sprouts, radishes and pea shoot leaves would be great additions.

Of course salad will be on the menu again this week. As CSA member Barbara Fraser says,

(continued on the
back)

Claire's Comments

Our New Sprout Business

When I was first hired to be the farmer for Troy Gardens, I sat down and thought through just exactly what we might accomplish on these 5 urban acres. The community had already decided that we would be a CSA farm, and I agreed that the CSA would be the backbone of our business – the thing that would be both the primary focus and the primary support for the farm. But in order to do CSA well, the farmer has to be realistic about the number of shares she intends to fill and then plan for about 20% more. I want your shares to be full and lovely every week, even if the fields are flooding in May and totally parched in June. The only way to do that is to plan for excess. Then when some crops struggle, there will likely still be enough to feed the CSA. And when some crops thrive, well then we really do have excess.

Rather than feeding all of you enough zucchini to choke your freezers and your garbage disposals, we take our excess to farmers' market or we sell it wholesale to grocery stores. Those extra outlets absorb the farm's excessive bounty when it exists, but can also go without when I need all the food to go to the CSA. My original plan, first formulated in 2001, called for about 100 CSA members. That was the number I thought our 5 acres could support well. This year we have 100 members, 10 worker shares, and a waiting list. That original plan is working! And I am so pleased.

A few years ago, I decided that if the farm had any place to grow it was in wholesale sales. Part of the reason that we have so much loyalty to you as CSA members is because you have made a commitment to this farm for the year (or longer!). You will come and pick up your shares even if it is raining or unbearably hot. We know we won't go home from a CSA delivery with a truck full of food, like can happen on a bad day at the market. Wholesaling is second best after that. The stores place orders, we harvest them and deliver them. No wasted food. No wasted work. But we have to be careful about what we offer for wholesale because first cut on everything goes to the CSA.

Last year we took over a packaged herb business that Doug Wubben started at Drumlin Farm. Now we grow a variety of herbs specifically for wholesale to local groceries. Herbs do not require much space, are relatively easy to grow and harvest, and have added new products to the CSA list, rather than detracting from it. Perfect.

(continued on the back)

(continued from "Claire's Comments")

Our success with the herbs last year got me wondering if there are any other crops with similar characteristics we could add to our mix. Back in 1993 I had some friends out in Gays Mills, WI who started a sprout business. Some of you may remember Gil and Lori, the SproutPeople. They grew delicious sprouts on very little land (in a building actually) and developed a very successful business. Ever since they left town, we have lacked a local sprout grower in Madison. And from what I have heard, they are sorely missed. Sprouts share many of the same characteristics as herbs. They require little space, are relatively easy to grow and harvest, no one else is selling them locally, and they add new spice to our CSA offerings, so Maggie and I decided to give them a try.

This week you have your choice between our first two sprouting attempts, lentils and mung beans. We will be testing out more varieties on you in the next few months, and soon you will be seeing our sprouts on the shelves of the Willy Street Co-op and Pierce's Supermarket. We hope you enjoy this new addition to your CSA share and we hope you will let us know what you think!

(continued from "In the Bag")

there is lots of "rabbit food" in the share this time of year. But if you are tired of spinach salad, you can switch to lettuce, radish, pea shoot, and sprout salad. Add some toasted nuts, oil, and vinegar for a perfect light meal. Or you could even skip the oil and vinegar. Another CSA member and worker share at the farm, Abby Bachhuber, said that she loved her lettuce so much last week that she thought any dressing ruined it. I have to be honest though, lettuce is only *this* good in the spring. So enjoy it now. You have your choice of red or green leaf, which I think most of you will be familiar with, or red Batavian lettuce. The Batavian is my absolute favorite, and it is the one that holds up best in the heat, so you will see a lot of it this year. It is crisp and sweet and can keep for up to two weeks in the fridge. But if you like lettuce, you will not need to test the storage capacity on this one.

Upcoming Events

Farm Volunteer Days

*Fridays, 7:00 to 11:00 am
at Troy Community Farm*

The farm has an open volunteer day every Friday morning. This time is for fun jobs like transplanting (early in the season), mulching, weeding (Claire honestly loves weeding!), and some harvesting of large crops like garlic, onions, and squash (later in the year).

Everyone is welcome to join the usual crew of interns, worker shares, and youth in our Farm and Field program whenever they can. We are trying the early morning hours this year at the request of all those who suffered through the afternoon heat last year!

Savor the Summer Festival

*Saturday, 12 August, 1:000 am to 4:00 pm
at Troy Gardens*

Mark your calendars now for this annual Troy Gardens event! This year we have a Hmong and a huitlacoche cooking demonstration; workshops on dried flower arranging, uses of native plants, mosaic art in the garden, and creating birdhouses; plenty of kid's activities; and a full day of live music. This will be a great day to spend on the land with friends, family, and lots of fun!

Recipe

Spring Pesto

Maggie adapted this recipe from The Gardeners' Community Cookbook. She has brought it for lunch at the farm several times now and has raved about it each time. She especially likes it over RP's Pasta fresh Lemon-Pepper Linguine.

2 1/2 cups (packed) coarsely chopped spinach
3 cloves garlic (or 1 whole stalk of green garlic)
1 or 2 teaspoons of dried oregano, sage or thyme (if you can use fresh, use more!)
1/4 cup pine nuts or walnuts
1/2 cup grated hard white cheese (romano, asiago or parmesan)
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
1/2 cup olive oil
salt to taste

1. Place the spinach, garlic, herbs and nuts in a food processor and chop as fine as possible. Add the cheese, lemon juice, and oil. Continue processing until well blended.
2. Transfer the mixture to a bowl and stir in salt to taste. Serve right away or store in the refrigerator for up to 5 days. Freeze for longer keeping.

Troy Community Farm

Claire Strader

1814 Sheridan Drive, Madison, WI 54704

Phone: 442-6760 e-mail: farmer@troygardens.org

Send newsletter comments, suggestions, and recipe ideas to:
Liz and Marcia Campbell, Editors
mcatoncampbell@gmail.com