

In the Bag

Delicata Squash, 2 pieces
Cipollini Onions, 1 bag
Orange & Red Carrots, 1 bag
Chard, 1 bunch
Edamame, 1 bag
Red Peppers, 2 small pieces
Basil, 1 pesto-sized bunch
Garlic, 1 bulb
Slicer Tomatoes, TBA

I know you may be thinking that August 23rd is a bit early for winter squash. I'm thinking it too. But still, these delicatas are as ready as can be. Sweet and yummy and wanting to be eaten. Some are already showing signs of storage stress from the two weeks they have been curing in the hoop house at the farm. These winter squash are always the first to come on and the first to go. They don't keep long under the best of conditions, and all this damp, mold-promoting rain has not been good for them. We separated them out into just-about-perfect squash and those that are starting to have spots. You should have one of each in your share. Eat the spotty one first. Just use a sharp, pointy knife to cut out the spots before you cook it.

How to cook a delicata? My preferred method is to stuff it. First, cut it in half lengthwise and scoop out the seeds. Then stuff it with your favorite stuffing (celery, croutons, onions, thyme, veggie stock...) and bake it in the oven until you can push a fork through the skin. When I make this dish, I eat it skin and all. If you don't want to stuff it, after you remove the seeds, you can steam the squash and just eat the flesh scooped from the skin. Or you can cube it and roast it with some cipollini onions, garlic, and carrots coated with olive oil, salt, and thyme. It's fall and winter food, I know. It's also good in the rain!

(continued on the back)

Claire's Comments

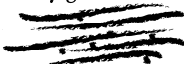
Rain: Week Three

Given the forecast for this afternoon (heavy rain and thunder storms), I'm expecting this newsletter to be sodden and unreadable by the time you get home. But if you are reading it, if you can read it, I want it known that we do not need any more rain this week, this month, and possibly even this year. I did my best to be up-beat and positive about the downpours of last week. I'm past that now. The rain needs to stop or all the good it did will be washed away along with what's left of our topsoil.

Some more things for which we can thank the rain:

- The cracks in the tomatoes and peppers. When the soil is so heavily saturated with rain, the plants take up the water more quickly than the fruit can grow to accommodate it. As the flesh swells, the skins cannot keep up and must crack in order to make room for the expansion. You will see minor cracks on even the best tomatoes and peppers in your share this week. And you will see larger cracks on the riper tomatoes that have had more time to drink in the rain.
- The dark, grey color on the garlic. After garlic is harvested, it needs time to cure for storage. Once cured, the outer layer of skin is dry and papery, and the cloves inside are crisp and juicy. Our garlic never got a chance to fully dry before the rains came. It has been in the hoop house, protected from direct contact with the rain. But the air has been so moist and sticky that the skins that should be drying have started to mold instead. The good news is that the cloves inside are not affected. They are still crisp and delicious. But the garlic head does not look so pretty and will not likely keep until March as it usually does.
- Spots on the winter squash. Winter squash too needs to cure for storage. The pumpkins, butternuts, acorns, spaghetti squashes, delicatas, etc. all grow with a natural waxy cuticle on their skin. This waxy cuticle protects the flesh of the squash both from rotting and from drying out. The curing process (which involves storing the squash in a hot, dry place) allows the cuticle to develop its full protective qualities. Since there is no hot, dry place in this kind of weather, the squashes are not curing well and are starting to develop spots. The good news is that the spots do not affect the flavor as long as you cut them out before cooking. The bad news is that they will not keep into December and March as they usually do.
- Wet feet. Smartwools and water-proof boots aside. Our feet have been wet for weeks.
- Muddy roads. The muddy sink holes on our field roads and paths stink of anaerobic decomposition and make more credible threats against the mobility the farm truck every day.

At least our farm is not actually under water, unlike other area farms that have been hit hard by rain and flooding. For that I am grateful. For the sake of our soil and our food and our other farmer friends, I'm truly hoping that next week's article is not titled: *Rain: Week Four*.



Recipes

To be true, I have not used a pesto recipe for many years. I just put basil in the blender with as much olive oil as I need in order to keep the blades turning. Then I throw in some garlic, walnuts, and Parmesan cheese along with a dash of salt and process a bit longer. Usually it works out pretty well. Sometimes better than others. When I was growing up, my mom would periodically make a huge batch of spaghetti sauce and freeze it for use throughout the year. She never consulted a recipe. My dad was the final judge on the quality of the sauce. He always judged it favorably, but no sauce was ever as good as "the one she made that one year." That was "the best sauce ever." As far as I know, she still has not topped it. That's the danger of not using a recipe. It's hard to make exactly the same thing twice. No matter how you make your pesto into the future, here are some recipes to get you started.

Use pesto on pasta, in place of tomato sauce on pizza, or as a sandwich spread. If you make more than you can use in a week, freeze it for use in the winter.

Walnut Pesto

3 Tbs. walnuts	3 Tbs. grated Parmesan cheese
2 cups fresh basil leaves	1 pinch sea salt
2 cloves garlic	½ cup olive oil

Combine walnuts, basil, garlic, Parmesan, and salt in a food processor and process to a puree. With the machine running, add the oil slowly. Scrape down the sides and process again. Store pesto in the refrigerator in an airtight jar. Keep pesto covered with a layer of oil to prevent the surface from browning.

Pine Nut Pesto

2 cups fresh basil leaves	2 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped
1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil	1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese
2 Tbs. pine nuts	salt and pepper to taste

In a food processor or blender, process basil, olive oil, pine nuts, garlic, and Parmesan cheese until just smooth, leaving some texture. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Use immediately or refrigerate for up to 1 week.

Goat Cheese Pesto

- 1 cup basil leaves, loosely packed
- 7 cloves garlic
- 6 pieces oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes
- 3 Tbs. pine nuts, toasted
- 2 Tbs. grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 Tbs. balsamic vinegar
- 1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 pinch salt and ground black pepper
- 3 ounces creamy goat cheese

Place all ingredients except goat cheese in a food processor. Process about 10 seconds until pureed. Add goat cheese and process until just blended. David Schy of Hubbard Street Grill uses this mixture on grilled vegetable sandwiches. It goes easy on the pine nuts and goat cheese, and is flavorful enough to spread thinly.

(continued from "In the Bag")

It has been a bad year for onions. Unfortunately, these cipollinis are no exception. While they are supposed to be a small, flat onion, they are not supposed to be quite this small. You won't need to quarter them when you cook them! I asked our worker share Deb for advice on how to prepare this once-a-year treat. (Deb is a wealth of ideas on delicious, though less common, vegetables.) She said that she plans to roast them with reduced apple cider, salt, and pepper, and serve them with roasted chicken and/or polenta. The reduce apple cider is just apple cider cooked down to about ¼ of its original volume. Deb said that she reduces apple cider when it is just about to go bad. Once reduced, it will keep in the fridge for a good, long time.

There's one more once-a-year treat in the share this week. It's edamame! These fresh, green soybeans are one of the highlights of the growing season. I don't do anything fancy with them. I just boil them in a little salt water for 5 to 10 minutes until the bean is soft inside the pod. Then I drain them and sprinkle them with salt and eat them all one-by-one, slipping the bean from the pod with my teeth. I hear they are good for you, but I cannot say that matters much given how good they taste!

This would be a good week for polenta pic. I've included a recipe for this dish in the newsletter for several of the past few years, so I will not repeat it exactly, but here's the basic idea. First make a sauce with all those tomatoes you have ripening on your counter: Sauté some garlic and onions in olive oil; then add some chopped sweet peppers and sauté a bit longer; finally add cubed tomatoes (and as much cubed summer squash as you can!) and let the sauce reduce. In a separate pan, sauté another onion in olive oil; add chopped (and slightly wet) chard, some tamari, and some apple cider vinegar. Cover and cook the chard until it is soft. In yet another pan, cook the polenta according to the instructions until it is thick, but still pourable. Pour half the hot polenta into a baking dish, layer half the chard on top of the polenta, then half the tomato sauce on top of that. Repeat the layers and top the whole thing with cheese. I prefer grated garlic cheddar. Bake in the oven at 350 degrees until the cheese is slightly browned. Make a lot, because the leftovers are even better than the original serving!



Troy Community Farm

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