



TWO SMALL FARMS

Community Supported Agriculture

May 28, 29, 30 2008

Cilantro, by Andy Griffin

When we harvest cilantro the smell of it hangs in the air around us like a fog. I find the aroma of fresh cilantro to invigorating and appetizing, but some people complain about the smell. That's only to be expected; cilantro is a strong herb that has always provoked strong reactions. What other food can you think of that's been compared by ancient and revered authorities to both manna from heaven and bedbugs?

Cilantro is the Spanish and American name for *Coriandrum sativum*, or coriander, an aromatic member of the carrot family, the *Umbelliferae*. Plenty of carrot family members, like dill, anise, caraway, and celery have strong scents. Cilantro is occasionally called "Chinese parsley" in cookbooks, but this is a misleading name. Yes, cilantro is closely related to parsley, and its leaves superficially resemble parsley, but the flavors of the two plants are quite distinct. Before parsley was a common culinary herb it was used to feed war horses, or woven into wreaths for heroes. Coriander, on the other hand, traces its name to the Greek *koris* or *koros*, meaning "bug." Classical scholars are divided as to whether the stinky bug that lent its name to the fragrant herb was a bedbug or a wood bug.

Coriander evolved in the Middle East and has been used there for ages. Sanskrit texts that date back 7000 years mention the herb, as do Egyptian papyri. Cilantro's defenders might be interested to know that the Bible refers to coriander in the Book of Numbers 11: 7, "The manna was like coriander seed..." Given that manna was also described as bread from heaven that appeared like flakes of frost and tasted like honey wafers it's difficult to understand how, except for sharing a color, manna could be anything at all like coriander seed. It is interesting, though, that the Israelites were commanded to gather only so much manna as they could eat. Some people disregarded this warning and tried to hoard the manna but on the following day the old manna had broken out in maggots. Bugs again.

Northern Europeans used the seeds of coriander as a spice to flavor foods and liquors but they never warmed to eating the herb's fresh leaves after the fashion of the Persians, Turks, Indians and Chinese. Coriander leaves were frequently dismissed as having a soapy, stinky quality. When the Spaniards conquered South America they brought coriander with them and the fresh herb was readily accepted by the indigenous peoples. Native Americans were used to the strong

flavor coriander leaves have. They were already eating an aromatic plant with an almost identical smell to coriander called *culantro*. *Culantro* is a yet another aromatic carrot family member that evolved in the New World tropics.

Once the Spaniards and Portuguese began colonizing the New World it didn't take long for *culantro* to travel to Asia and be accepted into various tropical cuisines there that already were familiar with coriander. *Culantro* is a common spice in Vietnamese cookery. I wonder if the old world coriander picked up its Spanish name cilantro after its similar smell prompted association with the new world *culantro*. It's a pleasing assumption but I don't have any word histories that can help me out on this. Are there any word nerds out there that might be able to contribute some wisdom to this vexing etymology?

European scientists named *culantro*, this "new" coriander impersonator they encountered, *Eryngium foetidum*. Are scientists as "objective" as they think they are? *Foetidum* means "stinky." Speaking from a proudly subjective standpoint I think both cilantro and *culantro* smell refreshing and inviting. Science can say what it likes. On my side are the billions of Indians, Chinese, Vietnamese, Mexicans, Turks, Persians and Americans who find tasty reasons to enjoy cilantro in their meals. copyright 2008 Andy Griffin

Here a few suggestions:

This Week
Avocados *
Cilantro MF
Strawberries HG
Baby MiniCor Carrots MF
Cauliflower MF
Mei Quin Choy HG
Scallions HG
Chard (Wed)
Kale (Th/Fr) MF
Mystery HG
Flowers: Mixed Bouquet HG,*

Experiment with Cilantro, adapted from *Fine Cooking Magazine*

- Garnish tomato-, carrot- or coconut-milk-based soups with chopped fresh cilantro.
- Serve iced tea or freshly squeezed juice with a splash of lime juice and sprigs of cilantro.
- Make a flavorful dip from chopped tomato, cilantro, cucumber, green chiles, and plain yogurt.
- Make pesto using cilantro in place of basil.
- Rub chicken or fish with chopped cilantro, ginger, and black pepper before grilling.
- Sprinkle chopped cilantro and chopped cashews or slivered almonds over cooked rice or couscous.
- Add cilantro to your favorite gazpacho or salsa recipe.
- add it to any beans or soup, stems included, then remove as you would a bay leaf.

Julia's Notes

How to store this week's produce: all into the fridge except the avocados. Remove carrot greens to store carrots. Eat the

strawberries fast, we pick them ripe! If they make it home uneaten, one way to keep them longer is to freeze them individually on a pan then put into bags for future smoothies, apple-strawberry crisp, etc.

Cauliflower leaves! An astute CSA member asked Shelley this week about the green cauliflower leaves: Eat them! They are delicious, edible, and sweet, kind of like a broccoli stem. I cut mine up thin and added them to my weekly vegetable soup. The cauliflower is harvested fresh so the whole thing is sweet.

What Dr. Paul (CSA member from San Francisco) Would Do With the Box This Week:

We put half an avocado in our Vita Mix blender every morning as part of a fruit smoothie. The avocado makes the smoothie, well, smooth! Very smooth. Other fruit additions: several dried pitted dates, half an apple, an orange, and a variety of frozen fruits, usually one banana (be sure to peel your bananas before freezing them!), blueberries, and sliced pineapple. Then we add grape juice, a spoonful of stevia, and a teaspoon each of vitamin C, ginger, turmeric and cinnamon. If you try this without a high speed blender, you'll find that the dates, apple, and orange won't puree so you'll be drinking a lumpy breakfast. 1-800-Vitamix should pay us to advertise for them. We've used the blender at least once every day for the last ten years.

We'll chop the cilantro into a tomato salsa.

We like our cauliflower florets roasted with minced garlic, lemon OR lime juice, olive oil, salt and pepper (400 degrees until tender, 20-30 minutes), then topped with parmesan cheese just before serving.

The baby carrots will get munched if they don't first make it into a lentil soup.

Scallions call for miso, hot water, and finely chopped celery and tofu.

We'll sauté the bok choy with olive oil and Costco's organic version of Mrs. Dash.

Finally, we'll douse the salad greens with our latest favorite salad dressing, a sesame balsamic vinaigrette.

What Jonathan Would Do With the Box: Jonathan has been a friend/supporter of our farms for many years; he's now a personal chef to some lucky folks, but most importantly he's known Shelley for 14 years. The following recipes are all from Jonathan.

Potato-Masa Gordas (Uses the avos, cilantro, scallions):

1-2 potatoes, steamed	1-2 cup masa
7-10 pickled jalapeños, sliced	½ tsp. baking powder
2 TBS-¼ cup water	salt
oil for frying	avocados, sliced
your favorite salsa	sour cream

Mash your potatoes and mix with the masa, then add the jalapeños, powder, salt and powder, using as little water as possible. You need a moist, not too stiff or sticky dough. Form the dough into discs the size you like. Fry them in oil (corn oil is good for this) until they are lightly browned. Serve with your favorite salsa, the avocados, cilantro, and sour cream. You can vary the peppers you use, or add any of your favorite grilled meat if you like.

Seared Scallops with Bok Choy and Lettuce, (uses bok choy, cilantro, and lettuce greens):

2-4 heads baby bok choy, sliced crosswise	2 TBS ginger, julienned, chopped, or grated
Lettuce greens, chopped	1 tsp. chili garlic sauce (from a jar)
1-2 shallots, chopped	3 TBS toasted sesame oil
1-2 tsp. hoisin sauce	Scallops (2-3 per person)
4 TBS cilantro	Juice from 2 oranges

Mix the orange juice, hoisin, chili garlic sauce, 2 TBS of the cilantro, some salt, and 2 TBS of the sesame oil together and let sit while you make the rest. In 2 TBS of sesame oil, sauté the ginger and shallot briefly, then add the bok choy and lettuce greens. Add a little salt and cook to desired consistency. Allow to rest while you sear the scallops. Sear the scallops in grapeseed oil. Finish by plating the greens (including all juices in pan), then the scallops, topping them with the hoisin dressing and any leftover cilantro.

Cauliflower Soup

Cauliflower, cut into florets	2-3 carrots, chopped
Broth of choice (chicken, veggie stock, or even water), up to 1 quart, depending on size of cauliflower	2-3 TBS herb of choice (parsley or thyme are good choices)
1 onion, chopped	1-2 cups half & half or cream

Sauté the onion and carrots in oil or butter. Cook them until the onions are really soft but not brown. Add the cauliflower and the herbs and cook a few minutes. Add your broth until it comes up just below the level of your veggies and simmer until the cauliflower is cooked, around 12-15 minutes. Add some cream and blend in a blender, then check for salt and pepper.

Kale-Bread Pudding

1 onion, chopped	1 fennel, chopped
3 garlic cloves, chopped	pinch red pepper flakes
1 bunch kale	herb of choice

Sauté the onion, fennel, garlic, and red pepper flakes until they are cooked to your liking (I like the onions to be golden). Add the kale, and herbs and some salt. Cook until the kale is done. Set aside.

1.5-2 cups cream or half & half	4-6 oz fresh goat cheese
2 eggs, beaten	few scrapes of nutmeg

Mix all these ingredients together. This is the custard base.

A few slices day old bread of quality (sourdough is good), cut into bite sized pieces.

Stir together your cooked greens with the custard, then fold in the bread. Check for salt and pepper. Put into a baking dish and bake for an hour at 375 degrees.

Everything in your box and the flowers are organically grown. From Mariquita Farm: carrots, cauliflower, cilantro, chard, kale. From High Ground: mei quin choy, scallions, strawberries, mystery, some flowers. From Thomas Farm: some flowers. From Marsalisi Farm: avocados.