

Two Small Farms Newsletter

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In your box this week: Mixed Sweet Peppers, Tomatoes, Romaine hearts, Strawberries, Bok Choi, Orange Carrots, either Marjoram OR Basil, and either Summer Squash OR Artichokes..

Preliminary Vegetable Notes:

The peppers, bok choy, carrots, squash, romaine and artichokes should each be stored in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. The tomatoes, basil, marjoram and strawberries should NOT be stored in the refrigerator but rather on your counter. The basil or marjoram can be placed in a small jar with water, just like you would flowers. The berries, if you receive them, should be eaten within a day or so and take them out of the plastic bag.

To eat first: Strawberries, within a day or so.
To eat second (within five days): everything else.

Red, Green, and Gold by Andy Griffin

(julia's note: Andy wrote a much lengthier, verbose-ier (I didn't say I was a professional editor!) version of this several years back.)

A big yellow pepper is shining through green leaves so I snap it off the plant. I turn the pepper over in my hand to inspect it. There's an ugly soft spot on the tip where the pepper pod touched the hot soil on a scorching summer day. I toss the flawed pepper to the ground. Given enough time every pepper will turn red or yellow. Even novelty crops like ivory, lavender or chocolate bell peppers will eventually ripen out of their designer tones into traditional reds and yellows. Mature, colored peppers

always are more expensive than unripe green ones since they must be cared for so much longer before harvest, and because the percentage of the crop that spoils is so high. But peppers, like any fruit, are sweetest when they're ripe.

I reach for another pepper and lift it up gently in my palm. Where the sun has warmed it on the top and sides the pepper has already turned a rich fire engine red, but on the shady, cool side there is still an apple green patch. Some consumers would reject this pepper because it isn't a solid color. Then again, other people can appreciate the slow drama of watching a pepper change color over a couple of days.

I consider the issue, then pick the pepper, green patch and all. If I were a conventional grower I might pass these half-colored peppers through an ethylene gas ripening chamber to color them all up at once. But I'm too much of a hippie to allow a gas chamber on my farm, and anyway, I've noticed that a splash of green makes golds and reds glow brighter. Different colors mean different things to different people but we all seem to react happily to brightness.

I remember a day nine years ago in the Santa Cruz farmers market. My tables were piled high with shiny peppers in green, yellow, and red. The air was fragrant with basil. Shoppers milled about filling their baskets and checking each other out. There were hemp activists and skateboard punks, college kids, clove-smoking slackers, and mothers pushing strollers. I caught a whiff of ganja coming from the crowd of rainbow kids swaying to the rhythms of the drummers on the sidewalk. A fellow sporting an impressive mane of dreadlocks approached my booth from the street and eyed the display. "Are the capsicums

organic?" he asked.

"Oh, yes," I answered. "I use no herbicides, fungicides, insecticides, or synthetic fertilizers on my farm."

"Jah bless," he replied, and began to fill his bag with peppers. He turned to leave.

"Excuse me sir," I called out. "You forgot to pay for the peppers."

"I & I have already paid," he said.

"You & you haven't paid me." I snapped back in a clear, sharp tone. The sidewalk drums pittered to a quiet and the dancers stopped grooving in order to take in this bit of scandal that was spicing up their afternoon.

My customer reached into his bag for several peppers and held them high for all to see. And, addressing the crowd, he said: "Green for the forests of Africa, stolen from the black man by the white man... Yellow for the gold of Africa, stolen from the black man by the white man... Red for the blood of the black man everywhere, spilled by the white man."

A number of people who had gathered to enjoy the free theater hooted and whistled appreciatively.

"Tighten your rap, sir," I volleyed back. "Peppers aren't African. I could say with greater poetic justification that the red, green, and gold of these peppers are the colors of the Bolivian national flag. The capsicum pepper was domesticated on the Bolivian altiplano 6000 years ago. By the time Columbus came peppers were cultivated from the Amazon to the Rockies. Every basic form of the pepper was

developed by the Native Americans. If you want to talk about our debt to history let's talk about what you and I owe them and them."

"Jah bless you," my customer responded.

"Look, sir. I can't pay the folks that work for me in blessings. They need money. My little farm supports over 40 people, from grandmas to infants, from Watsonville to Oaxaca. If you want these peppers you gotta to pay for them."

"This is a Babylon system," the shopper said to the audience.

"So pay in Babylonian currency." I answered.

After a pause he grinned and reached for his billfold. "The capsicums are beautiful," he said, passing me some money.

"Thank you" I replied as I handed him his change. "Have a nice day."

"All glory be to Jah, Ras Tafari," he answered, " the Son of David, Prince of princes, King of kings, Emperor of Ethiopia, and conquering Lion of Judah. Jah-Jah bless and keep you all."

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Cooking Class from Chef Andrew Cohen (there's some 'official' recipes Zelda put in below Andrew's text)

Many recipes call for "roasted" or "skinned" peppers, so let's get this out of the way first. This is done by direct application of high heat to the outside of the pepper. You can do this over an open flame like a grill or a

barbecue, over an open gas jet on the stove, or if you have an electric stove you can use the broiler. I actually use a propane torch since I am blessed with an older electric stove. To do this, I rub the peppers with a little oil (just enough to give them a sheen. This seems to help with even blistering) and then stick them on the end of a long handled fork like my roast fork. Turn on the torch and then apply the flame to the pepper. The pepper will begin to blister and pop, blackening. Turn the pepper to continue the process until the entire pepper is done. Then put the pepper into a paper bag or a bowl that you can cover and leave it to steam while the skin loosens and the pepper cools enough to handle. This is the same procedure whether on the grill, stove top, or under the broiler. It differs only in how many peppers you do at once. The more peppers at a time, the more you need to pay attention and move a little quicker. Peppers are pretty forgiving, however. A light blistering will leave the flesh of the pepper more solid, a longer roasting will cook the pepper.

Depending on what you will be doing with the pepper in the end will be the deciding factor as to how long you "roast" the pepper. After the peppers have steamed in the bag a while, pull them out to peel. If they are still firm, just use a knife to scrape the skin from the pepper. If they are soft, use a sharp knife to cut around the stem and slit up the side to open out the pepper. Do this over a bowl to catch the potentially hot juices that may be inside the pepper. Use your fingers to loosen up and pull out the seeds and ribs. Then lay the open pepper on a flat surface, skin up, and use a knife to scrape away the blackened skin. At this point the peppers are ready to use.

They may be kept in the refrigerator in a covered container for a couple days to be

used as needed.

Here is another basic recipe I use a lot; this is for "roasted" onions. With the skin on, cut the onion through the equator. Place the cut side over an open flame, or if you don't have one, lightly film a pan with oil, wipe the oil out with a paper towel, then place the cut side of the onion onto the surface of the pan. (I recommend using an old pan that you don't care about that much- sometimes the onions can mar the surface of the pan.) Cook the onion over medium-high or open flame and blacken (yes, blacken, as in char.) the cut surface. Then turn the onion and blacken the sides as well. The skin will sometimes ignite and flare, but only for a second or two. Watch that nothing else ignites. After the onion skin is colored up remove the onion from the heat and allow to cool. Then, use a knife edge to scrape off the char from the cut surface, and remove the skin. Use a knife to pare away any char from the onion. A few bits here and there won't hurt. At this point, the onion is ready to use. Onions prepared in this manner lend a definite smoky sweetness to a dish. This method also mitigates the hotness of an onion, and releases the pectins in onions. These onions are a key ingredient to my dark vegetable stock as they lend a depth of flavor, deep color, and the pectins help to produce a density or viscosity to the stock that is usually derived from animal products. I use these onions in braises, soups, and salsas. Tossed with a little vinegar (red-wine or balsamic) on placed on toasts they make a nice quick appetizer. These onions find their way into eggs, pastas, and sandwiches. Good for pizza, too. Okay, on with the Box...

Here's a recipe I got from two elderly Italian women while standing in line at a farmers market; roast red bell peppers and onions (see above...) and cut into 1/4" wide

strips or just into chunks, saute in olive oil and the juices from the roasted peppers and toss in some toasted pine nuts and some raisins that have been macerated for a couple hours in grappa. Sage was the herb of choice of one of the women. Serve as a side dish.

I like this recipe with the 1/4" strips as a pizza topping. Brush the pizza crust with olive oil, lay on fresh mozzarella, then the pepper onion mix. Bake and scatter with torn up bits of basil just as it comes out of the oven. I have also added bits of sausage or prosciutto ribbons to great effect, and have done one with just the peppers and olives.

Without the raisins, this makes a good pasta dish. Cook some sturdy pasta, then drain and toss with the vegetable mix. Large bits of cooked Italian sausage make this a heartier dinner.

I make a salad of the peppers and arugula dressed with a light vinaigrette. Sear a boneless skinless chicken breast on one side, turn it and toss in a little white wine, top with the pepper-onion mix and toss into a hot oven for 12 minutes or so and you have nice dinner in very little time. You could steam up or roast some of the summer squash or broccoli from the box to go along, or just slice tomatoes and sprinkle with some salt and pepper, and there's your dinner in less than 30 minutes.

If you sear the peppers until soft, you can put the juices along with the peppers into a blender or food processor and liquify. Strain this and set aside. Saute some minced garlic and shallot until softening and aromatic, add some wine or vinegar to the pan and cook until almost gone. Add the pepper puree and cook over high heat to reduce a little. Use this as a sauce under a piece of grilled

halibut or rockfish that has been seasoned with cumin and coriander, or with shrimp. I have done this sauce with a steak that marinated in lime, lemon, a little tequila, garlic, and cilantro. It was very well received.

Here is something with out pre-cooking the peppers. Cut into 1/4" dice. Cut corn from the cob, dice an onion, and a summer squash. Heat a pan over medium-high and toss in the peppers. After a few seconds, drizzle in a little oil and wirl to coat the pan. Toss in the onion and cook until starting to soften and turn clear, add the squash and cook until almost done. Add the corn and cook until the corn is heated through. Season and serve. If I have leftover grains or greens such as kale, I frequently toss them into the mix.

Black beans find their way in also. When you do this dish a few times, you'll find that you use this technique for other things, like leftovers in the 'fridge. The small dice leads to quick cooking and allows you to use up small bits of this and that you find in your refrigerator. Softer summer vegetables lend themselves readily to quick cooking.

I think most people think of eating artichokes and see the whole steamed or boiled artichoke. Another way to use them is to remove the leaves and the choke, peel the stem, and slice or chop the heart and saute or braise it. So- this technique takes some time and a sharp knife, but the cooking time is far less than if you were cooking the whole artichoke. Snap off the outside leaves until they start to show a paler, light green. Use a sharp knife to cut off the top 2/3rds of the artichoke, exposing the choke(the soft fuzzy stuff). Use a spoon to scoop this out, then use sharp paring knife to trim away the fringe of leaves remaining. Use a peeler on

the stem and trim the end. You now have the basic item for many other recipes. Keep the trimmed artichoke in acidulated water(1 gallon of water to 1 juiced lemon) to prevent discoloration while trimming the others.

While doing my internship in culinary school I learned this artichoke potato gratin. Slice and saute in oil and garlic and S&P 4 artichokes. Slice 6 medium large potatoes 3/16" thick. Put a generous layer(at least half) of potatoes in the bottom of the pan. Lay in the cooked artichoke, then carefully scale the remaining potato slices on with a generous overlap(3 slices to the length of 1 slice). Pour in a pint of heavy cream and season with S&P. Bake at 400F until done(gratin should be golden and bubbly, and the potatoes should be easily pierced with a knife), approximately 1 hour. We also did an iteration of this gratin with 1/4" bits of cooked pancetta that stands out in my memory still.

Slice the artichoke 3/16" and saute in oil, garlic and white wine and toss with pasta. Fried sage leaves would be nice as well. Shrimp would go well here, too.

These slices work well for pizza(I seem to recall an artichoke, meyer lemon, and parmesan pizza that startled me because it was so good-even with the lemon!) Cook 1/2" chunks of artichoke heart and potato(Yukon Gold or the like)and some onion or shallot in oil and garlic until coloring, about 4-5 minutes. Season with S&P and some garlic. Saute just to release the garlic smell and then add a little water or stock(around 1/2-1 C) and cover the pan. Simmer over low heat for around 15-20 minutes. Check for doneness/liquid level. When the vegetables are tender, remove from the pan and reduce the remaining liquid to a sauce-like consistency. Add a table spoon of butter and swirl the pan to

incorporate the butter and finish the "sauce" and pour over the vegetables. Serve as a side dish.

A riff on a broccoli dish I recently encountered; toss the broccoli in bite sized pieces into a pot of salted boiling water and cook for 3 minutes. Remove from the water and shake dry. In a saute pan, cook some diced onion and garlic until the onion is clear and then add the broccoli. Add some tapenade or a handful of olives, and or squeeze in some lemon juice. Season with S&P and herbs such as marjoram or oregano. Add in some water or stock(to come 3/4" up the pan bottom) and simmer over low heat until the broccoli is very tender.

Drain and serve warm or allow to cool and serve on coarse toasted bread.

Drizzle with a little lemon and fruity olive oil, and see if a touch of salt is needed to make the flavor "pop".

A tomato sauce; Puree some tomatoes in the blender and strain. Mince some roasted onions and garlic, and cook until very soft, season with S&P and a pinch of saffron that has been "bloomed"(this means to take the saffron and put it in a dry pan over medium heat until it becomes dry and you can smell the saffron waking up. This enhances the flavor and makes it easy to powder the saffron threads). Add the strained tomato puree and bring to the boil. Use with seafood, fish, and chicken.

The 'official' recipes courtesy Zelda:

Marjoram Recipes

Master Recipe File on our website

Spaghetti with Artichoke, from Deborah Madison's *Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone*

4 to 6 medium artichokes. Trimmed and quartered
Juice of 2 large lemons
1/3 cup olive oil
1 large onion, finely diced
4 garlic cloves, chopped
2 small bay leaves
3 TBS chopped fresh herbs of choice
1/2 cup dry white wine
Salt and fresh black pepper to taste
1 pound spaghetti
Fresh Parmesan, grated

Thinly slice the artichoke quarters and put them in a bowl with the lemon juice and water to cover. Start heating a large pot of water for the pasta.

Heat 3 tablespoons of the oil in a wide skillet with the onion. Drain and add the artichokes. Saute over high heat, stirring frequently, until they're well colored, about 7 minutes. Lower the heat and add the garlic, bay leaves, the wine and half the herbs. Simmer, scraping the pan, until the wine is reduced. Add 1 cup water and 1/2 teaspoon salt and cook until the artichokes are tender, about 10 minutes. Taste for salt.

Cook the spaghetti in boiling salted water until al dente. Scoop it out and add it to the artichokes with the remaining oil and herbs. Season with salt and pepper and toss well. Serve the pasta lightly covered with the Parmesan, more if desired.

BASIL OIL, from Bon Appétit, Sept. 1998

**Drizzle over fresh tomatoes and cheese; saute vegetables in this; use on focaccia or pizza

1 1/2 cups (packed) fresh basil leaves

3/4 cup olive oil

Blanch basil in medium saucepan of boiling water 10 seconds, [to help it retain its color]. Drain. Rinse under cold water. Pat basil dry with paper towels. Transfer to blender. Add oil; puree until smooth. Transfer to small bowl. Season with salt and pepper. (Can be made 3 days ahead. Cover and chill. Let stand at room temperature for 30 minutes before using). Makes about 3/4 cup.

BASIL PESTO, Gourmet, September 1996

4 cups packed fresh basil leaves, washed well
1/2 cup pine nuts, toasted until golden, cooled, and chopped fine
1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan (about 1 1/2 ounces)
2 large garlic cloves, minced
1/4 cup plus 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

Have ready a bowl of ice and cold water. In a saucepan of boiling salted water blanch basil, a handful at a time, 2 seconds, transferring with a slotted spoon to bowl of ice water to stop cooking. Drain basil in a sieve and pat dry.

In a food processor purée basil with remaining ingredients until smooth and season with salt and pepper. Pesto may be made 2 days ahead and chilled, its surface covered with plastic wrap. Makes about 1 1/4 cups.

Rich Dairyless Hazelnut Pesto

1 1/2 cups rinsed packed fresh basil leaves
3 garlic cloves, minced or pressed
1/3 cup whole hazelnuts, toasted*
3 TBS olive oil
2 to 3 tsp. fresh lemon juice
1/2 tsp. salt

*Toast a single layer of hazelnuts on an

unoiled tray for about 10 minutes at 325 degrees in the oven, until lightly browned and fragrant. Then rub the hazelnuts briskly with a clean hand towel to remove most of the skins. If using a blender rather than a food processor to make the pesto, coarsely chop the toasted hazelnuts.

Combine all of the ingredients in a food processor or blender and puree until smooth.

“This is one of the super vegetables - a rich source of calcium and vitamins A and C, and a member of the health-promoting cabbage family. The leaves and stalks are complementary and equally tasty: the stalks, crisp, sweet and refreshing; the leaves, tangy and a shade bitter. The stalks grow from a base, like celery, but are wide and bright white, topped with wide, deep green leaves similar to Swiss chard.” - from Moosewood Restaurant Daily Special

Stir-Fried Bok Choy with Roasted Peanuts, adapted from Deborah Madison's Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone

3 TBS raw peanuts
2 TBS plus 3 tsp. roasted peanut oil
1/4 tsp. Red pepper flakes
Salt
1 bunch bok choy
4 garlic cloves, minced
4 tsp. Minced ginger
2 TBS soy sauce
1 tsp. cornstarch mixed with 3 TBS. meat or vegetable stock, or water
**Note: slice up some of the peppers and carrots for color, and toss in!
Fry the peanuts in 2 teaspoons of the peanut oil until they're golden. Chop with the pepper flakes and a few pinches salt and set aside.

Slice off the bok choy stems and cut them

into 1-inch pieces. Leave the leaves whole, Set the wok over high heat. Add 2 tablespoons peanut oil and roll it around the sides. When hot, add the garlic and ginger and stir-fry for one minute. Add the bok choy and a few pinches salt and stir-fry until wilted and glossy. Add the soy sauce and cornstarch and stir-fry for 1 or 2 minutes more or until the leaves are shiny and glazed. Add the crushed peanuts, toss, and serve.

Marjoram is related to oregano but smell some fresh marjoram and you'll notice the difference. Marjoram has a great spicy aroma that's unlike any other herb.

Marjoram Lemon Roasted Chicken instructions from Kerstin Goldsmith:

Cut a lemon in half, stick both halves inside the chicken, having squeezed some of the juice inside and around chicken. stick in lots of fresh marjoram, and use leftovers to garnish when serving. Salt and pepper chicken, and roast per normal instructions - a totally delicious dish.

NUTRITION NOTES (from The Wellness Encyclopedia of Food and Nutrition, Sheldon Margen, M.D.): “Perhaps the most surprising feature of peppers is their nutritiousness: They are excellent sources of many essential nutrients, especially vitamin C - by weight, green bell peppers have twice as much as citrus fruits (red bells have three times as much.) Hot peppers contain even more vitamin C, 357 percent more than an orange. Moreover, red peppers are quite a good source of beta carotene. Red peppers are higher in beta carotene than green peppers: A sweet red pepper provides nearly 11 times as much beta carotene as a sweet green one; hot red peppers contain nearly 14 times as much as their green counterparts.

Furthermore, sweet red peppers have one and a half times as much Vitamin C as sweet green peppers; the vitamin C content of red and green hot peppers is the same.”

PEELING SWEET PEPPERS: Lay the peppers in a broiler pan, and broil until their skins blister (2-3 minutes). With a tong or long fork, slightly rotate them and continue turning until the peppers are completely charred, then pop them into a paper bag. Close the bag and let the peppers sit in it for 15-20 minutes: the charred skin steams loose from the flesh. Then, holding each pepper over a bowl, slit down one side, open it up, and discard the seeds, ribs and stem. Cut the pepper into 2-3 pieces, and peel off the loosened skin with a paring knife. The bowl collects the pepper juices, which can be used to store the peeled peppers up to 2 days, if you wish. Or, drain the skinned and seeded peppers on a rack. If you have a gas stove, you could also char the peppers over the flame, or you can use an open grill.

Tomato and Sweet Pepper Salad adapted from The Vegetable Market Cookbook by Robert Budwig

3 sweet peppers
4 ripe tomatoes
1/4 preserved lemon (or 2 teaspoons grated zest with some of the lemon's juice)
2 cloves garlic peeled and crushed pinch sweet paprika
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 tsp. black pepper

Grill or roast peppers, remove skins, cut into small cubes and set aside. Blanch tomatoes for 15-20 seconds in boiling water. Drain and remove skins and stems. Cut in half and remove seeds. Cut into small cubes. Rinse the preserved lemon under running water

and remove the pulp. Cut the rind into fine dice. Arrange peppers, tomatoes and lemon in a dish. Mix remaining ingredients to make a dressing and pour over the salad. Mix well.

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