

Two Small Farms Newsletter

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In your box this week: Eggplant, Tomatoes, Hungarian Wax Peppers, Strawberries, Spinach, Scallions, Parsley, and either Summer Squash OR Artichokes.

Preliminary Vegetable Notes:

The peppers, eggplant, spinach, scallions, parsley, squash, and artichokes should each be stored in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. The tomatoes and strawberries should NOT be stored in the refrigerator but rather on your counter. The berries, if you receive them, should be eaten within a day. (If you want to keep them longer, they can be refrigerated, but they lose a bit of flavor since we do pick them ripe.)

The Hungarian Wax Peppers have some spicy heat to them, but it varies between each pepper. Many are about as hot as a jalapeño.

What's Old Is New Again, by Stephen Pedersen

Downy mildew is a particularly vile disease that infects lettuce, spinach, and members of the brassica (broccoli/cabbage) family. It forms lesions that appear yellowish on the upper side of the leaf and fluffy white on the underside. It is particularly prevalent in our area—we're two miles from the sea where foggy, drippy mornings are the norm. This summer has been a particularly cool one. For the last month and a half the sun has only broken through for short periods during the afternoon and on many days not at all. And the constant drizzle has meant extended periods of surface moisture on leaves which combined with cool temperatures are the perfect conditions for downy mildew.

According to prevailing thought, one of the few tools organic growers have to deal with diseases like downy mildew, in the absence of chemical fungicides, is the use of resistant varieties. In both Europe and the U.S. much breeding work is

being done to develop downy mildew resistant varieties of lettuce and spinach.

Up until this season we had been successfully using these pricey new hybrid resistant varieties for both our salad mix lettuces and our baby spinaches. This summer however, their effectiveness began to wane. In the salad mix the mildew got progressively worse to the point that we were only getting one clean cutting before the mildew set in where we used to get two to three. The spinach has been even worse, with the last two plantings being near complete losses.

The problem is that the mildew is constantly mutating. As new resistant varieties are developed, the mildew in turn forms new races that the plant has no resistance to. While you can purchase many varieties of spinach with resistance to downy mildew races one through eight, the prevalent race in the coastal Watsonville area now is number ten. The only variety with that much resistance isn't widely available yet.

With this in mind, I had become resigned to only getting a single salad cutting and was contemplating giving up spinach for the season when something interesting happened. When seed for the expensive Dutch red romaine variety I had been using ran out, I was forced to sub in an old French variety called Rouge d'Hiver I dug out of the bottom of my lettuce seed bin. This variety first appeared in France back in the 1880s and I expected it to get hammered by mildew shortly after it emerged. To my amazement, however, that didn't happen. One by one the other three "resistant" varieties I planted it with developed the fluffy white lesions on their leaves and Rouge d'Hiver was clean. And clean it stayed. After the first cutting when all of the other varieties were unharvestable the old French heirloom was blemish free.

My only explanation is that as the mildew adapts to the new resistant varieties it loses its ability to infect some of the older varieties. And my success with the lettuce got me wondering if

the same might hold true of heirloom spinach as well. Bloomsdale Longstanding is a savoy type spinach with excellent flavor that first appeared in the early part of the last century. John, my seed rep, managed to scrounge up a ten pound bag which I planted into a 600 foot bed with eight seedlines on top. We got beautiful germination and stood back and watched. Sure enough the crop is much cleaner than the previous plantings of the "resistant" varieties. Every year we farm we end up rethinking things we took for granted the year before. Enjoy your mildew-resistant Bloomsdale Longstanding spinach.

Recipes from Chef Andrew C. and Zelda

Penne with Tuna, Olives, Tomatoes.

This is a recipe I keep in the back of the brain and the back of the pantry for emergencies. It uses canned goods and the tomatoes can be as "tomato sauce", or even canned (well, there are canned tomatoes that are better than nasty grocery store out of season tomatoes that work well here...), but this is best with ripe on the vine tomatoes.

2 T olive oil
1 med onion, diced
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 jar or can of pitted olives (such as kalamata) 1(6 1/2oz?) can tuna, albacore or oil packed "light", flaked or well drained
3 medium tomatoes, diced (around 14 oz)
S&P
optional; red pepper flakes to taste
10 to 12 oz penne pasta (2/3rds of a box)

Get the pasta cooking.

While the pasta starts cooking, heat oil over medium-high heat in a large saute pan and cook the onions until they start to look clear.

Add the olives and tuna. When they are warm, add the garlic. As soon as the garlic starts to give off aroma, crank the heat to high and add the tomatoes. Heat the tomatoes through, season with S&P to taste, and you if like heat add the pepper flakes now.

Pasta should be done about now - drain and toss with "sauce".

Andrew's Tabboleh. Zelda pasted in the Joy of Cooking version further below. This is a quick and easy dish. Do it once and you'll see how good and easy it is.

I like tabbouleh, the bulgar (cooked cracked wheat) "salad" with parsley seen at pot-lucks and veggie or Middle-eastern restaurants alike. However, I like it best the way I learned it from an Israeli friend, with lots of green stuff in it! About a 1:1 ratio of grain to green, actually. Research has shown me that this is the preferred way to make it in it's homeland.

Recipe: 1 to 1 cooked bulgar to parsley or a parsley-mint mix, half that amount seeded and diced tomatoes, a couple or three fine sliced green onions, moisten with lemon juice and olive oil and season with S&P. Or an official looking version:

1 cup bulgar according to instructions (this ought to yield about 2 1/2 C cooked bulgar)
1 bunch of parsley and 1/2 bunch of mint (2C & 1C), minced
3-4 medium tomatoes, seeded and diced (6 or 7 of the smallish early girls)
three green onions, finely sliced
Juice of one lemon
3 to 4 T olive oil
S&P to taste

Mix together bulgar with herbs, add tomatoes and onions and toss to combine.

Mix oil and lemon juice with a whisk or in a jar and dress the above. Season with salt and pepper, toss well (use your hand to really get it well mixed without beating it up too much) and you are ready to serve. I prefer it to sit a little for the flavors to marry well.

Spinach "Crespu" or Frittata (crespu is the Provençal word for this, and I like the sound of it...)

3 T olive oil
1 medium onion, sliced into strips

1 bunch of spinach (1# or more), stemmed and rinsed, but not dried
2 cloves garlic, minced
pinch of nutmeg or a T of fresh marjoram or oregano
8 eggs, whisked well with 2 T water (yes, many people use milk, but milk will scorch and stick to the pan)
1/2 C to 1 C of Parmesan or Gruyere cheese, grated

Heat the oven to 400F
Heat a medium saute pan(10") over medium high heat Add olive oil and heat until oil "shivers" Cook onions until soft and starting to brown Add spinach and cook just until wilting Season with nutmeg or herbs Add the garlic and cook until you start to smell it(just a few seconds) Add the eggs, swirl the pan a little to get it up the sides a little. Use a rubber spatula to form the edges and lift the cooking eggs up to allow the soft uncooked egg to run underneath. When most of the runny egg is setting, add the cheese by sprinkling over all and put the pan in the oven to finish the cooking and firm up the top(5-10 minutes. You will have to be the judge) The crespito will still be a little soft, do not cook until hard! Remove from the oven and allow to set up before diving in. Use a long thin turner or a rubber spatula to loosen the eggs from the bottom of the pan if necessary Place a plate over the pan and flip the entire unit over to turn out the eggs. This is good hot, warm, or room temp. Cut on the diagonals to make little 2" diamonds and serve with toothpicks.

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.

Roasted Eggplant, from *Chez Panisse Vegetables* by Alice Waters

Eggplant roasted in the oven requires little oil and therefore remains sweet and light-tasting. Take large globe eggplants (or any eggplants provided they are fresh, glossy and firm), trim off the stems, and cut the eggplants in half lengthwise. Cut the halves into generous wedges, again lengthwise. Small eggplants should be cut only in half: if the eggplant pieces aren't thick enough, they will dry out before they cook through. Salt the wedges generously and let them stand a few minutes. Meanwhile preheat the oven to 400 F and oil a baking sheet or a shallow baking pan. Lay the wedges out flat on the pan. Oil the exposed side of the eggplant and bake for 20 to 35 minutes. The eggplant is done when the wedges are soft all over and brown on the underside. Remove them from the pan with a spatula. If the eggplants sticks to the pan, let it cool for a few minutes and it will be easier to detach. Serve the eggplant warm or cool, with an interesting vinaigrette.

Spicy Eggplant Relish

adapted from the *Moosewood Cookbook* by Mollie Katzen

2 medium-small eggplants, cut into ½ inch cubes
3 Tbs. olive oil
1 cup chopped onion
1 cup chopped sweet pepper [use your wax pepper as a substitution if you don't mind some heat to it]
1 tsp. cumin
salt and lots of cayenne
juice of one lemon

Cook onions and eggplant together in oil, with a little salt. Cook slowly, over low heat until soft. Add remaining ingredients, and season to taste. Serve hot or cold.

Eggplant Gratin "Almodrote de Berenjen"

adapted from Joyce Goldstein's *Sephardic Flavors*

2. Those of you who enjoy eggplant might want to check out Joyce Goldstein's book *Sephardic Flavors*. It is a fascinating look at the foods and culture the Jews took with them into the Arab world when they were expelled from Spain by the Catholics in 1492.

4 pounds largish eggplants 2 cloves garlic, minced 4 slices country bread, soaked in water, and squeezed dry 4 eggs 6 ounces fresh white cheese, crumbled (such as ricotta or feta) 1/2 pound gruyere or kashkaval cheese, grated 1/3 cup sunflower or olive oil 1 to 2 teaspoons salt black pepper to taste 3 Tablespoons freshly chopped parsley

Bake the whole eggplants on a baking sheet in a 400 degree oven for 30-45 minutes. You can also broil them for 20 minutes, turning often. Transfer to a colander.

When cool enough to handle, strip away the skin and remove the large seed pockets. Place the pulp on a cutting board and chop coarsely. Return it to the colander and let drain for 10 to 20 minutes to release the bitter juices. You should have 2 to 2 ½ cups pulp.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Oil a 7 x 11 baking dish. Transfer the eggplant to a bowl and mash well with a fork. Add the bread, eggs, crumbled cheese, and all but 1/4 cup of the shredded cheese, and all but 2 Tablespoons of the oil. Salt and pepper to taste. Spread mixture in the prepared baking dish. Sprinkle evenly with the remaining 1/4 cup shredded cheese and the remaining oil over the top. Bake until golden and set, 30 to 40 minutes. Serve hot directly from the dish.

FETA PINE-NUT DIP, Gourmet, August 1999, *The Last Touch*

1/2 cup pine nuts
1/2 colored bell pepper
1/2 cup packed fresh flat-leafed parsley leaves
6 ounces feta
1/4 teaspoon minced garlic
1 cup plain yogurt

Preheat oven to 350 F.

In a shallow baking pan toast pine nuts, stirring occasionally, until golden, about 7 minutes, and transfer to a plate to cool. Separately chop nuts, bell pepper, and parsley and combine in a bowl.

Crumble feta into a food processor and pulse until it resembles coarse meal. Stir feta into nut mixture with garlic, yogurt, and salt and pepper to taste. Serve dip with pita toasts or bagel chips. Makes about 2 cups.

ROASTED SPICED SHRIMP ON WILTED SPINACH, Gourmet, March 1999

6 large shrimp
1/8 teaspoon chili powder
1/8 teaspoon salt
1/2 pound spinach (about 1 bunch)
2 scallions
1 teaspoon fresh lime juice
2 tablespoons water
1 teaspoon grated peeled fresh gingerroot
1/2 teaspoon sesame oil

Accompaniment: lime wedges

Preheat oven to 450°F. Leaving shells intact, pull legs off shrimp and with a sharp knife halve shrimp lengthwise. Arrange shrimp, shell sides down, in one layer in a shallow baking pan. In a small bowl stir together chili powder and salt and sprinkle evenly

over shrimp. Shrimp may be prepared up to this point 3 hours ahead and chilled, covered.

Discard stems from spinach and diagonally cut scallions into 1/4-inch-thick slices. Drizzle shrimp with lime juice and roast in middle of oven until just cooked through, about 5 minutes.

In a large nonstick skillet bring water with gingerroot to a simmer over moderate heat and add spinach. Cook spinach, stirring, until slightly wilted, about 20 seconds. Remove skillet from heat and immediately stir in scallions and oil until combined well. Season spinach with salt and pepper.

Mound spinach in center of each of 4 plates and arrange shrimp halves around it. Serve shrimp and spinach with lime wedges.

Cold Pasta with Zucchini and Tomatoes, from Pumpkins & Squashes by Caroline Boisset

12 ounces shell pasta

Salt

3 medium zucchini

4 tomatoes, quartered

4 oz. mozzarella cheese, cubed

2/3 cup ricotta at room temperature

handful of parsley, chopped

3 Tbs. olive oil

Cook the pasta in a large pot of boiling salted water until al dente. Drain in a colander, rinse under cold water and let cool completely. Meanwhile, cook the whole zucchini in boiling water that barely covers them for 5 minutes, until tender. Slice and allow to cool completely. In a large bowl, mix the pasta, zucchini, tomatoes, cheeses, parsley, olive oil, and season with salt to taste. Serve cold. Serves 4-6

Tabbouleh, from Joy of Cooking

a perfect CSA dish this week. Parsley, tomatoes, scallions. You can leave out the mint if you don't have any.

Combine in a large bowl:

1 cup medium bulgur [cracked wheat]

2 cups boiling water

Cover and let stand for 30 minutes. Drain in a sieve, pressing with the back of a large spoon to

remove the excess moisture, and return to the bowl. Add:

4 large ripe tomatoes, finely chopped

1 cup chopped parsley sprigs

1 cup cucumber

1 cup packed mint sprigs, chopped

1 bunch scallions, finely chopped

1 medium onion, finely chopped [optional]

Stir in:

1/2 t allspice, optional

1/2 t salt

1/4 t black pepper

Whisk together:

1/3 C fresh lemon juice

1/3 C olive oil (extra virgin)

add to the bulgur and toss to coat. Serve at room temperature

Tomato Salad With Spinach and Shaved Parmesan, adapted from Cook's Illustrated

Serves 6

4-5 large tomatoes (about 1 1/2 pounds)

1/2 teaspoon salt

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

1 small garlic clove, minced or put through garlic press

Ground black pepper

1 small bunch spinach, cleaned and chopped coarse (about 1 cup)

1 small chunk (about 2 ounces) Parmesan cheese, shaved into strips with vegetable peeler or paring knife

1. Core and halve tomatoes, then cut each half into 4 or 5 wedges. Toss wedges with salt in large bowl; let rest until small pool of liquid accumulates, 15 to 20 minutes.

2. Meanwhile, whisk oil, vinegar, garlic, and pepper to taste in small bowl. Pour mixture over tomatoes and accumulated liquid; toss to coat. Set aside to blend flavors, about 5 minutes.

3. Add spinach and Parmesan; toss to combine. Adjust seasonings and serve immediately.

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