

Two Small Farms Newsletter

Issue Number 340, October 26th, 2005

In your box this week: New England Sugar Pie Pumpkins, Rapini OR Broccoli di cicco, Salad mix, Young Greens (likely spinach or young chard), a Stephen mystery and an Andy mystery*

Preliminary Vegetable Notes

Everything but the pumpkins should be stored in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. The pumpkins can be stored out of the light in relatively cool place. (These are good eating pumpkins)

To eat first: To eat first (within five days): everything but the pumpkins. To eat within three weeks: pumpkins.

Broccoli di Cicco: This is a cutting broccoli, a true broccoli, an old fashioned variety, sometimes called 'sprouting Roman broccoli'. It's sweet like regular broccoli, it's what they developed the giant broccoli heads from. All the stems and leaves and everything can and should be eaten. Chop the whole lot and cook as you would a bag of "convenient broccoli florets."

Rapini is also called raab, broccoli rabe, cime de rape, and brocoletti. It's a leafy mustard green. Its leaves and buds have a mustardy bite much like turnip greens. -*The Joy of Cooking* - This is an unusual medium-sharp flavored green widely grown in Italy. It has edible stems and small bud clusters. -*The Victory Garden Cookbook*, Marian Morash - In Roman times this 'sprouting broccoli' was very popular and considered a delicacy. A recipe from Apicius for broccoli raab: Mince the leaves with coriander, onion, cumin, pepper and oil, then serve them with boiled leeks, olives or pine nuts, and raisins. -*The Vegetable Book* by Spencer

and my favorite way to cook broccoli di cicco and broccoli raab: roughly chop, saute in a bit of olive oil or broth, then toss with whole wheat pasta, a few toasted nuts and or grated hard

cheese, and a pinch of red pepper flakes. -julia (the same could be done with the baby greens, but toss the greens with the wet, hot pasta as is, they will wilt in the bowl with just a few stirs.)

How Farming is Like Raising Children, by Jeanne Byrne (revised from 2003)

For the past 8 years, we have been both farming and raising young children. I've come to the conclusion that these two endeavors have a lot in common. Here are some of my basic tenets of farm-rearing.

Just when you think you have something figured out and under control, it all changes. I listen patiently while Steve expresses strongly a conclusion he has reached about growing a certain vegetable. It is the absolute opposite of the conclusion he strongly expressed about that exact thing a few weeks before.

You give it everything you've got, and it still wants more attention. Steve's one half-day off per week evaporates during the summer, and we just can't manage to get it back. Each year we try to figure out a solution to this during the slower winter months, but once the season gets going, family time and free time too often become casualties of the FARM.

You do your best to raise wonderful fruits and vegetables, and still they will manage to embarrass you in public. I beam as a farmer's market customer glowingly praises the strawberries he has just bought from me. He takes a bite out of a large scrumptious-looking berry and finds a live earwig inside.

It helps to have a healthy interest in insects. Sure, some creepy crawlies still make us a little queasy. But as any kid could tell you, bugs are fascinating creatures if you watch them closely enough. We may as well learn to appreciate them, because they are an important part of the farm biosystem.

It is hard to entrust the care of your farm to anyone else. We are lucky to have several wonderful farm helpers so that we can take an occasional vacation. Still, it sometimes seems to

take weeks to get back on track when we come home.

Year after year, your farm teaches you new things; it develops its personality as it changes and adapts to your care. We are excited by the changes that we see in our soil and our infrastructure after five years on this property. Like children who are regressing before a major developmental breakthrough, the farm can sometimes look like a mess. Fortunately, the farm landscape changes weekly (sometimes to the disappointment of the children, who find cover crop nests or favorite foraging crops mowed down.)

There will always be things that are out of your control. Growing vegetables are constantly subject to pressures from the outside world weeds, insects, diseases, changes in weather. Often we need to revise our expectations of a given crop, or even completely change our strategies. After all, mistakes are a wonderful opportunity to learn.

Benefit Dinner for our adopted Louisiana farm family*

The benefit dinner for the Cores will be held in San Francisco at Desiree's this Friday, October 28th.

Dinner Link

*Since planning this dinner I've spoken with the Cores and there have been more hurricanes. The Cores are getting back on their feet, and they are most grateful to the prayers and donations they've received from California. This week I talked with a group that represents some coffee growers in Chiapas, Mexico who were devastated by hurricane Stan. I've not yet talked with Andy, Jeanne, Steve or Anne at Desiree... but I'm thinking that at this dinner we can all talk about ways we can help 2 or 3 farms here and in Mexico that in the most dire need. Stay tuned for an update! -julia

Recipes

BROCCOLI RECIPES:

GARLIC MARINATED BROCCOLI

Julia enjoys making this in the morning to have a head start on dinner and lunch. The cookbook says: "A fine dish that shows off the flavor of fresh-picked broccoli. Great for icebox raids."

1 pound broccoli di cicco, roughly cut up into pieces

Marinade:

3 TBS olive oil

1 tsp. finely minced garlic

2 TBS chopped fresh basil

1 tsp. chopped fresh oregano

2 tsp. soy sauce

2 TBS vinegar

pepper to taste

Mix the marinade ingredients together. Steam or quickly boil broccoli only until they are tender-crisp, 2-3 minutes. Drain immediately and chill broccoli in ice water to set color and stop the cooking process. Toss the well-drained broccoli with the marinade and let flavors blend for at least 1/2 hour. Serve at room temperature or chilled.

Asian Broccoli di cicco

1 pound broccoli di cicco, chopped into 1 inch pieces, including stems and leaves

1 tsp.. minced garlic

1/3 c. chicken broth

2 TBS soy sauce

1 tsp. sesame oil

Heat a large frying pan until very hot. Add the oil and immediately add the garlic. Let sizzle for 15-20 seconds. Add the remaining ingredients and give everything a quick stir. Without turning the heat down, cover the pan and let steam for 3 minutes, or until the broccoli is done.

RAPINI RECIPES

Blanched Rapini (Broccoli Raab)

adapted from *Cook's Illustrated*

Using a salad spinner makes easy work of drying the cooled blanched rapini.

1 pound rapini (broccoli rabe), washed, cut into 1-inch pieces
2 teaspoons salt

Bring 3 quarts water to boil in large saucepan. Stir in rapini greens and salt and cook until wilted and tender, about 2 1/2 minutes. Drain and set aside.

Cool empty saucepan by rinsing under cold running water. Fill cooled saucepan with cold water and submerge greens to stop the cooking process. Drain again; squeeze well to dry and proceed with one of the following recipes.

Rapini with garlic and red pepper flakes

2 T extra virgin olive oil
3 medium garlic cloves
1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
1 recipe blanched rapini greens (above)

Heat oil, garlic and red pepper flakes in medium skillet over medium heat until garlic begins to sizzle, about 3 to 4 minutes. Increase heat to medium high, add blanched rapini greens, and cook, stirring to coat with oil, until heated through, about 1 minute. Season to taste with salt, serve immediately.

Rapini with Sun Dried Tomatoes and Pine Nuts

Follow recipe for Rapini with Garlic and Red Pepper Flakes, adding 1/4 cup oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes, cut into thin strips, along with garlic and red pepper flakes. Add 3 Tablespoons toasted pine nuts to skillet along with rapini greens.

Rapini with Asian Flavors

Mix 1 Tablespoon soy sauce, 1 1/2 teaspoons rice wine vinegar, 1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil, and 1 teaspoon sugar in small bowl; set aside. Follow recipe for Rapini with Garlic and Red Pepper Flakes, substituting vegetable oil for the

olive oil and adding 1/2 teaspoon finely grated ginger along with garlic and red pepper flakes. Add reserved soy sauce mixture to skillet along with rapini.

BROCCOLI RAAB PASTA, from *The Greens Cookbook*

1 lg.onion, thinly sliced
6 cloves garlic, minced
1 bunch broccoli raab
olive oil
romano cheese
red pepper flakes
salt
1/2 lb. penne
red wine vinegar

Put on a large pot of water to boil. In a skillet, coated with olive oil, heat the onion over high heat. When onion is browning in spots, add the garlic, red pepper flakes and salt to taste. Toss briefly, then add the raab and a splash of water. Lower the heat and cook until tender, stirring frequently. Meanwhile cook pasta. Taste the raab and adjust the seasonings. Add a generous amount of olive oil and a splash of vinegar. Toss with the drained pasta and top with romano cheese.

SQUASH/PUMPKIN RECIPES

Julia's winter squash/pumpkin preparations:

In case you've never tried to cook **winter squash (or pumpkins)**, it couldn't be **simpler**: Cut in half with a big sharp knife. Remove seeds. (If you've ever carved a pumpkin, these two steps should be very familiar.) Put in a baking pan (I use glass, metal or ceramic would also work) cut side down, with a little water in the pan. Or rub the cut side with a little oil first. Bake in a medium oven (325, or 350, or 400, etc.) until it's easily pierced with a fork. Remove, and eat. Possible toppings: many like maple syrup, I like salt and pepper. I've also added my cut, seeded halves of winter squash to the crockpot with some water, and let it cook that way for a few hours. This method works especially well when all you want is the cooked

flesh to puree for a soup or other dish.

I put cut up pieces (large ones) already seeded into my crock pot for 2 or so hours on high. When a fork can easily pierce the squash/pumpkin pieces, I remove it and scrape the flesh into my food processor and whirl a bit. Then I freeze in 1 and 2 cup increments. Soup and pie are obvious and delicious choices, I also put 1 cup of this puree into nearly every batch of muffins, waffles, cookies, pancakes, biscuits etc. that I make. I just take an existing recipe and add my cup of squash puree. It nearly always works, and my kids are none the wiser.

PUMPKIN RISOTTO, *Gourmet*, October 2001

1 1/4 cups diced (1/4 inch) peeled seeded fresh pumpkin
2 cups chicken stock
2 cups water
1 small onion, finely chopped
1 tablespoon olive oil
3/4 cup Arborio rice
1 oz grated Parmigiano-Reggiano (1/3 cup)
1 tablespoon unsalted butter

Roast miniature pumpkins:

Preheat oven to 350°F. Cut in half with a big sharp knife. Remove seeds. (If you've ever carved a pumpkin, these two steps should be very familiar.) Put in a baking pan cut side down, with a little water in the pan. Or rub the cut side with a little oil first. Bake until very tender, 45 to 50 minutes. Cool slightly.

Make risotto while pumpkins roast:

Bring stock and 2 cups water to a simmer in a small saucepan and keep at a bare simmer. Cook onion in oil in a 2- to 2 1/2-quart heavy saucepan over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 3 minutes. Add rice and cook, stirring, 1 minute. Add 1 cup simmering stock and cook at a strong simmer, stirring constantly, until stock is absorbed. Continue simmering, adding stock 1/2 cup at a time, stirring constantly and letting each addition be absorbed before adding the next,

until rice is tender and creamy-looking but still al dente, about 18 minutes total. (There may be broth left over.)

Remove from heat and stir in diced pumpkin, cheese, and butter, stirring until butter is melted. Season with salt and pepper and cover to keep warm.

SPICED PUMPKIN SOUP, *Bon Appetit*, November 2002

1 1/2 tablespoons butter
3/4 cup chopped carrot
3/4 cup chopped celery
3/4 cup chopped ripe banana
1/2 onion, chopped
1 garlic clove, minced
1 bay leaf
1 whole clove
5 cups low-salt chicken broth
2 cups canned pure pumpkin
3/4 cup canned unsweetened coconut milk*
1/4 cup sweetened condensed milk
1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground coriander
1/2 teaspoon crumbled dried sage leaves
1/4 teaspoon ground allspice
1/4 teaspoon yellow curry powder
1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro

Melt butter in heavy large pot over medium-high heat. Add carrot and next 6 ingredients and sauté until vegetables are soft, about 10 minutes. Discard bay leaf. Transfer mixture to processor and blend until smooth. Return mixture to pot. Add broth and all remaining ingredients except cilantro. Boil soup over medium-high heat 15 minutes to blend flavors. Cool slightly. Working in batches, puree soup in blender until smooth. Return soup to pot. Season to taste with salt and pepper. (Can be made 1 day ahead. Cool slightly, then cover and refrigerate.) Bring soup to simmer. Serve sprinkled with cilantro..

SPINACH RECIPES:

Spinach salad with Oranges and Warm Goat

cheese, *Gourmet*, January 2001

3 small navel oranges
6 oz fresh mild goat cheese (preferably in log form)
1/3 cup pecans (1 1/2 oz), finely chopped
1 teaspoon whole-grain mustard
1 teaspoon white-wine vinegar
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
Pinch of sugar
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 lb spinach, trimmed
1 small red onion, sliced into thin rings

Cut peel and white pith from oranges with a sharp small knife. Working over a sieve set over a bowl, cut orange sections free from membranes, letting sections drop into sieve.

Cut goat cheese into fourths and pat each portion between your hands to form a disk. Pat pecans all over each disk to coat. Bake on a small baking sheet in middle of oven until heated through, about 5 minutes.

Measure out 1 tablespoon orange juice from bowl and whisk together with mustard, vinegar, salt, and sugar in a large bowl. Add oil and whisk until blended.

Add spinach, onion, and orange sections to dressing and toss well. Season with pepper. Divide among 4 salad plates and carefully transfer 1 goat-cheese disk to each salad.

Makes 4 (first-course) servings.

Greens and Potato Soup, adapted from *Bon Appetit*, January 1999

4 tablespoons olive oil
2 cups chopped onions
2 pounds Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled, cut into 1-inch pieces
7 cups chicken or vegetable broth
1/2 teaspoon dried crushed red pepper
4 garlic cloves, minced
1 bunch mustard greens [try the rapini] stems trimmed, leaves coarsely chopped
1 bunch fresh spinach, stems trimmed
Sour cream

Heat 2 tablespoons oil in heavy large pot over medium heat. Add onions and sauté until tender and golden, about 8 minutes. Add potatoes; sauté 3 minutes. Add broth and crushed red pepper. Bring to boil. Reduce heat. Simmer until potatoes are tender, about 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, heat remaining 2 tablespoons oil in another heavy large pot over medium heat. Add garlic; sauté until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add mustard greens and all but 1 cup spinach leaves; sauté until wilted, about 3 minutes.

Add sautéed greens to potato mixture. Working in batches, purée soup in blender until smooth. (Can be prepared 1 day ahead. Cool. Cover and refrigerate.) Return soup to pot. Bring to simmer, thinning with more water, if desired. Season soup to taste with salt and pepper.

Cut remaining 1 cup spinach leaves into 1/3-inch-wide slices. Ladle soup into bowls. Add dollop of sour cream to each bowl. Garnish soup with sliced spinach leaves and serve.

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