

Two Small Farms Newsletter

Issue Number 308 - March 16th, 2005

In your box this week: Green Onions, Meyer Lemons, Red or Green Lettuce, Roots (2 kinds of turnips and a black radish), Escarole, Dandelion Greens, Butternut Squash, Chard, Broccoli

Notes: There are many cooking notes below in the recipe section, as well as photo links for identification of the escarole, chard, butternut, roots, and dandelion greens. We enjoy sending out as much information as possible each week: it's our VEP: Vegetable Education Program. Andy talks some at the end of his article about a few of the possibly oddball veggies in this week's box.

The Lemons are from Marsilisi Farms in Corralitos: Steve M. is a friend who in his very active retirement keeps a few hundred Meyer lemon trees.

Note about this newsletter: Starting this week it's every week through Thanksgiving. This email version is free for anyone who wants to receive it, current members, lapsed members, relatives and friends of either above group, members of other community supported agriculture programs etc. If you don't wish to receive this email letter every week through Thanksgiving (and then monthly in the winter), please reply to this letter with unsubscribe in the subject line. Thank you. We don't like junk mail anymore than you do.

Just added: Pet the baby goats day at Mariquita Farm: to see a listing of all events

-Julia

Bedtime Stories by Andy Griffin

Welcome to the 2005 harvest season with the Two Small Farms c.s.a. program. I'd like to start the year by telling you a bedtime story, or maybe it's more correct to say I want to tell you about a bedtime story.

We never get too old for bedtime stories, or at least I never have. But until quite recently I've been in the habit of reading them to my children instead of hearing them myself. Now my daughter, Magdalena, aged eight, has taken it upon herself to read a story every evening to me, partly to show off how well she is reading and partly because she truly believes in absolute fairness and she recognizes bedtime stories have been a one way street for the last eight years. The other night as we scrunched into the sofa at eight pm for a short story before sleep overtook both of us she broke out her entire set of Beatrix Potter stories.

When I was a kid I loved Beatrix Potter's stories. I grew up and started reading an eclectic assortment of big people books (the last thoroughly gripping read I had was *A Dangerous Place* by Mark Reisner.....if you eat food, drink water, or live in a house in California you should definitely read this one. *Cadillac Desert*, also by Mr. Reisner was another of my favorite reading experiences) but I never lost my affection for the Victorian world of England's Lake Country where cats wear dresses and geese have bonnets and errant bunny boys are reprimanded by stern bunny mothers when they lose their mittens.

I love Beatrix Potter but I made it clear to Magdalena that we only had time to finish ONE of the tales before I passed out. Lena chose *The Tale Of Johnny Town Mouse*. As Lena pointed out upon finishing the tale it

wasn't really so very much about a town mouse, but concentrated more on the trials and travails of Timmy Willy, the country mouse. Seeing the illustrations Beatrix Potter made for the story reminded me what a country mouse she really was. If you take off their dresses and pants the animals Beatrix drew are rendered lifelike in a way that only deep and constant observation can teach.

Beatrix Potter's powers of observation don't fail her when it comes to drawing plants, either. Unlike modern illustrators of children's books whose computer-assisted pictures only give a vague iconic representation of botanically impossible plants when you look at a Beatrix Potter picture of a garden you can distinguish the cabbages from the peas and the snap dragons from the sweet peas. If the pictures were only a little bit larger I get the feeling I could even identify the plants she drew down to the varietal level.

But *The Tale Of Johnny Town Mouse* caught my attention not so much for the pictures as for the story. Basically the story is a retelling of the town mouse/country mouse theme. For me the fun was to see how the country mouse made it all the way to town. Timmy Willy, the country mouse, lived on a farm and one day he went to sleep in a wicker hamper of vegetables he was raiding after eating a lunch of fresh peas. The little farm that shared its harvest with Timmy Willy had a regular delivery schedule with a house in town and would drop off a hamper of freshly picked vegetables once a week, just like we do with you.

Now obviously, we are all going to be horrified if a country mouse crawls into your box for a ride to the bright lights of your

home town, but let me assure you our program is more modern than any truck farm in Victorian England employed. We use waxed cardboard boxes to convey your share of the harvest to you and they are only folded open at the very moment they are to be filled and whisked onto the truck. For recycling purposes it's a shame we can't use wicker but baskets are just too expensive in the 21st century. But that does remind me to remind you to please, please, please, please, please be careful opening and folding the veggie boxes so that we can use the cartons again. We spend over \$20,000 dollars per year on cardboard boxes and it's over a dollar lost every time someone trashes a box.

In *The Tale Of Johnny Town Mouse* the city rodent hitches a ride out to the country by hopping into the empty wicker basket that's being returned to the farm. Now obviously, you all are going to fold your boxes up when you've removed the bag of veggies so that the pick-up site hosts who are so generous with their homes are not inconvenienced, but also because we don't want to provide a attractive vehicle for a city rodent to take a free ride out to the country. If *The Tale Of Johnny Town Mouse* teaches us anything it's that a lot of what we take as normal is just circumstantial. It's not that the countryside wouldn't welcome a city rodent—quite the opposite. The hawks, owls, foxes, coyotes, badgers, skunks, weasels, and snakes that live off of luckless country mice would only be too happy to snack on a disoriented urban contemporary rat, and we wouldn't want that on our karma, would we?

No, we don't.

In Beatrix Potter's retelling of the country mouse/city mouse story the reason that the city mouse, Johnny, decides to visit Timmy

Willy out in the boondocks is simple hunger. The family that has been receiving a weekly wicker hamper of vegetables has retired for a short vacation to the seashore. Beatrix Potter does not tell us about any policy the farm had as regards the vegetables that were ripening back on the farm, we only know that with the family absent on vacation Johnny Town Mouse had no jam pots to pilfer in the kitchen so he went to the country where food was plentiful. If you don't have a friend who can pick up your harvest box when you're gone please tell us when you plan to be absent so that we can donate your share to the women's shelter or to the food bank.

With all this talk of mice and rats I've almost forgotten to introduce this first box to you. The weird black root in your bag of roots is a black Spanish radish, one of the most antique vegetables still being grown today. If you think of the black Spanish radish as just another type of turnip you'll do fine with it. The red turnips are heirloom Italian turnips and the white ones are a modern Japanese variety. I like to roast turnips.

The big lettuce thing that isn't lettuce is escarole, also called Batavian lettuce. I've been enjoying these just washed, sprinkled with a little salt, then dressed in olive oil with a squeeze of Meyer lemons. Yes, those are Meyer lemons in your box, too.

The spiky leaved green is dandelion, not the sidewalk dandy but a civilized cousin. I like dandys sauteed with garlic and tumbled in pasta. The rest of the box is pretty self explanatory but never forget our online photo library of veggie pix and recipes if you're puzzled. We want to be known as the c.s.a. program that provides lots of support to our subscribers. We're grateful for all the

support you all have given us. Thank you and welcome to harvest 2005.

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Recipes Julia:

Escarole: it's a chicory, and it's very mild, it doesn't have the edge that radicchio has. We make salads out of it at our house, my friend Michelle R. loves to make a wilted salad out of it, and it's plenty sturdy enough to cook up like any cooking green, it cooks down quickly.

Wilted Escarole

3 T olive oil
2 medium escarole - rinsed, dried and chopped
1/2 cup lemon juice
chopped zest from one lemon
2 tablespoons capers, roughly/barely chopped
10 dark, pitted olives, kalamata are good here
ground black pepper to taste

Heat oil in a large frying pan over high heat. Add escarole; cook and stir until greens begin to wilt. Stir in lemon juice & zest. Add capers, S & P, and olives; cook and stir for another 15-30 seconds.

8 Escarole Recipes:

<http://www.mariquita.com/recipes/escarole.html>

Dandelion:

This is a classic spring green, often made into salads but like escarole, fine to cook up as a cooking green. If your family/eating crew is afraid of dandy's bold flavor on its own in a salad, you can mix dandelion

pieces in the lettuce and or escarole salad.

The following is a classic recipe I've heard chefs discuss when folks at the farmers market ask what to do with dandelion. I prefer eating them in a simpler salad, but since this has been quoted as classic I feel a responsibility to put it in this newsletter!

Warm Dandelion Greens Salad

3/4 pound dandelion leaves
2 Tablespoons olive oil
1 Tablespoon red wine vinegar
1/2 teaspoon salt
freshly ground pepper to taste
4 ounces smoked bacon
1 slice French or Italian bread, cubed
2 Tablespoons red wine vinegar
1 hard boiled egg, crumbled

1. Wash the greens and tear into small pieces. Put into a warmed salad bowl with the oil and vinegar. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Toss lightly.
2. Fry bacon until half cooked. Add bread cubes and fry until cubes are golden and the bacon is completely cooked. Tip contents of the pan (fat and all if you want to be completely French about it) onto the greens. Toss quickly.
3. Put the vinegar into the pan and heat rapidly. When it is bubbling fiercely, pour onto the greens and toss. Serve immediately with a sprinkling of the crumbled egg on top. Serves two.

A couple more dandelion recipes:
<http://www.mariquita.com/recipes/dandelion>

.html

Black Spanish Radish & The Turnips: These humble roots are great both raw and cooked. I often grate them up and dress them up as our Nightly Salad when I don't have lettuce available, or even when I do. The same grated roots can be added to all kinds of soups and stews and unsuspecting family members don't even know they are getting their vegetables.

Sweet Sour Black Radish Salad

This is a recipe that was inspired by Elizabeth Schneider in her book *Vegetables from Amaranth to Zucchini*

2 T olive oil or butter, divided use
2 small/medium black spanish radishes, cut into 1/4 inch dice
2 leeks, trimmed and thinly sliced
1/4 cup rice wine or white wine vinegar
1/4 cup water
about 2 teaspoons honey

Cook in 1 T of oil or butter over medium heat the leeks and radishes for about 3 minutes, until softened and beginning to brown. Add vinegar and water and cook, stirring often, until radishes are soft but still a little firm, about 5 more minutes. Add honey to taste. Season with salt and pepper.

A few more black spanish radish recipes:
<http://www.mariquita.com/recipes/black%20spanish%20radish.htm>

More turnip recipes:
<http://www.mariquita.com/recipes/turnips.html>

Chard: a favorite green in our house, but this week you'll be getting gold chard or red chard, the leaves will be green but the ribs will be gold or red.

One of my favorite chard preparations, I leave out the mushrooms when I don't have them on hand:

CHARD IN DIJON MUSTARD SAUCE

2 1/2 tbsp. olive oil
1 lg. bunch green onions, chopped
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1/2 lb. mushrooms, sliced
1 bunch chard, finely shredded, including stems
1 tbsp. Dijon mustard

Heat the oil in a large skillet. Sauté the green onions and garlic for 2 minutes until softened and tender. Add mushrooms and cook 4 to 5 minutes more. Add chard, cover and cook over low heat for about 5 minutes, or until chard is tender but still crisp. Mix in mustard and heat 1 to 2 minutes more. Stir and serve immediately.

More Recipes from a Kitchen Garden,
Shepard & Raboff

more chard recipes:

<http://www.mariquita.com/recipes/chard.html>

Butternut Squash: this is a winter squash. The easy answer is bake and eat, with or without the butter and maple syrup that many East Coasters seem to enjoy on their winter squash. This type of winter squash is smooth, so it's a good candidate to peel, cut in half, remove seeds, and chop into large pieces or into slices for recipes that want to start with raw winter squash and cook up after it's all peeled and seeded. If you take the baking route, cut in half (skin and all), remove seeds, then bake in a medium oven 30-45 minutes. You can use the cooked flesh to make a puree, then put that puree in

pancakes, waffles, soups, cookies, etc.

<http://www.mariquita.com/recipes/winter%20squash.html>

Two Small Farms/Mariquita Farm recipe database:

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