

In your box this week:

Salad
Strawberries
Scallions
New Potatoes
Fava Beans
Orach

****FAVA BEAN
U-PIC-NIC**

This weekend in
Hollister, Sat
May 8th, 1pm-
6pm. Directions
and more info

It's time to Renew for those of you on the 9 week payment schedule, see the plain text email newsletter for more details.

Initial Veggie Notes from Julia

Storage: Everything in your box this week should be stored in the fridge. It will all keep better if kept colder. Yes, even the potatoes, they are NEW potatoes and should be treated differently than the fresh ones. Andy wrote:

True new potatoes are a rare treat. A new potato is not a small potato but a fresh potato harvested from a green, growing potato plant. A somewhat scuffed, frayed appearance to the new potato skin is a frequent consequence of harvesting such tender spuds and is unavoidable because the skin has not yet hardened. If left to mature new potatoes would get a little bigger and the skins would get tougher making for typical potatoes that are easier to harvest and ship. Unfortunately for the potato connoisseur the potato, once cured, always loses some of its tenderness and moisture. New potatoes wilt and must be treated like green vegetables and stored in a bag in the fridge. When I get them I never store them at all but eat them promptly. I like to steam them briefly and then roll the hot little potatoes in a little butter with a pinch of salt, a twist of pepper and voila! Do potatoes get any better? A friend from Idaho said when she was a girl they would eat new potatoes raw. I've tried it - the experience is not unlike jicama.

To eat within 1-3 days: berries, potatoes, orach

What I would (and likely will) do with this week's box: I will treat the new potatoes just like Andy said, they are divine that way. You can use a flavorful oil if you're not doing butter. I will repeat my delicious fava/couscous salad of last week, because I love it. If you still have green garlic in the fridge, you can make a dressing, recipe below. I like to cook the orach, it will hold up in the fridge for 2-4 days, but like most fresh greens eat it sooner rather than later. You can also make a simple salad with it.

More recipes are below....

Cinco de Mayo

The heat wave that scorched the last week of April prompted my crop of chervil to bolt prematurely. Now the rows of chervil are all popped out with little, lacy, umbrella shaped white flowers bobbing on slender stems. I felt cross at losing the planting but then I recalled the taste of fire water, the Emperor Maximilian, and Pedro Bravo, and that made me smile.

Chervil is a small, frilly, aromatic herb related to parsley and cilantro. The filigree leaves have a delicate anise scent to them and are a popular garnish in French cuisine. I first encountered the plant as a field worker on a biodynamic garden that supplied Berkeley's famous Chez Panisse restaurant back in the late seventies. And I remember the first time we harvested the herb on my own farm.

I was squatting in the chervil patch with Pedro Bravo, an employee, showing him how I wanted the herb bunched. Pedro's nose wrinkled as we cut the first handfuls. What is this? he wanted to know. It smells like anise.

It turned out that Pedro had more than a passing acquaintance with anise - real anise - having grown up on a little farm in the Puebla highlands of southern Mexico where his father raised aniseed as a flavoring agent for aguardiente distillers. Aguardiente is a potent Latin-American liquor typically made from cane sugar and infused with various herbs according to tastes of the region. The name comes from agua, for water, and ardiente, for burning. Firewater. Pernod and Pastis are two similar European spirits strongly flavored by anise, both descended from the now-outlawed absinthe. French soldiers fighting to relieve Algerians from the burden of running Algeria back in the 1840's knocked back gallons of absinthe as a gallic prophylactic against the fevers they

encountered in torrid climes.

I say Pedro's father cultivated real anise because here in the states we often confound anise with fennel. Both plants are in the Umbelliferae, along with chervil, and all three share the common trait of possessing an aromatic oil, anethol, that lend them that unique liquorice fragrance. Pedro's lack of familiarity with chervil was not surprising as French culture hasn't made much of an impact on rural Pueblan village life. Not that the French didn't try.

In the 1860's while the gringos were distracted with their own fratricidal war between blue and gray the French invaded Mexico and eventually installed the faux emperor Maximilian. I imagine French troops guzzled absinthe to fight off tropical Mexican fevers as they had earlier in Africa. Despite Maximilian's gallant efforts to Frenchify Mexico when the Mexicans got their chance they shot him. Pinche gabacho. Maximilian should have known it was coming. On the fifth of May, 1862, cinco de Mayo, a couple of years before Maximilian came to the land of the eagle, the cactus and the rattlesnake to crown himself Emperor, a ragtag Mexican army defeated French troops near Puebla. Pedro's great, great grandfather might have been there. No wonder Pedro didn't grow up eating chervil. It is interesting to speculate that the aniseed flavor to a local aguardiente might be the only aftertaste left of French imperialism in Puebla..

What do they do with this stuff? Pedro asked me as we finished our task.

Oh, think of it as the French version of cilantro, I replied.

You mean they put it on their tacos? he asked incredulously.

Yeah, something like that.

The Ladybug Letter

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Photo Links are in the plain text email letter. -----

Recipes

FAVA BEANS:

From Bruce at Bix restaurant in SF:

The easiest way to prepare favas is to grill them. The heat of the coals will pop the pods open and split the hulls that wrap each bean. Remove the beans with your fingers and they're ready. If there's a bit of char on your fingers from plucking out the beans from the grilled pods, it only helps the flavor.

(Julia's note, this is the easiest method if you already have the grill going. If not, try the recipe below.)

Our Favorite Fava Beans

from Julia and Andy

2 pound favas, taken out of the pods

1-4 cloves of garlic, chopped AND/OR: 1/2 cup onions,

chopped

olive oil

S & P

The simplest version: sauté the favas with the garlic in the heated oil. the shells will come off in the pan, they are a lighter green, and the whole thing can be eaten like that. (Season with S & P)

Fava Bean/Couscous Salad

1 cup raw couscous (Trader Joe's has whole wheat...) Cooked according to package instructions. (This is easy! Bring one cup water with a bit of butter or oil and a pinch of salt to a boil. Turn off heat and stir in 1 cup raw couscous and stir up well. Put a lid on and set the timer for 5 minutes. Fluff couscous and you're ready to go.)

1 small bowl or more shelled, blanched favas (the bright green ones)

3 green onions, chopped

large handful orach leaves, thinly sliced

Green Garlic Dressing

mix all ingredients above, making sure you don't put in too much dressing. Eat!

Green Garlic Dressing

2-3 stalks roughly chopped green garlic, tough end leaves discarded

1/3 cup rice vinegar

1 Tablespoon honey

1/3 cup olive oil

S & P

Whirl all in a blender. Can be used as a salad dressing or marinade.

Fresh Fava Bean Salata (Julia's note, this is a great recipe, I make something very close to this without the exact amounts, but it's a bit time intensive. Eat the favas raw at the table or make the recipe above if you're short on time this week.)

3 lbs. fresh fava beans in their pods

6 green onions, trimmed, with 2 inches of green left

3 oz EV olive oil

2 T. finely chopped fresh dill or oregano

salt and pepper to taste

juice of 1 lemon

2 fl. oz strained yogurt cheese (this is made by taking whole milk yogurt and straining it for several hours/overnight in cheesecloth).

Remove favas from pods. Blanch beans, then remove their skins. Coarsely chop onions, then set aside a couple of tablespoons for garnish (if using green garlic, find a scallion for the garnish...).

Heat 2 T. olive oil in a large heavy frying pan over low heat and saute the spring onions for 5 mins or until soft. Add the beans, cover, and cook for 5 mins more, shaking the frying pan occasionally.

Whirl this sauteed mixture in a food processor with the fresh herb, S & P. While it's running, add the lemon juice and yogurt cheese, and half the remaining

olive oil.

Spread on a platter and sprinkle with the reserved spring onions and the remaining olive oil and lemon juice. Garnish with dill sprigs and olives and serve at room temp.

More fava recipes:

Orach Info and recipes (the shortcut, use it just like spinach, it is spinach. Enjoy cooked or raw.)