

Two Small Farms Newsletter

Issue Number 294 - Sept. 15th, 2004

In your box this week: Colored Sweet Peppers, Tomatoes, Carrots, Beets, Green Onions, a Fruit, & a Mystery*

* What's a Mystery?? This is when Steve and Andy aren't sure which crop will truly be ready, but Katie and I are bugging them for the list... And some crops don't lend themselves to everyone being able to have it all the same week: like summer squash and cherry tomatoes for instance. -Julia

CSA News & Events

Tomato Upick this Thursday, Sept. 16th, 10am-3pm. [More Info Here](#)

Also available:

****15# flats of early girls for \$15.00****

Call or email Katie to make an order...
csa@twosmallfarms.com or 831-786-0625

What I'll Do With This Week's Box

By Elsa Chen

Greetings from the Santa Cruz Mountains! I hope it's cool enough to turn on the stove or oven this week! It was lots of salad and take-out last week.

My husband and 3 1/2-year-old son enjoy carrot sticks as a before-dinner snack. If I have lots of carrots and time, I make carrot cake. I've attached a recipe that I got from Epicurious.com and tweaked a bit. My 1 1/2 year-old son loves fruit and is always excited to have fresh strawberries or apple slices. The strawberries are also yummy in smoothies with bananas, yogurt, and a little orange juice.

I'll probably char the bell peppers over the grill (the stovetop or broiler work well, too), put them in a paper bag for a few minutes, then peel and slice them and marinate with olive oil and minced garlic. If I get squash

I'll slice it thin, brush it with olive oil, grill quickly, and marinate and serve it along with the peppers. Grilled eggplant is delicious, too, but I really love "eggplant caviar." Cut a few slits in the whole eggplants. Broil or grill the eggplants for about 45-55 minutes (less, if they're small) until they're black on the outside and a little shriveled. When they're cool enough to handle, scoop out the flesh, and mix it in a bowl with some olive oil, garlic, lemon juice, salt, and cumin to taste. This is great on pita chips, crackers, or slices of toasted baguette.

Here are a couple of tasty and quick Chinese dishes to make with tomatoes:

Although most folks don't eat eggs for dinner, a tomato-egg scramble is tasty and easy on a weeknight. Start a pot of white rice, and before the rice is ready, this dish will be done! Lightly beat some eggs (as many as you like) in a bowl. Add salt and white pepper to taste, along with a little sugar (about 1 teaspoon for 3 eggs). Saute some diced, seeded fresh tomatoes (about the same amount as the eggs) in some oil for just a couple of minutes, then set aside. In the same pan, add a little more oil, and lightly scramble the eggs. When they're just beginning to set, add the tomato mixture back in, toss in a handful of chopped green onions, mix, and serve over hot white rice. If you like, you can add some cubed tofu in with the tomatoes, too. Garlic, basil or cilantro also nice additions! if you have some handy.

A variation on this dish is tomato-egg flower soup. Peel, seed, and dice a few tomatoes (4-6, depending on the size). In a little oil, stir fry the tomatoes for about 5 minutes with a few stalks of chopped green onion. Add 3-4 cups of chicken stock (I use the stuff in a box from Trader Joe's. Vegetable stock would probably be fine, too.) Bring to a boil, then simmer for about 20 minutes. Lightly beat 2-3 eggs in a bowl, then add the eggs to the soup in a thin stream, stirring gently. Here again you can add some cubed tofu if you like. Season to taste with salt and white pepper.

Chinese scallion pancakes are also a yummy

and not-too-difficult way to use green onions (recipe attached). Kids might like them, too!

Confession time: I'm not a big fan of beets, so I usually leave them in the "trade-in box"! But there's one way my family will eat them, and that's if I make beet chips. Peel the beets and slice them paper-thin with a mandoline, then fry in peanut or canola oil at 350 degrees until they crisp up, drain on paper towels, and enjoy!

from Julia: notes on this week's box: All peppers this week are sweet peppers, there shouldn't be any spicy peppers in your box. Don't forget to eat your beet greens within a day or two, they are tasty and full of antioxidants, but they do wilt fast in the vegetable crisper.

Home Is Where the Cover Crop Is

by Jeanne Byrne

Our daughter Lydia is seven years old. Her friend Jake is almost six. Whenever these two get together, they nest. They build sea turtle nests in the sandbox with golf ball eggs. They become eagles in the redwood tree stumps at the Forest of Nicene Marks. They make mud nests and stick nests and sand and seaweed nests. But last week they outdid themselves. They spent about 3 hours in our four-foot high cover crop field, creating a supernest with many rooms, pathways and tunnels. There was a "cooler room" to store the strawberries that they picked, bedrooms, a nursery for their babies, and several different escape routes in case predators should happen by.

The medium for their creation was Sudan grass, and it covers the field that will become our strawberry patch next year. Last year we did a trial of several different cover crops prior to planting this year's berries. On one section we incorporated broccoli residue from a broccoli crop after harvest. On another we planted broccoli close together and didn't harvest it, but worked

the whole crop back into the ground. A third patch had a mustard cover crop. But the fourth patch, the one where we worked a Sudan grass cover crop into the soil, distinguished itself with bigger, stronger, healthier strawberry plants that were more productive for most of the season. (UC Cooperative Extension agents Richard Smith and Mark Bolda helped design the study and followed up with soil tests. Marisha Banister weighed and compared strawberry yields for us.) The Sudan grass probably works so well because it has high carbon content, resulting in a slow-release of nitrogen into the soil throughout the long berry-harvesting season (it takes the little critters a long time to break down the biomass).

I guess we all benefit from the cover crops. Steve judges them by the fertility they add to our soil. Lydia and Jake are mainly looking for height and nestability. I enjoy seeing little heads popping up out of the tall grass. And I even feel a sense of adventure exploring pathways and secret rooms late at night with my flashlight to rescue teddy bears left in the nursery, so that my daughter can sleep.

Recipes from Elsa and Julia

Here are the two recipes Elsa refers to in her what I'll do with the box this week rave:

Chinese Scallion Pancakes

Ingredients:

2 1/2 cups flour, plus more for flouring the rolling surface

1 cup water

2 teaspoons oil

A bunch of green onions, green and white parts, chopped medium-fine

A few tablespoons of oil to brush on pancakes (a mix of canola or corn oil and

sesame oil is good) some salt A few tablespoons sesame seeds (optional)

Directions:

Mix together the first three ingredients by hand or in a food processor. Flour a surface and knead the dough. Let it rest for 20-30 minutes before continuing.

With a rolling pin, roll the dough out on a well-floured surface into a big, flat square or rectangle 1/8 to 1/4 inch thick.

Brush the pancake with a bit of oil, and sprinkle with spring onion pieces and a little salt. Starting at one short end, roll up the dough tightly, jelly-roll style, so you have a "snake."

Cut the "snake" crosswise into 8 - 10 pieces. Then flatten each piece again gently with your palm and rolling pin to make a little rectangle. Don't flatten it too firmly, because you want a little air to remain trapped between the layers of the pancakes so they'll puff up a bit between the layers and be lighter.

Press one or both sides in sesame seeds (optional).

Heat a tablespoon or two of oil in a large skillet. Shallow fry the pancakes until both sides are golden brown and crispy. Drain on paper towels.

Serve plain or with dipping sauce. An easy sauce can be made by mixing soy sauce with a little minced garlic, scallion, and rice vinegar.

MOTHER BERTA'S CARROT CAKE
(With some modifications in parentheses)

3 medium-sized carrots, peeled (I use more like 5-6 carrots!)

2 cups all-purpose flour

2 cups sugar (1 1/2 cups seems to be enough, and I'm not the type that usually cuts the sugar!)

2 teaspoons baking soda

2 teaspoons cinnamon

1 cup corn oil (I use 1/2 c oil and 1/2 c unsweetened applesauce)

3 eggs, lightly beaten

2 teaspoons vanilla

1 cup chopped walnuts
(I add 1 cup raisins with the nuts)

1 cup shredded coconut (sweetened variety)

3/4 cup canned crushed pineapple, drained

Cream Cheese Frosting: (It's very good without the frosting, too)

4 ounces cream cheese, softened

3 tablespoons butter, softened

1 1/2 cups confectioners' sugar, sifted

1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract

1 tablespoon lemon juice (I leave this out, if I'm making frosting at all)

1. Cut 2 (to 4) carrots into 1-inch dice; place in a saucepan, cover with water and simmer until tender, about 10 minutes. Drain and puree in a food processor or blender. Set aside.
2. Grate the remaining carrot(s); reserve.
3. Preheat the oven to 350 F. Grease a 9x13-inch baking pan. Line the bottom with waxed paper and grease the paper.
4. Sift the flour, sugar, baking soda and cinnamon into a large bowl. Add the oil, eggs and vanilla; beat well. Fold in the carrot puree, grated carrot, walnuts, coconut and pineapple.
5. Pour the batter into the prepared pan. Bake until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean, about (45 minutes to) 1 hour.
6. Cool the cake in the pan for 10 minutes before unmolding it onto a rack, then let the cake cool completely.
7. Prepare the frosting: Mix the cream cheese and butter together in a bowl. Slowly add the confectioners' sugar. Stir in the vanilla and lemon juice. Frost the cake.

Makes 12 servings.

adapted from PARADE magazine, August

2002

For tomato canning people, I've added 3 recipes at the bottom of my tomato recipe page: one each for chili sauce, tomato sauce, and ketchup.

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

I admit I've not tried this recipe, but it looks interesting! Maybe served with crackers and cream cheese for an appetizer at a party?

TOMATO CONSERVE

18 cups tomatoes, cut in chunks
3 teaspoons ginger
6 cups sugar
3 lemons (thinly sliced)

Cook tomatoes 45 minutes. Add sugar, lemon, and ginger. Cook until thick and smooth. Pour into sterilized jars to within 1/2 inch of top. Put on cap, screw band firmly tight. Process in Boiling Water Bath 10 minutes. Yield: 8 eight oz. jars.

Simplest Tomato Salad

2 pounds ripe tomatoes
S & P to taste
3 tablespoons olive oil
1 tablespoon good wine vinegar
4 or 5 scallions, chopped
2-3 ounces feta or blue cheese, crumbled, optional

Gently mix up everything, then let sit about 20-30 minutes.

LENTIL CHILI

Adapted from "Still Life with Menu"

serves 8 NOTE: This freezes beautifully.

4 cups dried lentils any kind
6 to 7 cups water (tomato juice can be

substituted for about 2 cups water)
One 1-pound can tomatoes, or 3 to 4 large ripe fresh tomatoes (peeling optional), chopped

2 teaspoons ground cumin
1 teaspoon paprika
1 teaspoon dried thyme (or about 1 tablespoon minced fresh thyme)
1 1/2 tablespoons minced garlic
2 cups chopped onion
1 1/2 to 2 teaspoons salt
6 tablespoons tomato paste
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar or cider vinegar

Freshly ground black pepper to taste
Crushed red pepper to taste

Optional Toppings:

Thin slices of sharp cheddar

Sour cream

Salsa

A handful of toasted cashews

Minced fresh parsley and/or cilantro

1. Place lentils and 6 cups of water in a large soup pot or Dutch oven. Bring to a boil, partially cover, and lower the heat to a simmer. Leave it this way for about 30 minutes, checking it every now and then to be sure it isn't cooking any faster than a gentle simmer. (You can chop the vegetables during this time.)

2. Add tomatoes, cumin, paprika, thyme, garlic, and onions. Stir, mostly cover again, and let it cook for another 30 minutes or so. Check the water level as it cooks, and add water or tomato juice in 1/4-cup increments as needed, to prevent dryness. Stir from the bottom every several minutes during the cooking.

3. Add salt and tomato paste. Stir and continue to simmer slowly, partially covered, until the tomato paste is all blended in... about 10 minutes.

4. Stir in the vinegar, black pepper, and crushed red pepper, adjusting the

seasonings to taste. Serve hot, with some or all of the optional toppings.

Simple summer beet soup

Boil and peel beets. (can use both kinds). Whirl in food processor with orange or lemon juice, small amount of fresh mint leaves if you have some, and black pepper. Chill. Serve with plain yogurt or sourcream.

Beet Bundt Cake

1 cup butter, softened and divided
1 1/2 cups packed dark brown sugar
3 eggs
4 squares (1 oz. each) semisweet chocolate
2 cups pureed cooked beets
1 tsp vanilla
2 cups all purpose flour
2 tsp baking soda
1/4 tsp salt
confectioners sugar

Cream 3/4 cup butter and brown sugar, add eggs, mix well. Melt chocolate with remaining butter, stir until smooth. Cool slightly, then blend chocolate mixture, beets and vanilla into the creamed mixture. It will appear separated. Combine dry ingredients, add to creamed mixture and mix well. Pour into a greased and floured 10 inch fluted tube pan. Bake at 375 for 45-55 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool in pan 10 minutes before removing to a wire rack. Cool completely, and dust with confectioner's sugar before serving.

Yield: 16-20 servings

Roasted Beets

Roasted beets bleed very little when cut, so they can also be used in recipes. Just remember that the dish will take on a sweet and very distinct roasted flavor.

1 bunch of beets (about 2 pounds), greens removed and reserved for another use, leaving a 1-inch beet top; beets washed thoroughly 1 tablespoon olive oil (if roasting without foil)

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Wrap beets in foil or brush with olive oil and place in small roasting pan. Roast until beets can easily be pierced with thin knife or trussing needle, about 1 hour for small to medium beets. Cool slightly and remove skins; serve.

Carrot and Beet Salad with Ginger Dressing

1/4 cup minced shallot
2 tablespoons minced peeled fresh ginger
1 garlic clove, minced
1/4 cup rice vinegar
1 tablespoon soy sauce
1/2 teaspoon Asian (toasted) sesame oil
Tabasco to taste
1/2 cup olive oil
4 cups finely shredded carrots
4 cups finely shredded peeled raw beets
spinach leaves, washed thoroughly,

In a blender purée shallot, ginger, and garlic with rice vinegar, soy sauce, sesame oil, and Tabasco. With motor running add olive oil in a stream and blend until smooth.

In separate bowls toss carrots with half of the dressing and beets with remaining half. Divide carrot salad and beet salad among 6 plates and garnish with spinach leaves.

Serves 6. Gourmet April 1994

[Two Small Farms](#)

[831.786.0625](tel:831.786.0625)

<http://www.twosmallfarms.com>

[PO Box 2065](#)

[Watsonville, CA 95077-2065](#)