



LOON ORGANICS

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July 8, 2008

This Week's Box:

Spring Mix – Contains 3 varieties of baby lettuce along with chervil (an anise-flavored herb that looks like parsley).

Rainbow Swiss Chard- Now at its peak of beauty and quality!

Broccoli- From Gardens of Eagan.

Fresh baby onions- Can be used like scallions or cook the bulb like regular onions. They are sweet Walla Walla onions

Sugar snap/Snow peas- The sugar snaps are fatter: snap off top and pull string off side. Snow peas are flat and only need to have top snapped off.

Summer Squash/Zucchini-

A variety of zucchini, yellow summer squash, and zephyr summer squash (green + yellow).

Cucumber- From Gardens of Eagan.

Red Dragon Carrots- A reddish purple carrot on the outside. These are ok for eating, and great for cooking.

Baby Beets- beets and tops are edible. Use greens like swiss chard or spinach.

Basil- In your pea bag—check out storage tips on pg. 2

Cilantro and Parsley- Both bunched together. Cilantro is one with roots attached—roots are often used in Asian and Ayurvedic cooking and considered to be medicinal.

We can never predict, but here's new produce we might have next week: green beans

Week 4: Gourmet Weeds and Other Laughable Things

Hope you all had a nice long holiday weekend. We did our typical market harvest on the 4th for our Saturday farmers market, and sold out of much of what we brought to the following market. Much of our other time, when not harvesting and going to market, has been devoted to managing the weed populations in our garden. Normally in April and May we can get a couple flushes of weeds out of the fields before we have to start planting everything. What this means is that usually spring rains combined with a week or two of warmer days will germinate the first of the weed seeds and we can go through with a field cultivator on our tractor that lifts, spreads and aerates the soil, as well as pulling small weeds up by the roots. We like to be able to do a couple weed flushes before planting, but the cold and wet conditions this year delayed the weed germination (and our early crops, if you remember) so we weren't able to do even an initial flush on parts of our fields. The weeds eventually came and we've been pulling, yanking, hoeing, and cultivating ever since. The most important weed management rule in farming, esp. organic farming, is don't let the weeds go to seed. Never let it flower and disperse its thousands of seeds across the farm. It happens, but we try to prevent it. One interesting thing about weeds is that many of them are edible and nutritious Purslane, lambsquarter, pigweed are just a few of our very common edible weeds. In some foodie circles, these weeds are the "hot" new gourmet item, but don't worry we don't have plans to put them in your box. Occasionally we toss in a few purslane leaves in the salad mix—they have a succulent, lemony flavor. Nice to munch on in the field on a hot day.

A weed is basically any unwanted plant, and this year we grappled with many tomato weeds in one of our salad mix plantings. We planted a bed of salad mix on the same field section that we had our cherry tomatoes last year. Many of the cherry tomatoes that were overripe or cracked fell off the vine and all the tiny little seeds hung out in the soil all winter long. Then they all germinated right around June 5 when soil temps reached a pleasant 70°. The tomatoes grew like gangbusters and overtook our salad mix planting. We were able to hand weed half of it, with the help of 5 more sets of hands, but it made a lasting impression on us to never ever do that again. Lessons in farming are usually very visible, time-consuming, and while we are spending the time ameliorating our mistakes, the lesson is cemented into our brains. Another example: Last Tuesday, on my way to pick up produce from Gardens of Eagan for the CSA box, I drove our van through a notorious muddy crossing, the likes of which has stuck many a farm vehicle and tractor. I thought I had made it until the back wheels sunk way down, and my stomach along with it. My walk of shame across the farm to get someone to pull me out insured that on each future trip I will take the long way and avoid the muck like everyone else on the farm. It actually only took about 15 minutes to get me out and by the next day we were chuckling. Our life would be a lot less funny without all these mistakes!

What Laura would do with your box:

First off, everything you are receiving should still be refrigerated **except for basil**. Basil, like tomatoes and eggplant, is sensitive to cold temperatures, and the shelf-life of basil will be increased dramatically if you keep it on your counter in a bag. Before you put everything else in the fridge though, a CSA member tells me that it is easier for her to use her greens if she cooks them right away when she gets her box and then is able to use the greens in meals throughout the week, or in the least, she will wash and chop cooking greens so that they are prepped for the next meal (like the chard gratin recipe to the right). Sounds like a great idea that would literally take 5-10 minutes of your time.

I'm imagining that it isn't difficult to find something to do with your carrots, peas, broccoli or zucchini. I prefer to eat them all together lightly steamed, sautéed, or grilled. Eat with a cilantro/basil pesto, and serve with pasta or toasted bread or your preferred protein source—animal or vegetable. With your cucumbers, slice them with fresh onions chopped up like scallions and dressed with olive oil, cider vinegar, salt and pepper. Feta and olives are a great addition too—and salad can be either consumed right away or chilled for later meals too. Beet chocolate cake for dessert?

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Recipe corner

We have found over the past couple years of operating our own CSA that cooking greens, Swiss Chard, Kales, Beet Greens, etc. are the most difficult item for members to want to eat regularly. They grow SO well in our climate that they can become nearly a weekly CSA staple, and yet cooking greens are essentially non-existent or grossly overcooked in typical Middle American cuisine (except maybe there are some cooking greens in that oh-so-famous lime green jello mold?). I guess that tells you how much our “traditional” fare has strayed from what actually grows well in our climate. At any rate, kales, collards, and broccoli are in the *Brassica* family of vegetables, and they have potent cancer-fighting properties. As in eating 3 servings per week (1 serving was 1 cup) reduced all types of cancer risk in individuals by 66% in a recent study!!! Swiss Chard and Beet Greens are just about as good as brassicas on the nutrition front, containing high levels of B Vitamins and folate, potassium, Vitamins A,C, and so on. I'll get down off my green soapbox soon, but just wanted to stress that it is imperative that we get our children to start eating more cooked greens along with us. Not an easy task I know, but if they eat them when they are young they will develop a taste for it and probably continue to eat it into adulthood. Try preparing greens a few different ways and see how you like it best (it helps if you serve them when everyone is REALLY hungry—you might be surprised at the taste then).

We had been thinking about using swiss chard leaves to make wraps and then steaming or baking the wraps. Finally got around to it, and the final product reminded us both of stuffed grape leaves, dare I say better?

Rainbow Chard Dolmas

1 bunch rainbow chard	2 small fresh onions or 4 scallions
1 ½ cups cooked orzo pasta (or rice)	handful of raisins
2 cloves garlic or 4 garlic scapes	½ bunch parsley
Handful of nuts (we used raw cashews)	1 egg, beaten
½ cup feta or queso fresco	2 Tablespoons olive oil

Preheat oven to 375°. De-stem chard (you can leave some stem in the leaf part). Put leaves aside, as you will stuff and roll those. Saute chopped onion/scallions, garlic, and chopped chard stems for a few minutes. Add parsley, egg, raisins, nuts, pasta/rice, and cheese and cook a few minutes longer. Salt to taste. Line baking pan with foil and brush with a light coating of olive oil. To wrap dolmas, flip swiss chard leaves so that you put the filling inside the leaf. Put in a couple heaping spoonfuls of filling, and roll the long sides of the leaf around the filling. Seal the ends by folding under the sides and place the rolls with the wrapped side down in the baking pan. We had leftover filling and ended up adding that to the pan and baking it with the dolmas as a tasty sidedish. Cover the baking dish and bake for 20-25 minutes. Chard leaves will darken almost to the color of grape leaves when they are cooked and done.

Chard Gratin

2 pounds rainbow chard (or other green)	2 Tablespoons flour
1 clove garlic	Whole nutmeg
3 Tablespoons unsalted butter	¾ cup Toasted Bread Crumbs
2 cups milk	

Preheat the oven to 375°. Wash the chard and cut off the thick ends of the stems. Parboil the chard for 1 ½ minutes in lightly salted boiling water. Drain, squeeze out water from leaves, and chop into small pieces. Peel garlic and chop fine. Melt butter over medium heat in a large, nonreactive skillet and add the chard. Turn the chard in the butter as it begins to wilt, add the garlic, and continue cooking slowly, uncovered, for 7-8 minutes, until leaves have begun to soften. Warm milk in small saucepan. Sprinkle flour over chard and stir to distribute the flour evenly. Cook for 1 minute more and slowly add milk, about ¼ cup at a time. Continue adding milk in small amounts as it is absorbed by chard until the milk is completely incorporated. Season with a light grating of nutmeg, salt, and pepper; transfer to a buttered gratin dish. The layer of chard should be about 1 inch thick. Cover evenly with breadcrumbs and bake for 35 minutes, until browned nicely. Recipe from Alice Waters' [Chez Panisse Vegetables](#)

Enjoy! Your farmers, Laura and Adam