



LOON ORGANICS

www.loonorganics.com

August 23, 2008

This Week's Box:

Sweet Corn- One of the best varieties yet!

Greentop Beets- grill, roast, bake, steam, or raw!

Sweet Pepper/Jimmy

Nardello Peppers- J.N. peppers are long, skinny, reddish and very sweet. Also, another orange/yellow sweet pepper.

Yellow onions- sweet and mild variety

Cucumbers- are back. Just as we were starting to miss them.

Swiss Chard- recipe idea on pg 2

Melons- are back! Thanks to some warmer weather. Red, orange or yellow variety.

Orange Carrots- Salad?

Assorted Tomatoes- Mixed cherry and plum tomatoes in the container (plums are elongated and best for cooking), red slicer, saladettes, and heirloom included.

Assorted Herbs- oregano, thyme, parsley and sage. Perfect for a fresh pasta sauce.

Hungarian Hot Wax or

Wenks yellow hot- Yellow or orange hot peppers, smaller than sweet ones.

Garlic- This is a superb garlic for roasting.

Next week: We hope for the return of salad mix

Check out our farm blog for info and photos on your tomato varieties:

users.livejournal.com/_loonatics_

Week 10: Busy as bees

This past week brought many farm events: four days of evenings tours, corn boils and parties at the farm for various customers, friends, and policy people left the crew excited to get back to “just harvesting” the summer bounty this week. We participated in those events, and were busy cleaning up our fields so they looked nice and pretty when the tour wagons rolled by. Last Sunday, we had a tour for some of the local sustainable farmers, and we’ll do it all over again tomorrow Sunday, August 24th for many of you! Tour is from 3-5 p.m. and we’ll give you an overview of our little operation, as well as Gardens of Eagan’s surrounding fields and farm (where we rent our land). Also be giving rides and demonstrations on the electric tractor, and there are many cherry tomatoes for the young ones to pick and eat! I’ll e-mail out directions.

I didn’t imagine I would say this, but we gladly welcomed the heat of summer again this week! This really helps speed up the ripening of the tomatoes, and the turning of the sweet peppers from unripe green to ripe red, orange and yellow. We’ve had green peppers for 3 weeks now, and it takes about a month for the peppers to turn from green to red or orange. That extra month on the plant leaves another month for things to happen to the pepper: over ripening or uneven ripening, insect damage, and disease all can and do strike which inevitably decreases the yield and therefore increases the price. It’s not hard to get a nice green pepper, but the sweet colored peppers are more of a challenge. This is the main reason that the red peppers are typically at least twice as expensive in the store. The Jimmy Nardello peppers are one of our favorites, and you’ll recognize them if you’ve been a member before. They are an heirloom, heritage pepper that was brought over from Italy by the Nardello family when they emigrated to the East Coast. They saved the seeds each year and continued to grow them for hundreds of years. The son, Jimmy, died in 1980 and the seeds were given to Seed Savers Exchange in Decorah, Iowa where they propagated them and made them commercially available for farmers to buy and grow. We buy many of our heirloom varieties from Seed Savers and you can visit their farm and fields in Decorah—quite a sight we have heard. They have everything from heirloom tomatoes and peppers, to apples, garlic, and heritage poultry and cattle breeds. To read more about the saga of the Nardello family and their fabulous pepper, go read the **August 24, 2006 newsletter** on our website. J.N. is considered an “endangered taste” by Slow Food. Sweet and fruity when raw, its thin skin becomes perfectly creamy and soft when fried.

Thanks to all for diligently bringing back your boxes in pretty good condition. We’ve had a good return rate. If you’ve still got boxes sitting at home, we’ll take them! To open the boxes without ripping the flaps, there is a crease in the flap that you must squeeze to open and release the flap. Same goes for the bottom of the box—there are two flaps that must be squeezed to release them and flatten the box. Please open gently without tugging. If boxes are ripped, they won’t hold heavy items anymore and we must send them to the landfill. ☺

What Laura would do with your box:

Everything should still be refrigerated, except for the basil, eggplant, tomatoes, garlic, and onions. Basil should be kept in a loose plastic bag out of the sun on your counter or wrapped in a dish towel and kept in the fridge, if only for a couple days. Keep refrigerated things in plastic to prevent dehydration and if you aren't using your carrots/beets right away, you'll want to remove the tops so that the roots store longer.

Trim beet and carrots tops, reserving beet tops in a bag with swiss chard for a ricotta and greens tart (recipe link on the right). Cucumber buttermilk gazpacho anyone? Or maybe you prefer tomato gazpacho, watermelon gazpacho, or perhaps creamy tomato soup? Make an herb and garlic pesto to top a pizza with halved sungold cherry tomatoes, fresh sweet pepper and mozzarella cheese. Your heirlooms make fantastic tomato sandwiches and are meaty enough to hold their own with some great cheese and mayo. Our favorite tomato sandwich is the BLT, especially a BBCLT: bacon, blue cheese, lettuce and tomato OR a TBCLT: sauted tempeh, blue cheese, lettuce, tomato. Often we'll omit blue cheese and sub an avocado instead: a BALT. Try a fresh corn and hot pepper salsa with a few tomatoes thrown in. Watermelons are the top of the crop right now. Try one for breakfast.

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Recipe corner

A note about your **heirloom tomatoes**: the different shades can throw people off and they don't know when they are ripe. Ripe heirlooms should give a little to the touch, non-ripe heirlooms will still be firm. Some heirlooms will have green shoulders even when they are ripe. Most of your heirlooms should be ready to eat.

Rick Nelson, food writer at the Star Tribune writes a local food blog, "The Farm Report" that I read a lot. Rick is a regular patron at Mill City and also belongs to Burning River CSA (also at Mill City) so he consults local chefs about what to do with his box's contents. In July he talked to Lucia Watson about **Swiss Chard**: "I love Swiss chard and use it as much as possible when I can get it locally. Mainly because I get two vegetables in one: the stems, which have the texture of tender celery and with rainbow chard are so beautiful in sautés and salads, and I also have the leaves: tender but with a good chewy texture that is useful in stuffing (**add ricotta and currants and stuff under chicken breast or put into lasagna or cannelloni**) hearty stir fry or curry, or used like grape leaves with a feta, black olive and the sautéed stems of the chard stuffed inside." She includes a recipe for Swiss Chard Tart with Pine Nuts, Currants, and Lemon. <http://ww3.startribune.com/blogs/farmreport>

Another food website (there are so many good ones!) we just found is culinate.com, chock-full of recipes, articles, and interviews in the Slow Food vein. I can't read it without getting hungry. This great gazpacho recipe is theirs....

Culinate Gazpacho

2 lb ripe tomatoes	2 garlic cloves, coarsely chopped
1 med. sweet colored pepper, chopped	2 Tbsp. sherry vinegar
1 cube crustless French bread (2 inches square)	
2 tsp. sea salt	½ tsp ground cumin
1 tsp. sugar	½ cup extra-virgin olive oil

Chopped parsley leaves and pepper for garnish

Place half of the tomatoes, garlic, pepper, vinegar, bread, salt, cumin and sugar into a food processor. Blend until no large pieces remain. With the motor running, add the rest of the tomatoes, and when will processed, gradually add the oil. Beat as smooth as possible. Optional: Pass the puree through a food mill or strainer to remove all solids. Chill for several hours or overnight. Taste for salt and vinegar and adjust those flavorings if necessary. If you desire a less hearty soup, thin it with ice water. Pass parsley and chopped peppers at the table for garnish.

Oh yeah, the sweet corn. This is the Providence variety and all the veteran corn eaters on the farm (who boast that they've been eating corn longer than most of us have been alive...certainly true in our case) exclaim that this is the BEST corn they have ever tasted. The large, beautiful ears have perfect corn flavor and good sugar holding capacity, which means that the corn will still have great sweet flavor for up to 5 days. You probably will find a little worm on at least one tip of the corn—please just trim the tip of the corn and proceed preparing it. If the sight of the worms gives you the hebbie-jebbies, cut the tip off before de-husking the corn. Then you won't even have to see it. If you're buying non-organic corn elsewhere and it doesn't have worms, it is GMO. Pretty much all conventional growers now grow a GMO sweet corn that has the BT pesticide inserted into its DNA so that the worms automatically die when they eat the sweet corn, without having to spray BT (*bacillus thuringiensis*) or a much worse pesticide. We'll tackle the GMO seed issues next week, as Gardens of Eagan is engaged in its own seed breeding here (somewhat related to GMO issues). We'll just say that we are not in favor of genetically engineering our food sources and having a contract-limited license to their use. Among many of its problems, GE Seed cannot be adapted and reseeded to local conditions or disease pressures, so what good does that do us farmers who thrive on dynamic systems?

Our favorite way of late to eat the sweet corn is cutting it off the cob and sautéing in butter. But grilled in the oven with the husk on is a close second, topped with butter of course.

Hope your week is full of good food and lots of butter! —Your Farmers