



LOON ORGANICS

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What's in the box 8/31:

Red Watermelon: Ready to eat!

Best to store in refrigerator.

Sweet Corn: Bi-color (yellow and white) sweet corn. Our favorite variety: Providence. Great recipe with corn and kale on page 2.

Jimmy Nardello Sweet Italian Pepper (long, skinny reddish-green pepper. SWEET not hot).

Italian Sweet Pepper & Bell Pepper: Red, orange or yellow in color. These are SWEET.

Green Kale: Recipe page 2 for non-kale lovers.

Garlic: Will store for months

Cucumbers: A favorite salsa recipe on page 2.

Yukon Potatoes: These are the gold-standard for mashed potatoes, roasting, baking, or hashbrowns. Try making garlicky mashed potatoes and adding chopped cooked kale to them. With butter, milk, and salt, it is the ultimate comfort food.

Tomatoes: Red slicing tomatoes from our hoop house and mixed cherry tomatoes.

Cilantro: Use in the cucumber salsa recipe on page 2.

Red and Yellow Onion: Onion is tasty in everything!

Purple or Green Beans: purple beans turn green when cooked. Both are very tasty varieties of bean.

Jalapeño Pepper: green and blackish in color. Small pepper. Medium heat. Be careful when handling.

Week 11: A Few of our Favorite Things

The weather has continued to be relatively good for most crops. Our tomatoes are still below average (see last week's newsletter), but many other crops are finally the quality that we like. The last plantings of green and purple beans are just starting to come in and it looks like the nicest beans we've had yet, finally with yields that we are used to and disease free plants. The cucumbers are still producing lots—we recommend trying the cuke salsa recipe on page 2 to use up all your cukes!! We have a really nice batch of sweet corn for your box. I'm not sure we will have sweet corn beyond this week though—some of our plantings got stunted by all the rain we received earlier in the year and never matured. We are thinking about buying sweet corn from another local grower for next year as it is a crop that takes a lot of land, a lot of nutrients to grow, and we never seem to have enough corn for several weeks of boxes. We feel like we may be able to put our land to better use growing other popular crops to supplement our boxes. Either way though, we'll still make sure we have it for our CSA since it is such a summer time staple. This is our favorite variety of sweet corn in your box, so enjoy!

On our farm we grow over 50 different types of crops and plant nearly 250 crop varieties. In our winter months, we spend many hours evaluating our crop varieties and how they performed relative to our goals for yield, quality, vigor, and disease resistance. After farming for nearly 10 years in some capacity, we have a solid base of favorite varieties, but there is always room for improvement and we are continuously adding new varieties to trial and see how they stack up to our stand-bys.

One of the most exciting parts of our farming duties in the winter is getting to study all of our favorite seed catalogs for new and improved varieties. We usually pick a few promising sounding varieties to order and trial for the following season. This year we tried a new variety of cilantro from Johnny's Seeds that has been outstanding and is much slower-bolting (takes longer to send up a seed stalk) than our previous 'Santo' variety. The result, as you may have noticed in your box this season, is that we have a much more consistent and productive yields of cilantro coming in.

The sweet Italian peppers in your box (orange, yellow or red) are also new varieties for us and we have also been so pleased with them. They are absolutely delicious and ripen up much faster than the traditional sweet Bell peppers. The seeds for the orange and yellow peppers are quite expensive—nearly \$1/seed—but I think it is worth it in terms of the flavor, yield and beauty of the fruit. The orange sweet pepper is an organic seed variety called 'Oronos'. The red sweet pepper is called 'Carmen' and is a stand-by of market gardeners and farmers across the country.

One dud variety this year was a green bean called 'E-Z Pick'. It was, in fact, NOT E-Z to pick and the flavor and texture was not as good as our standard 'Provider' bean variety. We will toss out this variety next year and look for another one to try in its place in our search for more wonderful varieties to add to your table.

Produce Storage:

All produce this week should be stored in the fridge, EXCEPT for Tomatoes, onions, potatoes, and Garlic. Potatoes are cured now and should stay in their paper bag on the counter. Avoid exposing potatoes to extended light as it will turn their skin green and green potatoes are not good for you to eat. The garlic and onions are pretty dry now and should be left out of the fridge. Store everything else (cukes, beans, peppers etc) in plastic bags in the fridge, if it isn't packed in one already, to keep in moisture and prevent greens from wilting. Eat your watermelon within a week for best flavor. Everything else should last over a week if stored properly.

Preserving Tips: Make refrigerator pickles with your cucumbers. Peppers can be chopped and frozen raw for adding to soups, sauces and pizzas this winter. Beans can be steamed and frozen. Kale can also be steamed for a few minutes, chopped up and frozen for use this winter in stews, soups, omelettes etc. Cilantro also freezes well—either chop up and freeze as is to add to cooked dishes later on or make cilantro pesto and freeze.

Watermelons!

Seems to have been a good year for watermelons. We have sampled a good many of them while picking and they have all been excellent. If you happen to get a watermelon that is over-ripe (it will be very mushy) or under-ripe (won't be very sweet or have a good red color), let us know and we can give you another melon to replace it next week. Hopefully canteloupes in next week's box!

A watermelon recipe...

Cat Cora's Watermelon Cucumber Gazpacho:

<http://www.epicurious.com/recipes/food/views/Watermelon-and-Cucumber-Gazpacho-232543>

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Recipe Corner

Cucumbers are the 4th most cultivated vegetable in the world, after tomatoes, onions, and cabbage. Annual production of cucumbers is over 80 billion pounds world-wide. We are doing our part by producing close to two thousand pounds of cucumbers each season. They are a prolific crop when grown in good conditions! High in antioxidants and with anti-inflammatory properties, cucumbers are both nutritious and delicious. Both the skins and seeds of cucumbers are highly nutritious, so it is recommended to eat them. This advice to eat the skins of cukes doesn't go if you are buying conventional cucumbers trucked in to the grocery store. Often those cucumbers have wax on their skins as a preservative and you wouldn't want to consume it. In that case, it is best to peel your cukes. No wax on these babies though.

What to do with all those cucumbers? Take 5 minutes and make this delicious salsa. You will want to make a double batch—it is that good. Adding in some freshly diced tomato wouldn't be a bad addition either. ☺ Recipe passed along to us from our farmer friend, Mike Leck.

Cucumber Salsa

1 cup crumbled feta cheese 2T lemon juice
1/4t black pepper 1 1/2 C cubed cukes
1 C finely chopped red onion 1/4 C cilantro

Combine feta, lemon juice, and pepper; partially smash with a fork. Add cucumber onion and cilantro. Serve with pita bread and lemon wedges.

This corn and kale recipe was sent to me by a CSA member who said it was a great way to use up her kale and several other CSA veggies. Recipe is from the MN blog: www.kateinthekitchen.com. Looks tasty—we are going to try it tonight!

Cheesy Corn and Kale Bake

1 red, orange or yellow bell pepper, diced (or use 2 sweet Italian peppers)
1 medium leek or onion, sliced thin 2 garlic cloves, minced
1 large bunch of curly leaf kale, washed and spun dry then chopped
4 c. fresh corn kernels 2 T. unsalted butter
2 Tbsp. All Purpose flour 1 c. milk (or use soy or rice milk)
1 c. freshly grated cheddar cheese (or mix it up a bit with pepper jack)
1 Tbsp. cream cheese (or use sour cream)

Pinch of cayenne pepper Salt and black pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 375° In a deep cast iron skillet, or other oven proof skillet, sauté the leek and pepper in a bit of olive oil until soft. Add the garlic and cook, stirring, for about a minute or two. Add in the kale and stir until it's coated with the oil, then cover the pan and cook for about 5 minutes, stirring once or twice. Scrape veggies in to a bowl and set aside. In same pan, melt the butter, then add the flour and stir to make a roux. Cook, stirring, for about two minutes to cook out the raw flour taste. Slowly whisk in the milk until smooth, then cook, stirring constantly until the mixture is very thick. It may look a bit reddish brown from the pepper, but that's just fine. Mix the cheese in a little at a time until you have a nice cheese sauce, stir in the cream cheese and cooked pepper mix, and then the corn kernels. It will be very thick. Season with salt, pepper and the cayenne and spread it evenly in the pan. Place the pan, uncovered, in to the oven and bake until hot and bubbly, about 30 minutes.

This cornbread would be a great side for the corn and kale bake, a tomato soup or vegetable and/or meat kabobs Adapted from "Living" magazine

Jalapeño Cornbread

2 T. butter, melted plus more for pan 1 c. flour
3/4 c. cornmeal 1 1/2 t. baking powder
1/2 t. salt 1/2 t. ground black pepper
1 c. buttermilk or milk

1 jalapeño pepper, diced (Wear gloves when dicing)

1 egg, beaten 1/3 c. sugar

Lightly butter 8-inch square pan. Combine flour, cornmeal, baking powder, salt, and pepper. In another bowl, whisk together buttermilk, jalapeños, egg, sugar and melted butter. Add to dry ingredients and stir until just combined. Pour batter into pan, bake at 425 degrees until golden brown, about 20 minutes.