

Great Basin Basket CSA

Summer, Week 5

August 9th, 2011



Life on the Farm

We thank you for your patience with our slower first couple of weeks. Mother Nature is not always predictable but she is now helping us catch up with all our summer produce. We hope you enjoyed last week's full basket and this week's is just as full. Last week we had a last minute addition of cherry tomatoes. We hope that you enjoyed this special treat and this week we have even more for you! The lighter orange tomatoes are not unripe red cherry's they are called sun gold cherry tomatoes and have a bright, very sweet flavor.

We have added a different pickling recipe this week to give you a delicious way to use up your abundance of cucumbers. These pickles only take a few days to make but must be kept in the refrigerator. We have included a couple of grape leaves in your box which helps to keep these pickles crisp.

What's in your basket this week:

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|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Organic Carrots | Organic Corn |
| Yellow Onion | Organic Eggplant |
| Organic Cucumbers | Organic Summer Squash |
| Sweet Onion | Organic Bell Peppers |
| Organic Lemon Basil | Organic Thyme |
| Organic Cherry Tomatoes | |
| Organic Seedless Watermelon | |
| Organic Pickling Cucumbers | |
| Organic Romanian Peppers | |
| Organic Cantaloupe | |
| Organic Armenian Cucumbers | |
| Organic Grape Leaves | |

Cantaloupe

You will all be receiving a different variety of cantaloupe this week. In the mix are the famous Heart of Gold, Sarah's Choice, Ambrosia and the Olympic Gold. Unfortunately they are difficult to tell apart, even for cantaloupe growing veterans. We encourage you to come out to the farm where we have testers of all the different kinds of melons. Everyone has their favorite and you might be surprised which is yours.

Globe Eggplant

The purple globe eggplant is one of the most common types of eggplant you may recognize from the supermarket. Eggplant holds an esteemed place in many Mediterranean cuisines—caponata from Italy, ratatouille from Provence, moussaka from Greece, baba ghanouj from all over the Middle East, and many hot and cold dishes from Turkey, where eggplant is the king of vegetables. Eggplant is one vegetable for which slight undercooking will not work. It must be completely cooked through until it's meltingly soft, smooth, and creamy; only then will it be flavorful on its own, as well as receptive to the other flavors with which you'll blend.

Thyme

A delicate looking herb with a penetrating fragrance, thyme is a wonderful addition to bean, egg and vegetable dishes. Thyme has been used since ancient times for its culinary, aromatic and medicinal properties. The ancient Egyptians used it as an embalming agent to preserve their deceased pharaohs. We hope that you use it to create your own delicious traditions in your family. Add thyme to your favorite pasta sauce recipe. Fresh thyme adds a wonderful fragrance to omelets and scrambled eggs. Hearty beans such as kidney beans, pinto beans and black beans taste exceptionally good when seasoned with thyme. When poaching fish, place some sprigs of thyme on top of the fish and in the poaching liquid. Season soups and stocks by adding fresh thyme.



Solar Dill Pickles

2 lbs pickling cucumbers
4 ½ cups distilled water
¼ cup pickling salt
½ cup cider vinegar
½ tsp alum
½ tsp pickling spices
Lots of garlic
Lots of dill
Red pepper – optional
2 large grape leaves

Directions

1. Bring water, salt, vinegar and alum to a full boil. Let cool. Put dill and garlic on the bottom of the jar, then a good layer of cukes, then another layer of garlic and dill. Repeat until jar is full. Cover with brine. Put ½ tsp of pickling spices and at least 1 grape leaf on top.
2. Leave in direct sun for 4 days – turn ¼ turn each day. Don't leave jars on sand or cement. Set them on a board, chair or something made of wood.
3. Be sure to remove blossoms from cukes. Blossoms contain enzymes that can soften pickles.
4. Be sure to use the grape leaves, at least 2 large ones. They contain a chemical that inhibits cellular breakdown. Also, use lots of garlic and dill.
5. Store jars in a cool place such as a cellar, basement, or refrigerator. If not, they will soften.

Recipe courtesy of Kenneth L. Bowie

Oxacan Eggplant Spread

3 lb medium eggplants (about 3)
2 fresh poblano chiles
1 to 2 fresh habanero chiles
1/3 cup finely chopped white onion
1/3 cup chopped cilantro
1 tablespoon fresh lime juice (preferably Key lime)

Directions

1. Prepare grill to medium hot heat
2. Prick eggplants in several places with a fork.
3. Grill eggplants and chiles, covered only if using a gas grill, turning frequently with tongs, until chile skins are blistered and slightly charred and eggplants are charred all over and very soft, 5 to 6 minutes for habaneros; 10 to 12 minutes for poblanos; 18 to 20 minutes for eggplants.

4. Transfer chilies as cooked to a large bowl; cover and let stand 20 minutes. Cool eggplants to warm, about 15 minutes.
5. While eggplants cool, carefully rub off skins from chiles. Stem, seed, and devein chiles, then chop. Transfer to a large bowl.
6. Peel eggplants and drain in a colander 10 minutes. Coarsely chop and add to chiles along with onion, cilantro, lime juice, and 3/4 teaspoon salt (or to taste). Stir well.

Artichokes Braised with Garlic and Thyme

3 medium artichokes
18 fresh flat-leaf parsley sprigs
1/4 cup olive oil
8 fresh thyme sprigs
1 head of garlic, cloves separated and left unpeeled
1 cup water
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

Directions

- Working with 1 artichoke at a time, cut off top inch of artichoke and gently pull open center. Scoop out sharp leaves and fuzzy choke from center with a melon-ball cutter or a spoon. Trim bottom 1/4 inch of stem (if present), keeping stem attached, and peel stem. Put artichoke in a large bowl of cold water. Repeat with remaining artichokes.
2. Remove artichokes from water and push 3 parsley sprigs into center of each. Heat 1/4 cup olive oil in pot over moderate heat until hot but not smoking, then add artichokes, thyme sprigs, garlic, 1/4 cup water, pepper, and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Cover pot and braise artichokes, turning occasionally, until artichokes are browned in spots and bases are tender when pierced with a knife, about 35 minutes.
 3. Transfer artichokes, thyme, and garlic to a platter. Add remaining 3/4 cup water to pot and deglaze by boiling over high heat, stirring and scraping up brown bits, 1 minute. Pour pan juices (they will be dark) into a small bowl and stir in extra-virgin olive oil and remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt. Squeeze pulp from 2 of garlic cloves into juices and mash into sauce with a fork.
 4. Divide artichokes and remaining garlic cloves among 6 plates and drizzle with sauce. Garlic cloves can be peeled and spread on crusty bread.