

THE TIPI TIMES

July 22, 2010, week 11 (green EOW)

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THIS WEEK'S BOX CONTAINS:

Sweet corn, 7 ears?
Muskmelon
Eggplant, 1 or 2
Walla Walla onion
Zucchini/squash
Basil
Green bell pepper, 1
Cucumber, probably 1

One or two slicing
tomatoes OR a half pint of
cherry tomatoes

Broccoli OR
Green beans

NEXT WEEK'S BOX WILL PROBABLY CONTAIN:*

Watermelons, peppers,
tomatoes, onions & more

MENU IDEAS

Here's what farm cook
Genevieve made for lunch
on Wednesday:

- ◆ Breaded zucchini sticks
with blue cheese dip
- ◆ Marinated Asian-style
cucumber salad
- ◆ Rice, zucchini, onion
and basil stew in coconut
milk sauce
- ◆ Green beans lightly
steamed and dressed with
lemon juice, salt & butter

FROM JULY 30 THROUGH AUGUST 10, PLEASE LIMIT YOUR COMMUNICATION WITH US TO THE ESSENTIALS.

I am taking our children to visit family. That leaves Steve to run the CSA in addition to his other responsibilities. Please email me no later than noon on July 30 if you have questions, want to reschedule a box, etc. If problems arise, go ahead and call Steve. Thank you.
Beth

BACKHOE DISCOVERIES We resolved to upgrade the water system when we purchased our farm nine years ago. We are finally getting to it this year. Our goals are to increase our water output (from 12 to 50 gallons/minute) and to lay underground pipes to our greenhouses and outdoor wash station. We all look forward to a more abundant water supply in the wash station. The lack of underground water pipes to the greenhouse is a hurdle every year. During spring and summer, we lay plastic pipes on the surface of the ground. That will not work when we start the greenhouses in February because surface pipes will freeze. Instead, we fill tanks inside the greenhouses on sunny days, then use that water for the young plants. It works, but it's a hassle.

The contractor we've hired (Charlie) is laying pipes throughout our farmyard with a backhoe. What a mess. Keep in mind that a backhoe is not a delicate tool. Charlie set a personal record by encountering 23 obstacles while digging in our lines. Each discovery warrants a knock on the house door. "Well Beth and Steve, you better come look at this." Some obstacles were expected, some were obscure. For example, we knew the current water lines were in the ground, but didn't know their location. We also expected obsolete electric lines, the legacy of buying our farm from an Amish family. We are not experts on Amish culture, but have learned a lot about the local community's practices through our farm purchase. Some Amish cannot have telephones. The folks we bought from were allowed to have phones in the barn but not in the house. Interestingly, they were not permitted to have tractors or electricity (hence the obsolete electric lines), but could utilize stationary engines. They set up a diesel engine in a shed and used it to power their dairy parlor through compressed air. When Charlie showed us a set of underground lines leading from that shed, we said, "Sure, those are the compressed air lines. Go ahead and cut them." Charlie cut them and out gushed hydraulic fluid. Huh. Maybe they started with a hydraulic system before switching to compressed air?

We could not even guess at some of the things he found, eg, a tiny 1/2-inch copper pipe that spewed water when cut. Obviously it is still connected to our current well, but we have no idea what it supplies. Hmm. Maybe it ran to the trailer that was once located next to our house? The pipe is now sealed shut and we will never know its purpose. Charlie found big slabs of cement under the driveway. Huh. Maybe the cattle yard once extended into that area?

The biggest surprise was the enormous trash heap buried near one of the sheds. This was not a small trash pile, it was huge. Charlie excavated yards of dirt filled with twisted, rusted metal panels, field posts, and old junk. We had no idea that it was there. We do know that the original dairy barn burned down around 1980. Maybe the remains of the old barn were buried there? Regardless, it's now a problem because we cannot backfill the trench with this junk. We'll get it hauled to the dump. Charlie is almost done with the digging phase of this project and we hope there are no more discoveries.

VEGGIE NOTES. This box marks the beginning of summer crops, with sweet corn, melons, eggplants and the first few tomatoes. There will be more of all in the coming weeks.

Sweet corn - Enjoy the first corn of the season. We'll have 6 or 7 ears for everyone. We won't know the final number until we pick on Thursday morning. We're trying a few new varieties this year. This one is called " ". It is tasty and has good, large ears. A few ears will have ragged tips and will need to be trimmed.

Storage. Sweet corn is best when fresh, so we encourage you to eat it ASAP. Store in the refrigerator, in the husks if you have the room.

Steamed sweet corn. It is quicker to steam sweet corn than to boil it.

1.) Stand ears of corn upright in a tall pot. Put one inch of water in the pot.

2.) Bring the water to a boil. If the corn is cold when you begin cooking, steam for 5 - 6 minutes. If the corn starts at room temperature, steam for 4 - 5 minutes. The cooking time will vary somewhat depending on how many ears are in the pot. Pay attention to how the corn smells. The scent changes once the corn is ready. Don't overcook it.

Muskmelon - You will receive one of two varieties. Round melons are "Halona". Oblong melons are "Goddess." Both are tasty. Many melons have cracks and you will want to trim off the cracked area.

Cherry or slicing tomatoes - You'll only get one tomato this week (or a partial pint of cherry tomatoes) but the first tomato harvest is still a milestone. Wash your tomatoes. Late blight is expected again this season, so we are spraying our tomatoes with an organically-approved copper spray. We wash the tomatoes here at the farm, but you should wash them again at home.

Eggplant - Everyone will receive one or two globe or Japanese eggplants.

EGGPLANT - The quantity of eggplant we are sending this week is modest; just one medium eggplant per box. I am sending extra info about eggplant in this newsletter because this is the first eggplant delivery, and because everyone will receive it this week. We are growing two types of eggplant this season. **Globe eggplants** are large, round, shiny and dark purple. This type is best peeled. Globe eggplants are good for any eggplant dish. They are the best (only?) choice for making baba ganouj. **Japanese eggplant** are long, slender, and dark purple or medium purple. The skin is thinner on this type. These are traditionally left unpeeled in Asian cooking, and are often cut diagonally. If you are cutting lengthwise slices of Japanese eggplant, I find it useful to remove a little skin from the outside slices, as they grill or sauté best if the flesh is exposed.

To salt or not to salt? Many recipes advise salting eggplant slices to draw out bitter flavors. I always skip this step, as I find that fresh eggplants are rarely bitter.

Storage. Eggplant store best at 50oF, an impractical temperature in summer. Eat your eggplant as soon as you can. Refrigerate if you plan to store your eggplant for more than two days. Globe eggplant can be stored at room temperature for 2 days. You can do the same with Japanese eggplants, but should wrap them in a cloth to avoid wilting. Miniature eggplants need to be refrigerated because they wilt so readily.

Preparation. There are many ways to cook eggplants. Eggplant will be creamy when roasted, grilled, broiled, or sautéed. If cubed eggplant is boiled in a sauce, it will become spongy and chewy, as happens with moussaka. Eggplant tends to absorb a lot of oil. Here are a few suggestions. Try grilling marinated slices (see below). You only need to use enough oil to keep the eggplant from sticking to the grill. If you are going to sauté eggplant, make sure the oil is hot when you add the eggplant to the pan, as it absorbs less oil this way. Also, brush the eggplant slices with oil just before flipping them over.

BABA GHANOUJ or EGGPLANT CAVIAR. This is the classic dish to make with globe eggplant.

Japanese eggplant are too small. There are lots of recipes for this available, so I won't use space printing one here.

GRILLED EGGPLANT. All types of eggplant can be grilled. It's a good approach because it requires less oil than frying. Slice ½- inch thick, rub generously with Italian salad dressing, let the dressing soak in, then grill over a low flame on a well-oiled, clean grill. Japanese eggplants can be sliced lengthwise, but remove a little skin from the outside slices, as they grill best if the eggplant flesh exposed. Grilled eggplant can be added to appetizers, salads, pasta sauces, casseroles, pasta salads, sandwiches, lasagne or pizza.