

THE TIPI TIMES

May 24, 2012, week 3 (green EOW)

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THIS WEEK'S BOX CONTAINS:

Spinach, large bunch,
about 1.5 lb
Asparagus, 0.8 lb
Red Romaine lettuce OR
red bibb lettuce
Scallions
White salad turnips
Escarole
Arugula

NEXT WEEK'S BOX WILL PROBABLY CONTAIN:*

Spinach
Asparagus
Scallions
Greens
Peas?? and more

*depending on weather,
critters & other forces of
nature.

MENU IDEAS

There are lots of cooking greens in this box: spinach, escarole, arugula and turnip greens. Looking for ideas? Check out this article in Fine Cooking: ["Eat Your Greens: An Essential Guide to Five Leafy Favorites"](#).

It contains five recipes that can be adapted to a variety of greens.

Spinach. We sure hope you like spinach. This looks to be a very productive spring for spinach. Members asked for more spinach, so we planted lots. Actually, we always plant lots of spinach, but some of it usually fails. All the plantings are doing well this year. Spinach is such a great veggie; you can eat it raw or cooked, alone or in soup or casseroles. It wilts and cooks so quickly. It is a cool-weather vegetable, so enjoy while we have it.

Aphids. There is an aphid outbreak on our farm, the first we've seen in the ten years on this property. There are always a few aphids lingering in our crops, but noticeable outbreaks rarely occur. A few members alerted us that they found these little green bugs in the lettuce last week. We find that the aphids are in 'hot spots' - most lettuce heads are free of bugs, but a few have many. We watch for this at harvest, but it's easy to overlook. Fortunately, it is quite easy to remove aphids from lettuce. See the instructions below.

Aphids are a greater problem for conventional growers than for organic growers because aphids are controlled quite well by natural predators and parasites. Aphid populations often surge after a conventional grower sprays an broad-spectrum insecticide to control an insect pest. The insecticide kills the beneficial wasps and flies which prey on aphids, and the aphid population explodes.

We are managing the aphid population in the greenhouse, but watching-and-waiting on crops in the field. Most interventions on our part will only make the problem worse. I called Russell Groves (the UW entomologist who works with vegetable growers) to ask if aphids are unusually abundant this year. He says all the insect populations are crazy this year because it was so warm in March. Some insects are a month ahead of their normal schedules. So, we just wait and watch. We have released lady bugs in our greenhouses and will continue to do so. I'll write more about that another week.

Beth

How to wash lettuce and spinach

This technique works well to remove soil or aphids. Many vegetables that grow as a 'head' need extra washing because soil splashes into the head during rain and irrigation. This includes lettuce, bok choy, escarole and spinach. Run a sink or tub full of cold water. Cut the head of lettuce across the base so the leaves all fall apart. Cut it into smaller pieces if you wish. Submerge the cut lettuce in the water and swish gently. This week's red Romaine is VERY tender and fragile, so be gentle. Pull from the water and let drain. Repeat. The draining action pulls the dirt off the leaves. Repeat with a clean tub of water if there is a lot of dirt in the water.

I recommend using a salad spinner to dry the clean lettuce and spinach. Then store in a dry bag or container. Lettuce and spinach last much longer when handled this way.

Farm and Veggie Notes

Spinach - The spinach is very tender this week. Use it soon. The thin leaves may not store for long.

Red Romaine lettuce - This is the dark red head of lettuce. Some members will receive red bibb lettuce.

Escarole (large green head that looks like lettuce) - This member of the chicory family can be eaten raw or cooked. Its slightly bitter flavor is a good addition to mixed salads. It is excellent cooked alone or mixed with other greens. It cooks quickly, but not as quickly as spinach. Refrigerate.

Arugula - (small bunch of green leaves with pungent scent) - This is good mixed with lettuce or spinach in salads or in cooked dishes such as lasagne or quiche. This batch of arugula has begun to bolt (stretch into a flower stalk) but remains tender and good eating quality. I love it on sandwiches. Like the spinach, it is quite thin-leaved this week, and should be eaten soon because it will not store for long. Cover and refrigerate.

Spinach and Arugula Salad with Asparagus and Salad Turnips

This recipe was contributed by Pat Mulvey of Local Thyme who writes "We took this salad to a potluck birthday party at Orton Park this weekend, and it was gobbled up in no time!"

3/4 pound asparagus, any woody ends broken off
3 cups spinach, large stems removed, well washed, leaves torn into bite sized pieces
3 cups arugula, well washed, leaves torn into bite sized pieces
2 salad turnips, trimmed, halved, then sliced thinly
1/3 cup feta cheese, crumbled

For Dressing:

2 tbsp freshly squeezed lemon juice
2 tbsp rice vinegar
2 tbsp honey
4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
2 tbsp fresh mint, minced
2 teaspoon scallion, minced
1/2 teaspoon salt
cracked black pepper to taste

Pour a couple of inches of water into the bottom of a small saucepan, and bring water to a boil over high heat. Place asparagus into a steamer-insert in the pan, cover and steam until asparagus is tender. Depending on how thin or thick each spear is, this will take between 4-8 minutes. I remove the thin ones as they become tender, and leave the chunkier ones in to keep cooking. Move the steamed asparagus to a colander in the sink and run cool water over to stop the cooking process. Dry the asparagus and allow it to cool completely while you make the rest of the salad. Chop into 2-inch lengths.

Put spinach and arugula in a salad bowl, scatter sliced turnips and cheese over.

Combine all dressing ingredients in a jar with a tightly sealing lid, and shake it until well emulsified.

When asparagus has cooled, add asparagus to salad, and toss with vinaigrette to taste.

Escarole Risotto

Laura Gilliam of Local Thyme writes "This is a comforting way to use some of the fresh escarole you receive this week. Plan on about 10 minutes to get all the ingredients prepped, and then about 20-25 minutes of stovetop time."

2 tablespoons olive oil
2 anchovies
1 clove garlic, minced
1/4 cup finely chopped scallions
3 cups finely shredded escarole
1/4 cup golden raisins

1 cup Arborio rice
1/3 cup dry white wine
freshly ground pepper, to taste
4 cups simmering chicken or vegetable stock

2 tablespoons butter or cream (optional)
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese
1/4 cup pine nuts, toasted

Prepare all ingredients and have them ready by the stovetop. Set the chicken or vegetable stock on a low simmer and keep ready.

Heat the olive oil in a saucepan over medium heat, and add the anchovies. Stir, breaking up the anchovies into a paste. Add the scallions and garlic. Cook, stirring, until the scallions are wilted. Add the escarole and raisins, and cook until the greens are wilted.

Transfer the wilted vegetable mixture to a bowl, and return the saucepan to the stovetop. Wipe out the pan with a towel. Add one more tablespoon olive oil, and add the rice and cook, stirring, for several minutes until the rice starts to become translucent. Add the wine and cook, stirring, for several minutes, until the wine is completely absorbed. Add few grinds of black pepper, and stir gently for several minutes.

Add the simmering broth, one cup at a time, and cook over moderate heat, stirring often from the bottom, about eight minutes for each cup of stock added. Continue adding one cup at a time, and stirring for another 8 minutes until all the liquid is absorbed, and until all the stock is used, and the rice mixture begins to take on a creamy texture. At this point, add the reserved wilted escarole mixture (including any liquid that may have accumulated), and stir well so all the vegetables and liquid are incorporated into the rice.

Add the butter or cream (if using), and stir well until it's incorporated. Then stir in the Parmesan cheese, and cook, stirring from the bottom, about three minutes more. Toss in the toasted pine nuts. Test for salt. (I used a homemade, salt-free vegetable stock, and with the anchovies and Parmesan, it needed very little salt.)
Serve immediately.