

THE TIPI TIMES

October 18, 2012, week 24 (purple EOW)

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THIS WEEK'S BOX CONTAINS:

Winter squash,
Carnival OR
Acorn squash OR
Delicata
Sweet potatoes, 3 lb
Broccoli OR cauliflower
Mixed turnip and red
mustard greens, 1 bunch
Beauty Heart radish
Onion(s)
Peppers of various sorts,
all sweet this week
Scallions, 1 bunch

NEXT WEEK'S BOX WILL PROBABLY CONTAIN:*

Winter squash, leeks, russet
potatoes, greens, broccoli OR
cauliflower, peppers and
more.

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

CSA countdown

October 18/19 (this week) = purple EOW

October 25/26 = final week for green EOW members

November 1/2 = final week for purple EOW and weekly members.

Do you talk about sweet potatoes as much as we do?

I wrote recently about our sweet potato harvest. Steve reviewed the newsletter and asked "Is that all you're going to write about sweet potatoes?? We spend so much time talking about them, I thought you were writing a book."

Running a CSA means we get to tinker with new crops, which keeps farming interesting. After two seasons, we still consider sweet potatoes a new crop. I've gathered lots of information about growing them, but there are still surprises. I called an extension scientist in North Carolina because some of the roots behaved oddly during curing. (We cure the sweet potatoes by keeping them warm and humid for a week after harvest. This heals wounds and boosts the sugars in the roots. We cure them in an insulated truck that's not needed at this time of year.) I described our issue and the scientist said he's never seen anything like that in decades of working with the crop. "Ma'am," he said, "sweet potatoes do something odd to surprise me every year." Sigh. As you can imagine, this all gets discussed over the dinner table.

We regularly test sweet potatoes and winter squash to determine if they are mature, properly cured, which varieties taste best, etc. How does one do this? By cooking them, of course. We roast various squash and sweet potatoes, then taste them. Our kids take this very seriously. We line up before the warm pans with forks in hand, like vintners judging the grape harvest.

"Ooo, the Sweet Dumplings are good this year."

"Hmm, let's cure the Waltham butternuts for another week."

"Wow, those two sweet potato varieties taste exactly the same."

Here are a few things we've learned about sweet potatoes.

1. Sweet potatoes are good at any size. We tend to cook the smallest and largest ones because they are odd-looking. We consistently find that all sizes taste good.
2. Sweet potato fries is our favorite recipe for this crop. You can prepare fries from roots of any size. See recipe below.
3. Sweet potatoes like hot weather and are not picky about soil. We planted them in a field with poor soil, didn't irrigate them enough and they still did great. Yields were high this season because it was so hot during the summer. In a cool year, sweet potatoes only form small roots.
4. The sweet potatoes we've grown take longer to cook than ones from the supermarket. Cook thoroughly for best flavor and texture.

I'm sure we'll learn something new next year.

Beth



Left. Sweet potatoes are good at any size. Our son holds a 6-pounder and our daughter holds some tiny ones. Right. Testing Carnival (at left) and acorn squash (at right). Looks like we're having squash for dinner again. It's great for breakfast too.

Veggie Notes

Winter squash - The Carnival squash is unwashed. I looked at them in the dimly lit barn and thought they were already washed. Sorry about that. Most members will receive Carnival squash which are round and striped green and yellow. Carnival can be used interchangeably with acorn squash.

Beauty Heart radish (round, pale green exterior, bright pink interior) - These are excellent thinly sliced in salads, or lightly cooked in mixed vegetable medleys. Try making a grated carrot-Beauty Heart salad if you still have carrots from last week. I like to cut this radish into matchsticks and add to pasta salads. The color is lovely.

Onions - Our onions were gorgeous at harvest this year, but many rotted in storage. We carefully graded the onions for your CSA boxes, and feel we've sent only good ones. Please refrigerate the onions to keep them in good shape.

Turnip and red mustard greens (big leafy bunch) - These two greens can be cooked together. We combined them because they are pretty together. It looks like a big bunch but the thin leaves will reduce substantially during cooking.

Cauliflower - The hot summer delayed our cauliflower and Romanesco plantings. We will distribute cauliflower among the sites as it is ready to harvest.

Clare Whitten's favorite sweet potato dish.

Clare is a neighbor and CSA member. Actually, it's her kids' favorite sweet potato recipe. Thank you Clare!

4T unsalted butter cut into 4 pieces

2 T heavy cream

1 t sugar

1/2 t salt

2 lbs sweet potatoes (2-3 medium), peeled, quartered lengthwise, and cut crosswise into 1/4 inch slices

Ground black pepper

Melt butter in large saucepan over low heat. Stir in the cream, sugar, and salt. Add the sweet potatoes and cook, covered, stirring occasionally, until the potatoes fall apart when poked with a fork, 35-45 minutes.

Off the heat, mash the sweet potatoes in the saucepan with a masher or food mill. Season with pepper and serve in warm bowl.

Beauty Heart Radish and Scallion Tea Sandwiches with Sesame and Ginger

Contributed by Local Thyme. Dish Type: Appetizer, Brunch, First Course, Main Course, Snack

Adapted from Bon Appetit April 2008.

I love a good tea sandwich, whether or not we are having a tea. I think they make great party food, and a wonderful snack or lunch. This Asian-ified take on the classic radish tea sandwich is uber-beautiful with the colorful Beauty Heart radish. Depending on how large your radish is, you may have to manipulate your cut to make it fit on the baguette. Most Beauty Hearts are the perfect size for the average baguette slice.

Servings: 16

Prep Time: 30 minutes

Total Time: 30 minutes

Ingredients

- about 1/2 Beauty Heart Radish, *peeled*
- 4 tablespoons Butter, *room temperature*
- 3 tablespoons Scallion, *minced, divided use*
- 1 tablespoon Black Sesame Seed, *divided*
- 1 teaspoon Ginger, *minced*
- 1/4 teaspoon Toasted Sesame Oil
- 16 1/4 inch slices Baguette
- Fleur de Sel

Instructions

1. Peel your beauty heart radish, and cut in half lengthwise. If you have a mandolin, set it to a very thin slice, and cut 16 paper thin half-moon shaped slices of the radish, or using your sharpest chef's knife, cut 16 half-moons.
2. In a small bowl, combine butter, 2 tablespoons scallion, 1/2 the sesame seeds and the ginger with the oil. Spread this mixture over the 16 slices of baguette. Lay a half moon slice of beauty heart on top (again, if the size isn't right, be creative!) and sprinkle with remaining scallions and sesame seeds. Just prior to serving, sprinkle a little touch of fleur de sel on top.

Curried Mustard and Turnip Greens with Chickpeas

Contributed by Local Thyme. Dish Type: First Course, Main Course, Side Dish, Snack

Many Indian dishes, especially Punjabi dishes, use bitter greens such as mustard. This isn't a traditional Indian dish, but rather an interpretation of Indian flavors for the American palette using a mix of mustard and turnip greens.

Servings: 4

Prep Time: 10 minutes, Cook Time: 15 minutes, Total Time: 25 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon Butter , *or Ghee*
- 2 cups Onion , *cut in thin slices*
- 1 tablespoon Ginger , *minced*
- 1/2 teaspoon Curry Powder
- 1/4 teaspoon Turmeric
- pinch Red Pepper Flake
- 2 tablespoons Water
- 1 bunch Mustard and Turnip Greens , *center stalk removed, rough chopped*
- Salt and Pepper , *to taste*
- 1 15 ounce can Chickpea , *drained and rinsed*

Instructions

1. Melt butter in a sauté pan, and add onion and ginger and sauté until wilted, about 5-6 minutes. Add in curry powder, turmeric, red pepper flake and stir to incorporate. Splash in water and add greens with a sprinkle of salt and pepper, and cook, turning in pan, until wilted, 2-3 minutes. Add chickpeas and cook until greens are tender and chickpeas are warmed through, about 2-3 minutes longer.

Sweet Potato Fries

Here's an excellent recipe, adapted from <http://www.instructables.com/id/Perfect-Oven-Sweet-Potato-Fries/> Check out the website for photos and more recipe details. The author writes "I have perfected the art of the sweet potato fry. I've made them so many times that I have a very set formula for making them. I don't enjoy frying things, so I do mine in the oven. They're easy and tasty and go well with Cuban, Mexican and Indian food. They're also good for holiday dinners. ... This recipe takes about a half hour to make, and one large sweet potato can serve 2-3 people if it's a side. Or sometimes I'll eat a whole one by myself if I've had nothing else to eat that day."

1 large sweet potato
coarse sea salt
freshly ground black pepper
good quality olive oil

1. Preheat your oven to 450oF.
2. Wash the sweet potato and dry it very, very well. Leave the skin on, to add nutrition and a chewy texture.
3. Cut a thin slice from both ends. This will eliminate little pointy ends on your fries - they're bad because they tend to burn very quickly since they slice up thinner. Cut the sweet potato in half if it is large. Now, take one half and cut it into large slices about 3/4 inch thick. Next, cut the slices into fries. Your fries should be 1/2 inch to 3/4 inch thick. Repeat for the other half.
(Beth's note: the website photos help with this.)
4. Pile the sweet potatoes on a cookie sheet and drizzle with olive oil. Sprinkle a good pinch of sea salt over them, and then apply a ton of freshly ground black pepper. Mix it all together on the baking sheet, scooping the salt, pepper and oil from the bottom and mixing it in. At this point you can add more olive oil if you want - just don't drown them. They should look glossy, but they should not be sitting in a pool of olive oil.
(Beth's note: Add the minimum amount of oil to coat. The fries don't brown properly if coated with too much oil.)
5. Space out the fries on the baking sheet. Make sure they're all evenly spaced and not touching, otherwise they don't brown.
6. Put them in the oven for 15 minutes. Do not open the oven or fidget with them during this time. Just let 'em cook. *(Beth's note: I generally need to bake them for 20 minutes.)*
7. Take the pan out of the over and flip the fries. Put them back in the oven for 10 minutes. Both sides should now be dark brown and crispy and delicious. And hopefully spicy, if you followed the directions. Spicy is the way to go with sweet potato fries! Keep in mind that I like mine REALLY dark and crispy. Should you want a lighter brown color, just reduce the cooking time a couple minutes for both sides.