

THE TIPI TIMES

June 3, 2010, week 4 (purple EOW)

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THIS WEEK'S BOX CONTAINS:

Strawberries, 1 qt + 1 pint
Asparagus, 0.8 lb.
Spinach, 1/2 lb.
Romaine lettuce
White salad turnips
Mustard greens OR
collard greens
Scallions
Oregano

NEXT WEEK'S BOX WILL PROBABLY CONTAIN:*

Strawberries, bok choy,
peas?, scallions, cilantro
and more

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

MORE BEE ADVENTURES. Last year, I wrote about a bee swarm that took up residence in our barn wall. They chose a problematic spot next to a busy front door. Still, we didn't want to kill the colony, as many bees in the USA have succumbed to the mysterious colony collapse disorder. The colony of bees in the barn was not aggressive, so we allowed them to stay. Here's the rest of the story.

The bees lived in the barn all winter, which was a new experience for us. We rent bees from Gene Woller of Gentle Breeze Honey but he only keeps them here during the summer. Gene tends the hives all season. Our crops get pollinated, and the bees thrive and make lots of honey. Our farm offers good bee habitat since we don't spray pesticides and we irrigate. Bees need water to make their honey and there are always puddles to drink from. Gene usually removes the hives in late fall, but this year he wintered them here at our farm.

I was surprised at how active the bees were in winter. They would fly about on sunny days, even if it was quite cold. Our son Ari ran in the house one day, upset because he found the hives ringed with dead bees laying on the snow. During his next visit, Gene explained that those bees had died of old age, as expected for an healthy colony. He pointed out small brown splats in the snow around the hives. Those were left during 'cleansing runs' made by the bees to clean out their hives. Early spring is the most vulnerable time for an over-wintered colony, as bees can run out of stored honey before there is a fresh supply of flowering plants. Gene feeds his hives with sugar cakes in early spring, just in case. We pushed a cake into the barn wall to feed that colony too.

As spring approached, it was time to move the bees in the barn to a new home. Fortuitously, our neighbor Karen Nicholson needed a new queen and brood for an empty hive. Karen took on the task of removing the colony. It took hours! Steve pried the wood off the barn wall. Karen dressed in full bee-keeper's armor, included gloves sealed at the wrist with duct tape. The first task was to gently remove the honeycomb layer by layer and transfer it into a portable hive. The goal was to move the all-important queen without injury. Karen could tell once she had successfully moved the queen, as the swarming bees sensed her presence and began to enter the portable hive. We left the hive near the barn until nightfall and the swarm settled in with the queen for the night, allowing Karen to move the colony to her farm. Karen was pleased to fill a 5 gallon pail with honey and honeycomb. Clearly, the bees had excellent reserves and would have survived without the sugar cake we fed them. They still made use of it, and you could see white layers in the honeycomb where the bees had packed the sugar directly into their comb.

The bees have settled nicely at Karen's house. We suspect they still return to visit our fields. We were pleased to have them and Gene's bees here during strawberry blossoming. Strawberry yields increase by about 15% if there's good pollination, mostly because the berries are larger. Sounds good to me!

STRAWBERRY U-PICK and FARM PARTY

Date: Sunday June 13

Time: 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Cost: \$2.20 per lb.

There will be more details in next week's newsletter. We do not know yet if there will be enough berries for another u-pick during the weekend of June 19/20. Watch the newsletter.

SALES OF EXTRA STRAWBERRIES.

If there are enough, we will sell extra strawberries to CSA members next week. We will find out when we pick the berries. Watch for an email announcement from me next week. The cost is \$22 per ice cream pail, about four to five quarts. The limit is 4 pails per member. Watch for the email announcement, then send us your order via email only. There may not be enough berries to satisfy the orders, so orders will be honored on a first come-first served basis. I will send confirmations on Wednesday night or Thursday morning to the people who will receive berries. If you do not receive a confirmation from me, that means that we did not have berries to sell to you.

Our first priority is to have enough strawberries for the CSA boxes. Many members ask why we sell extra berries at all. Why don't we just put them all in the CSA boxes? It's an excellent question. Our main responsibility is to feed you for a week. We plan a box that should feed a family of four. If we dedicate too much of the box's value to strawberries in the box, we will have to decrease the other items that we send, and there won't be enough food for the week.

Again, please wait for the email announcement before placing an order. EOW members, you can order extra berries even if it is not your week to get a box. Just don't take a CSA box by accident!

FARM NEWS and VEGGIE NOTES. Well, it rained hard on Wednesday, so many veggies will need careful washing again this week. We are thrilled that strawberries are ready to harvest. This is the earliest we've ever picked strawberries, compliments of the early spring weather and a new early variety called 'AC Wendy.' There are not many early strawberry varieties to choose from. This one looks good: early, with large, flavorful berries.

Strawberries - Strawberries are perishable. Ripe berries should be eaten immediately, or stored in the refrigerator. Some berries will be dirty. These are from the rows at the edge of the field where the mulch is thin. Rinse the berries gently. Don't soak them, just rinse. Do not be concerned if you receive a partially-filled container. Sometimes we fill them partially in order to distribute berries to all the members.

Please wash and dry your plastic clamshells and return them to your pick-up site next week so we can use them again. However, we can only use the clamshells that you have received from us. We cannot use other types, so please don't bring them to your site. (Outpost members, please do not return your clamshells; they are too disruptive for the produce department.)

Mustard greens (bundle of flat, dark green leaves) - Mustard greens are best cooked rather than raw. They require cooking times intermediate between those for spinach and collards. Mustard's spicy character is good alone, or mixed with other greens like spinach or turnip greens. Refrigerate in a plastic or cloth bag. Here are a few ways to cook mustard greens:

- 1) They are good steamed or stir-fried and dressed with Asian-style seasonings (sesame oil, rice vinegar, soy sauce, ginger, garlic and red pepper flakes).
- 2) Mustards are excellent with peanut or ricotta sauces. The fats in those sauces seem to mellow the mustard's spiciness. I recommend the same mustard green recipe every year because I like the dish so much: Penne with Sheep's Milk Ricotta and Mustard Greens

http://www.thewednesdaychef.com/the_wednesday_chef/2007/05/sara_jenkins_pe.html

This recipe is simple and quick, and turns a very nutritious green into a delicious meal. Ignore the commentary that you cannot use the average cow's milk ricotta found in supermarkets. Just add more than is called for in the recipe and it turns out great.

Collards (bundle of flat, green leaves with whitish cast) - Only a few members will receive collard greens instead of mustard this week. Collards can be cooked in any recipe calling for kale. These collards were harvested quite young, and do not need to cook as long as the usual kale and collards harvested in summer.

Oregano - Enjoy oregano in salad dressing or egg dishes or herb biscuits. You can use it fresh or you can dry it. To dry, bundle and hang someplace out of the sun (to avoid fading). Tipi crew member Kerry Devlin says you can dry oregano in a paper bag with holes cut in it. Put the bag someplace warm where there is good air circulation.

GREENS RECIPES. Last week, I recommended a recent issue of Fine Cooking magazine that features five greens recipes. Those recipes can be adapted to mustard and collard greens. Here is the link:

<http://www.finecooking.com/item/16023/eat-your-greens-an-essential-guide-to-five-leafy-favorites>