

THE TIPI TIMES

August 19, 2010, week 15 (green EOW)

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THIS WEEK'S BOX CONTAINS:

Watermelon
Sweet corn, 8
Edamame soybeans
Slicing tomatoes, 4 lb
Bell/frying peppers, several
Spanish onions, 2
Pickling cukes OR
slicing cucumber
Basil, small bunch
Romano beans OR
cherry tomatoes OR
1-2 heirloom tomatoes

NEXT WEEK'S BOX WILL PROBABLY CONTAIN:*

Cabbage, edamame, melon, basil? and more

MENU IDEAS

We've sent enough tomatoes this week to make a batch of soup or sauce, in combination with onions, peppers and basil. Slicing tomatoes are juicier than plum tomatoes, so they make a more liquid sauce.

CARRY YOUR BOX FROM THE BOTTOM THIS WEEK.

The box is heavy and might break open if you carry it by the handles.

FARM NEWS.

We finally have some edamame (edible soybeans) for you. Long-term CSA members might remember that we last delivered edamame in 2007. It's been a long wait. Thank you for your patience. We plant edamame every year, but they struggle to germinate and emerge from the ground. We've considered various theories for this problem; poor seed, diseases that attack the un-emerged seeds, too much soil crusting after a heavy rain. Our newest theory is that an insect (seedcorn maggot) is attacking the seeds. If true, there's a simple solution: just cover the newly planted beds with row cover until the soybeans are well emerged. You'd think they would be easy to grow; the countryside is filled with fields of soybeans.

We expect to have another, slightly smaller bundle of edamame for you next week.

The big project this week is to gather our onion harvest for the year. We packed Walla Walla onions in the CSA boxes for many weeks now. That type of onion matures the most quickly. Now all the other types (yellow storage, red, Spanish) have completed their growth. The onions tops withered slowly over the last weeks, drawing nutrients into the maturing onion. Steve undercut the rows with a field tool this week to cut the roots and heave the onions out of the ground. Next, the work crew will pull them free of the soil surface and pile them in long windrows. Both steps speed drying. This is a risky moment for the onion crop, as it can be spoiled by too much rain at this stage. We are thrilled by the current dry weather, and hope we can finish this job before storms visit our region. It will be a relief to have the onions safely stored away. The barn smells wonderful as it fills with drying onions, just like dried onion soup.

VEGGIE NOTES. Edamame soy beans

- There is a bundle of edible soybeans in your box today. These are a treat. Pull the pods from the stem, wash well, and boil until the beans are quite tender. Season with salt and pop the beans out of the pods into your mouth. This Japanese specialty is becoming more and more popular in the USA. Storage: Remove the pods from the stems promptly and refrigerate.

Sweet corn - This is the final delivery of sweet corn for this season. FYI, there are some bugs at the tip. The damage is minimal on most ears, so just cut off the tip when you are husking the corn. There may be a little corn smut as well. This is a disease that results in enlarged, black corn kernels. It is a delicacy at an immature stage, known in Mexican cooking as huitlacoche. By the time the corn is ready to eat, the huitlacoche is past its eating peak. We've graded out all that we can find, but there may be overlooked ears with huitlacoche under the husks.

'Candy' Spanish onions - These are another type of sweet onion. They are more pungent than the Walla Wallas we've sent so far this year. Spanish onions will fry better than Walla Wallas, but still release more moisture than a traditional yellow onion. Our Walla Wallas are finished for this year.

Cucumber or pickling cucumbers - You will receive one of these types of cucumbers. Both are excellent in salads. Several members asked why we grow so many pickling cucumbers. That's because they mature earlier than slicing cucumber varieties. We include them in our second cucumber planting in order to have a longer, steadier supply of fresh cucumbers.

Slicing tomatoes - We continue to send tomatoes of varying ripeness, so you have several to ripen at room temperature and use over a few days. FYI, yellow tomatoes should be eaten when still firm. They lose their flavor if you wait until they are fully ripe/soft.

Heirloom tomatoes. A few sites will receive an heirloom tomato or two this week. We'll rotate through the sites as more ripen in the coming weeks. We grow several types of heirloom tomatoes. Most are larger and more deeply lobed than the usual slicing tomatoes. If you receive one this week, please handle it gently as they bruise easily. You will have to use your best judgment with these perishable beauties. A perfect heirloom tomato would be picked one day short of full ripeness, so it is firm enough to handle and then ripen one day at room temperature after arrival at your home. Some of the tomatoes we send will need longer ripening, others will be fully ripe and should be eaten immediately or refrigerated. Heirlooms are more perishable than other tomatoes once ripe.

We grow heirloom tomatoes for their amazing flavors, but they are true prima donnas. Many fruits will crack, they bruise easily and spoil quickly once they are fully ripe. Yet they taste wonderful, so we keep growing them. Trim off those cracked areas and enjoy the rest. Here's my favorite way to enjoy heirloom tomatoes: slice, arrange on a plate, then drizzle with good olive oil and a small amount of balsamic vinegar. Sprinkle with salt and a bit of minced herb. This simple preparation lets you focus on the wonderful flavors in these special tomatoes.

Tomato Soup with Poached Eggs

I prepare tomato soup with diced tomatoes, garlic, sweet onion and basil. Once the tomatoes have released their juices, season to taste with salt, pepper, and balsamic vinegar or red wine. Then crack eggs into the soup and poach until the eggs are set but the yolks are still runny. Good with dumplings, rice or bread.

Watermelon, Feta And Black Olive Salad

Excerpted from Nigella Fresh by Nigella Lawson. Serves 8.

"As improbable as it might sound, this combination is utterly fantastic, both savory and refreshing at the same time. You can pare it down to the essential contrast, and serve no more than a plate of chunked watermelon, sprinkled with feta and mint and spritzed with lime, but this full-length version is hardly troublesome to make and once made will, I assure you, become a regular feature of your summer table."

Beth's notes: We expect to deliver watermelons for many more weeks, which will give you a chance to try new ways to prepare melons. I printed a different watermelon-feta salad recipe a few years ago. That recipe called for basil and mint (and skipped the olives). Both herb combos are good, but my favorite is just mint.

1 small red onion	Bunch fresh mint, chopped
2-4 limes, depending on juiciness	3-4 tablespoons, extra-virgin olive oil
3 1/2 pounds sweet, ripe watermelon	4 ounces (1/2 cup) pitted black olives
9 ounces feta cheese	Black pepper
Bunch fresh flat-leaf parsley	

Peel and halve the red onion and cut into very fine half-moons and put in a small bowl to steep with the lime juice, to bring out the transparent pinkness in the onions and diminish their rasp. Two limes' worth should do it, but you can find the fruits disappointingly dried up and barren when you cut them in half, in which case add more.

Remove the rind and seeds from the watermelon, and cut into approximately 1 3/4-inch triangular chunks, if that makes sense (math is not my strong point). Cut the feta into similar sized pieces and put them both into a large, wide shallow bowl. Tear off sprigs of parsley so that it is used like a salad leaf, rather than a garnish, and add to the bowl along with the chopped mint.

Tip the now glowingly puce onions, along with their pink juices, over the salad in the bowl, add the oil and olives, then using your hands toss the salad very gently so that the feta and melon don't lose their shape. Add a good grinding of black pepper and taste to see whether the dressing needs more lime. Hava Negila! The taste of Tel Aviv sunshine!