

THE TIPI TIMES

September 9, 2010, week 18 (purple EOW)

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THIS WEEK'S BOX CONTAINS:

Broccoli, about 2 lb
Slicing and plum tomatoes,
5 lb total, in 1 bag
Yellow onions
Red/yellow frying peppers, 3
'Yummy' mini peppers, ½ lb
Cucumbers, 2?
Parsley
green Jalapeno pepper, 1
Beans OR Lettuce

Some members will receive an heirloom tomato

NEXT WEEK'S BOX WILL PROBABLY CONTAIN:*

Bok choy, tomatoes, peppers, winter squash, onions, etc.

REMINDERS

Sept. 11 = Bike the Barns fundraiser. I'll be there dishing lunch. Come say hello if you're participating.

Sept. 21 = deadline to sign up for our winter share. See the 8/26/10 newsletter for details and a form.

Sept. 26, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. Pumpkin U-pick here at the farm. More details in a future newsletter.

MENU IDEAS

The weather was cool enough to bake bread this past week, something we miss during the summer. I prepared several loaves, plus three fresh salads: tomato-pepper-onion salad, cucumber salad and lettuce salad. It was enough food to coast through three dinners, supplemented with something hot each night (sausages, fried tofu.)

FARM NEWS - After eating a bowl of tomato buttermilk soup tonight Steve said "That's enough tomatoes," leaned over and put his head on the table. I'm not sure why the rest of us found that so funny, but we all laughed. Perhaps it's because Steve is not prone to dramatic gestures (unlike the rest of the family.) He ate too many tomatoes in the field today, followed by the intensely flavored soup for dinner. This time of year, Steve is sampling tomatoes all over the farm, the best way to test the crop's quality. With five tomato fields and many varieties, that's a lot of sampling. Until last week, he was sampling watermelons. Watermelons are even more mysterious. The clues to a ripe watermelon have to be parsed. Opening a few melons is essential when judging the crop's development. Now the melons are almost done for the season. We might have a few next week. Despite all the snacking, Steve comes in and eats a big dinner each night.

This has been an excellent tomato year. We planted a few more tomatoes than usual in anticipation of late blight problems. 2009 members might remember our war stories as we battled late blight last year, killing off 1500 of our 6000 plants to slow the spread of the disease. Late blight has not reached our farm yet this season, despite being present throughout the state. The result is that we've had lots of tomatoes for the CSA boxes. The tomato harvests will slow by next week, and upcoming boxes will have smaller quantities. We have a late planting that's just beginning to ripen, so we will have smaller quantities of good quality tomatoes into fall.

In contrast, this has not been a good pepper year. We have fields of lush beautiful pepper plants with few fruits, probably the result of hot weather as the plants flowered this season. A visiting horticulture professor confirmed that peppers are sensitive to 'pollen blast' during hot weather. Tomatoes suffer this too, but at higher temperatures. If we have problems with a crop, we're always curious how other farmers are faring. We called around and found that other farms are having the same problem: beautiful plants with little fruit set. That helps us judge that weather truly is the culprit, rather than our cultural decisions. Each year, some crops do well and others do poorly. That's why we plant so many different crops.

PEPPER/TOMATO SALES NEXT WEEK? I'll send an email announcement if we have peppers or tomatoes to sell next week. If the pepper supply is short again, we will give priority to members who have not purchased extra red peppers yet this year.

BOX AMNESTY Please return all empty CSA boxes this week! We need them next week. Look through your garage, your car and everywhere else that they might be stashed away. Also, too many boxes have been returned to us ripped this year. Please read the instructions below to learn how to properly flatten your box and conserve this valuable resource.

PLEASE UNFOLD YOUR RETURNED BOX AT YOUR PICK-UP SITE.

Unfolding your box helps your site manager. It is a small job if everyone tends to their own box, but a big chore if all the boxes are left for your site manager to flatten. Thank you for helping.

Please be gentle when flattening the CSA boxes. Many boxes have gotten ripped this year! When flattening the box, the key step occurs when you are unfolding the bottom of the box. Hold the box at waist height, with the bottom of the box facing up. Each of the shorter flaps has a CREASE. Your instinct will be to pull up on the flap. Don't do it! You will rip the tabs and ruin the box. Instead, grasp the edge of the short flap closest to you and pull TOWARD you (left photo). It will bend at its natural crease. Again, avoid pulling UP on the flaps or the tabs will rip. The flap can now be pulled loose (right photo). Repeat with the other short flap. Unfold the two long flaps. Repeat for the top of the box if it is closed. Now collapse the box so it is flat.



FARM NEWS and VEGGIE NOTES. The sweet peppers are all colored this week (red, orange or yellow). In contrast, the one hot jalapeno pepper is green.

Red or yellow frying peppers (long, slender, red or yellow) - Do you still have an Anaheim chile in your fridge from last week? Pay attention and don't confuse this week's frying peppers with last week's hot chile.

'Yummy' peppers, about 1/2 lb, maybe 7 peppers (small orange, red or yellow peppers) - These peppers are sweet with excellent flavor. They make a great snack because of their size, color, flavor and sparse seeds. They are a lovely little package, good for packing in lunches. You can also cook them like a normal bell pepper.

Jalapeno pepper (small, green pepper) - These are HOT peppers.

Broccoli - This broccoli matured during the recent cool weather, so the heads are even and tight. Summer-grown broccoli tends to be more uneven and lumpy. Maybe you've noticed that with the broccoli over the last month.

Slicing and plum tomatoes - These will be packed together in one bag.

Beans - Some members will receive yellow wax beans, or green snap bean. Others will receive lettuce.

TOMATO BUTTERMILK SOUP

This is simple but intensely flavored. We eat this soup with bread or matzo balls or other dumplings. Watch out, this is the soup that pushed Steve over the edge. See my Farm Notes. Serves 3.

5 cups slicing tomatoes, coarsely chopped

1/2 tsp. salt

2 Tbsp. chopped onion

2 pinches baking soda

2 garlic cloves, finely minced

your favorite Italian seasonings (parsley, oregano or basil)

black pepper

2/3 cup buttermilk

Mix the chopped tomatoes and onions with the salt. Let stand in a bowl until they've released some juices, about 10 minutes. Puree in a blender, then pour into a soup pot. The blender will chop the skins into small, insignificant pieces. Avoid overblending, so you don't chop up the seeds. You'll end up with less than 5 cups.

Add the baking soda, minced garlic, herbs and pepper. Bring to a low boil over medium heat. Simmer about 15 minutes. Remove from heat for a few minutes, then stir in the buttermilk. Adjust salt, pepper and buttermilk to taste.

Cold Tomato Buttermilk Soup

There are many recipes available for cold tomato buttermilk soup. Most are similar to the recipe above, but without the garlic and the cooking. I imagine they are very refreshing. We prefer the cooked version, maybe because we eat so many raw tomatoes.

Lacquered Tofu Triangles with Green Beans and Red Bell Pepper

Adapted from Deborah Madison's "This Can't Be Tofu." Serves 4. Serve with rice or a baked sweet potato. CSA member Julie Smith recommends this recipe. Her comments are included in the text. Thank you Julie! Some members will receive beans this week, some will not. Hang on to this recipe for the next time we send beans.

1 carton [*extra*] firm tofu
1 red bell pepper
1/2 teaspoon Szechuan peppercorns
1/4 [*to 1/2*] pound green beans

1 tablespoon mushroom soy sauce
3 tablespoons regular soy sauce
2 tablespoons light brown sugar
3 garlic cloves, minced or pressed
1/4 cup water or stock

5 teaspoons roasted peanut oil
5 scallions, including the firm greens, sliced diagonally into 1/2-inch pieces
1/4 cup roasted cashews

1. Drain the tofu. [*Julie's note: for easy and effective browning, leave the drained tofu on a paper towel uncovered in the refrigerator for 2-4 days. This dries it out, making it denser, "meatier" and easier to brown. However, author Deborah Madison recommends the softer texture of undried tofu.*] Cut the tofu crosswise into slabs about 1/2 inch wide. Cut each slab in half lengthwise, then cut into triangles. Blot well with paper towels. Cut the bell pepper in half lengthwise, remove the veins and seeds, then cut each half into three long strips. Cut each strip into triangles. Tip and tail the beans and cut them into 2-inch lengths. Toast the Szechuan peppercorns in a dry skillet until aromatic, then grind to a powder and set aside.

2. Combine the next five ingredients in a small bowl and stir to dissolve the sugar.

3. Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil in a wide, nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add the tofu and cook, without disturbing, until firm, about 5 minutes. Turn and cook the second side. The tofu should be golden, but still tender to the touch. Remove and set aside.

4. Add another teaspoon of oil to the pan and, when hot, add the green beans and peppers. Stir-fry over high heat for 2 minute or so. Return the tofu to the pan and season with a few pinches of salt and the Szechuan peppercorns.

5. Pour in the soy-sauce mixture and cook, moving the pan back and forth rapidly to coat the tofu and peppers. Turn off the heat before it reduces completely. Top with cashews, and serve over rice or sweet potatoes.