

THE TIPI TIMES

July 21, 2011, week 10 (green EOW)

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THIS WEEK'S BOX CONTAINS:

Cabbage
Celery
Green beans, 0.8 lb
Snap peas, 1.5 lb
Snow peas, 0.3 lb
The snap and snow
peas will be together
in one bag.
Zucchini/squash, 2 lb?
Cucumbers, 2?
Walla Walla onion, 1

We have small harvests
of the items below. You
will receive one or two
items from this list:

Broccoli
Eggplant
Tomato
Cherry tomatoes
Muskmelon

NEXT WEEK'S BOX WILL PROBABLY CONTAIN:*

Carrots, sweet corn,
melons and more

FROM AUGUST 5 THROUGH 13, PLEASE LIMIT YOUR COMMUNICATION WITH US TO THE ESSENTIALS.

I am taking our children to visit family. That leaves Steve to run the CSA in addition to his other responsibilities. Please email me no later than noon on August 4 if you have questions, want to cancel a box, etc. If real problems arise, go ahead and call Steve. Thank you.

Beth

ROUND-THE-CLOCK FARMING. It's hot. OK, you don't need me to tell you that. Our work crew is drinking lots of water and faring OK. Not great, but OK. The heat has driven some of them to adjust their work schedule. We have two work crews, one that starts at 6:00 a.m., and the other at 9:00 a.m. The 6:00 a.m. crew looked wilted on Tuesday and Steve joked "Maybe we should start at 3:00 a.m." Every face lit up. Steve quickly back-pedaled "Umm, we don't have enough flashlights." Everyone had a good laugh, then Sia Thao said firmly "Then we will start at 5:00." There's history behind that statement. This work crew wants to begin work as early as possible. Years ago, they wanted to start at 5:00 but we insisted on 6:00 a.m. Honestly, 6:00 a.m. is early enough for us. But they would show up at 5:15, trying to force us to start the day earlier. Our bedroom faces the driveway. We can roll over in bed, look out the window and say "Wow, they're already here." Steve would wait in the house until 5:45, so he eventually won that test of wills. (You've seen my 11 p.m. emails, so you know I don't greet the early crew.) This is the same group that phones at 4:15 a.m. on rainy days, to be sure there's still work. The current heat wave is exhausting and dangerous. This week, they can start whenever they want.

Our 9:00 a.m. crew split into two groups. Some came to work at 7:00, others stuck with 9:00. We knew that Wednesday would be very difficult, hot with no clouds. The crew worked full days on Monday and Tuesday, in hopes of shortening Wednesday. We saved all the indoor jobs for Wednesday, so everyone was out of the sun by late morning, opening CSA boxes, weighing peas and beans, and putting cherry tomatoes into pint containers. We shorten the workdays when we can and

encourage everyone to take breaks in the shade or inside the cooler. The cooler's the place to be; we have a stash of cold lemonade and melons in there. These folks are seasoned and know how to take care of themselves, but it is still difficult. Overheard in the 96° washroom:

- "I'm having trouble adding by 2's."

- "It's not that I'll forget to turn off the scale, it's that I won't care enough to turn it off."

We were able to send everyone home by 2 p.m. on Wednesday. It was a relief.

Steve's hours are round-the-clock right now because of irrigation. We expect a big electric bill this month due to running the pump so much. Steve starts the irrigation before bed, then gets up around 5 a.m. to turn it off or to switch it to another field. He is lightly irrigating our newest carrot plantings every day. They were planted over the last two weeks, and need to stay moist until the seeds emerge. We'd love to get some rain.

Beth

MENU IDEAS. It's hot. OK, you don't need me to tell you that. Here are some cooking tips, although I suspect you've already figured these out.

- Use your grill. Grill some zucchini, eggplant and onions, then mix into pasta salad or an omlet.
- Make cold salads. Nothing in this box has to be cooked. Cold, crunchy cucumbers, peas, celery, cabbage, onions, beans. Aren't those appealing? Even eggplant can be prepared raw. See the Fresh Eggplant Rice Topper recipe (<http://www.tipiproduce.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/tipi100729purple.pdf>) we put in the newsletter last year. It's a Japanese dish, served with rice. Our farm cook Eric supplied the raw zucchini recipe below. He prepared it for lunch on Tuesday and it was delicious. Eric made us a lovely smorgasbord of cold dishes. I'll list them here, just for ideas, as we haven't sent all these veggies.
- Zucchini Ribbon Salad
- Kohlrabi and fennel with vinegar and dill
- Cucumber-onion salad with curried yogurt-garlic sauce
- Slivered beet salad with a dressing made of honey, poppy seeds, lime juice and salt
- Pasta salad with lots of crisp veggies
- Hard-boiled eggs

VEGGIE NOTES. We gathered small harvests of these crops, and will share them among the CSA boxes: broccoli, eggplant, tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, muskmelons. Soon we'll have enough to send to everyone. Don't get too excited about slicing tomatoes yet. Our first planting set just a few early tomatoes per plant. Now those are harvested and we have to wait for the next round of fruits.

Cabbage - Three weeks ago, I wrote about trying new pointy-headed cabbage varieties. These types are tender and excellent for coleslaw and other raw uses. Their small size is appealing in a mixed summer box. This is a different variety than we sent three weeks ago, with a more obvious cone shape. Give it a try in a cold salad.

Celery - This celery is strongly flavored and not as tender as commercial celery. We actually don't have good soils for this moisture-loving vegetable. Treat it like an herb to take advantage of its aromatic flavor. Will store for two weeks or longer, so use a stalk at a time as needed.

Slicing or cherry tomatoes - As mentioned above, not all will receive tomatoes this week. Wash your tomatoes. Late blight is expected again this season, so we are spraying our tomatoes with an organically-approved copper spray. We wash the tomatoes here at the farm, but you should wash them again at home.

Snap peas - These are similar to the peas last week. A bit rough looking but very tasty. It's been a bumper pea crop this year. We might have peas again next week.

Eggplant (not everyone will receive eggplant this week) - We grow two types of eggplant.

Globe eggplants are large, round, shiny and dark purple. This type is best peeled. Globe eggplants are good for any eggplant dish. They are the best (only?) choice for making baba ganouj. Some globe eggplant are irregularly shaped, with a white collar under the stem calyx. These are new varieties we're experimenting with. We find that they are similar to normal globe eggplant, but remain whiter and firmer when cooked. **Japanese eggplant** are long, slender, and dark purple or medium purple. The skin is thinner on this type. These are traditionally left unpeeled in Asian cooking, and are often cut diagonally. If you are cutting lengthwise slices of Japanese eggplant, I find it useful to remove a little skin from the outside slices, as they grill or sauté best if the flesh is exposed.

To salt or not to salt? Many recipes advise salting eggplant slices to draw out bitter flavors. I always skip this step, as I find that fresh eggplants are rarely bitter.

Storage. Eggplant store best at 50oF, an impractical temperature in summer. Eat your eggplant as soon as you can. Refrigerate if you plan to store your eggplant for more than two days. Globe eggplant can be stored at room temperature for 2 days. You can do the same with Japanese eggplants, but should wrap them in a cloth to avoid wilting.

Preparation. There are many ways to cook eggplants. Eggplant will be creamy when roasted, grilled, broiled, or sautéed. If cubed eggplant is boiled in a sauce, it will become spongy and chewy, as happens with moussaka. Eggplant tends to absorb a lot of oil. Here are a few suggestions. Try grilling marinated slices (see below). You only need to use enough oil to keep the eggplant from sticking to the grill. If you are going to sauté eggplant, make sure the oil is hot when you add the eggplant to the pan, as it absorbs less oil this way. Also, brush the eggplant slices with oil just before flipping them over.

Eggplant, continued

BABA GHANOUJ or EGGPLANT CAVIAR. This is the classic dish to make with globe eggplant. Japanese eggplant are too small. There are lots of recipes for this available, so I won't use space printing one here.

GRILLED EGGPLANT. All types of eggplant can be grilled. It's a good approach because it requires less oil than frying. Slice ½- inch thick, rub generously with Italian salad dressing, let the dressing soak in, then grill over a low flame on a well-oiled, clean grill. Japanese eggplants can be sliced lengthwise, but remove a little skin from the outside slices, as they grill best if the eggplant flesh exposed. Grilled eggplant can be added to appetizers, salads, pasta sauces, casseroles, pasta salads, sandwiches, lasagne or pizza.

Zucchini Ribbon Salad

Farm cook Eric Friedericks prepared this salad for us for lunch. He describes it as "pad thai without noodles." You can always add noodles to bulk up the dish. Eric says this is good with any size zucchini, but is an excellent way to use over-sized squash. For chili paste, Eric recommends the Sriracha brand. He especially likes the Sriracha chili paste with garlic that is packaged in a jar with a green lid.

5-6 medium zucchini or summer squash
1 can coconut milk
2 Tbsp. Thai chili paste (available in Asian food stores)
Lime or lemon juice
Salt to taste
Minced garlic
Thai basil (optional)
Chopped peanuts

Shave the zucchini or squash into ribbons with a potato peeler. Work lengthwise. You can shave large squash until you reach the seedy core, then discard the core. It's fine to use the core of small and medium-sized squash.

Mix the coconut milk, chili paste, lime/lemon juice, salt and minced garlic. Pour over the zucchini ribbons and mix well. Eric says the zucchini ribbons are less delicate than you'd expect. Top with basil and chopped peanuts. Serve alone, or mix in some noodles.