

THE TIPI TIMES

May 10, 2012, week 1 (green EOW)

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THIS WEEK'S BOX CONTAINS:

Spinach, about 1.3 lb
Asparagus, 0.9 - 0.95 lb
Red leaf lettuce
Green garlic
German butterball potatoes,
2.75 lb.
Radishes
Rhubarb, 2 lb.

NEXT WEEK'S BOX WILL PROBABLY CONTAIN:*

Spinach
Asparagus
Lettuce
Green garlic
Sweet salad turnips
Bok choy
Cilantro
Rhubarb

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

MENU IDEAS

This box is filled with spring treats. Everything is super-tender; it will be easy to make salads with the next few deliveries. I will try to send a variety of salad dressing recipes in the newsletters, to enliven the spring salads.

I love sending potatoes in the first box, as they combine so nicely with the delicate spring greens. You can build some lovely meals with potatoes, spinach and green garlic.

For example, see the "Mashed Potatoes with Green Garlic Dressing and Olives" recipe below.

Starting early this year. Welcome to our CSA. Many of you are long-term members. Thank you for joining us again this year, we appreciate your commitment to our farm. New members, I hope you enjoy your first season with our farm. Don't hesitate to contact us when you have questions.

This was a fast-moving spring. We advanced the starting date for the CSA by one week. This is the earliest we have ever delivered CSA boxes. We set many personal records this spring: earliest planted crops, earliest asparagus to pick, earliest date we've gotten our crew back to work. The last one is crucial. The crops are ready early and we have employees here to pick and wash them for you. A perfect storm. I'll write more next week. *Beth*

Things you need to know.

- The first few boxes of the season are always the lightest. Every-other-week (EOW) members, please do not worry that you have signed up for the wrong share. Later deliveries will be bigger.
- We will send a weekly reminder email on Wednesday night, with a link to the newsletter on our website (www.tipiproduce.com). We post our newsletter each Wednesday night, which means that you can get access to the newsletter even if our email communication falters.
- EOW and weekly members, we assume that you read all the newsletters, even on weeks that you do not receive a box. We rely on the newsletter to communicate with everyone. You do not want to miss important information, or a good recipe, or a chance to purchase extra tomatoes or peppers.

Farm and Veggie Notes Check this section for information about the veggies in the box. I'll provide extra info on cooking and storage the first week that we send an item. Does an item need extra washing? Does something have special qualities? This is the place to find out. For example, please, please, please refrigerate the potatoes. See explanation below.

Spinach - These are nice big bundles of spinach. It's from a field we planted last fall. The spinach survived the winter easily and grew like gangbusters this spring. I consider this 'cooking quality'; the leaves are thick enough to hold up when cooked. Late frosts caused browning on a few leaf tips but the damage is minor. We expect to send 'salad quality' spinach next week from a spring planting. That spinach will be thin-leaved and delicious for salads.

Asparagus - Enjoy this spring treat! You will receive either green or purple asparagus. The purple variety will turn dark green when cooked, and the flavor is almost identical to normal green asparagus. The best way to wash asparagus is to submerge it in water, soak briefly, then swish vigorously and pull out of the water with the tips pointing down. The draining action helps pull the grit out of the asparagus tips. Repeat several times.

Storage: Asparagus is perishable, so eat it as soon as possible. If you must store it for a while, wrap the bundle in a paper towel and then store it loosely in a plastic bag. The asparagus tips tend to rot if in direct contact with the plastic bag. We snap our asparagus at harvest, rather than cutting it. Therefore, there is no need to snap the stalks to remove fibrous ends.

For the same reason, it is not necessary to peel the asparagus stalks. It's OK to trim the end a bit.

Cooking: If your asparagus stalks vary greatly in size, you will want to cook the thicker ones longer. Put the asparagus in a steamer pot over water. Alternatively, you can lay spears flat in the bottom of a broad pan, with ½ inch of water. Cover and steam over medium heat until just tender. Use two forks or a spatula to turn the asparagus during cooking, rotating the bottom spears to the top. Drain and serve. Also excellent broiled or grilled. Good dressed with vinaigrette. We always eat our steamed asparagus simply with lime juice, salt and pepper.

Green garlic - (looks like scallions) - Last fall, we planted small heads of garlic. The cloves sprouted and grew into the stalks we've sent today. If left to grow, the fat bulb on this week's garlic would divide and form the usual cluster of cloves in a garlic bulb. Green garlic is more pungent than scallions, so slice thinly and use sparingly when raw. It mellows nicely when cooked. The easiest way to use it is to chop and add to any cooked dish that would benefit from garlic. You will have to peel off and discard the outer layer. Use the white bulbs and pale green stems. Do not use the leaves or dark green stems, as these are too fibrous.

German butterball potatoes - Please refrigerate these potatoes. They are in great shape now but will sprout if stored at room temperature. They want to grow! We grow everything we send in our CSA boxes except potatoes, garlic and mushrooms, which we buy from organic growers that we trust. We purchased these potatoes from Mike, Noah and Josh at Driftless Organics, who recommend this variety as one of the best all-around potatoes. Here's what they have to say about their German butterballs: "These potatoes are special because they have a deep golden-color flesh with phenomenal taste. The skins are a bit russeted, half because that's the way they grow but also because they are grown in a heavier loam soil which also adds to their flavor. These potatoes are coming out of storage and will actually taste a touch sweet as the temp conversion will convert some of their starches to sugar. They are great roasted, in foil packs on the grill, baked, and are a personal family favorite for mashed potatoes."

Rhubarb - Refrigerate in a plastic bag. FYI, 2 lb of rhubarb will yield about 6 to 6.5 cups when chopped.
Stewed rhubarb: This is the simplest way to prepare rhubarb. Chop rhubarb into one inch chunks. Stir over medium heat with a small amount of water in the bottom of the pan. The rhubarb will release moisture as it cooks. Stew until it softens and falls apart. Sweeten to taste with honey or sugar. Eat warm on its own, over vanilla ice cream, on pancakes, etc.

Penne with Spinach and Green Garlic

Contributed by chefs Pat Mulvey and Laura Gilliam of Local Thyme who writes "sweet spinach and the goat cheese are meant for each other, and marry well with the silky texture egg lends to this quick weeknight dinner recipe. Our kids love this meal, and request it frequently."

1 tablespoon oil, sunflower or olive oil

2 bulbs and light green parts of green garlic, peeled, trimmed and chopped

4-5 cups spinach, washed and trimmed of any larger stems (don't worry about drying the spinach....leave a little water on the leaves)

1 egg, lightly beaten

1/3 cup fresh goat cheese (or ricotta), and it's perfectly fine to use a savory-flavored goat cheese here - I'm partial to Dreamfarm's pesto goat cheese.

12 oz penne

salt and pepper to taste

- Prepare the penne according to directions on the package.
- While the penne boils prepare the spinach, so the penne will be hot when it is melded with the spinach mixture.
- Heat a large pot on medium heat, and add oil and wait until the oil starts to shimmer. Add the garlic and stir until it becomes fragrant, about 1 minute. Add the spinach and a pinch of salt, and cover and cook for about 3-4 minutes. Remove the lid and stir gently. If there's a lot of water in the pot, increase the heat, and gently stir to allow some of the moisture to evaporate. Remove the pot from the heat. Add the egg and cheese, and some freshly ground pepper, and vigorously stir the pot with a wooden spoon to mix all the ingredients. The residual heat from the pot and cooked spinach will cook the eggs, like a carbonara sauce.
- Add the drained penne to the pot, stir to mix, season to taste with salt and pepper and serve immediately.

Roasted Rhubarb

Contributed by chefs Pat Mulvey and Laura Gilliam of Local Thyme.

This is a great way to prepare rhubarb to have on hand for using in a variety of ways. Try adding it as a topping for pan-seared fish. Add some roasted rhubarb to spinach greens, a little Greek yogurt, and some toasted nuts for a quick salad. Or toast some good bread, and use the rhubarb as you would a preserve or jam. You might find you even enjoy this preparation by itself, cold from the fridge. Oh, and this freezes wonderfully too.

For the wine, try using a light, citrusy pinot grigio or, if you'd like to keep it local, this is the perfect use for that bottle of Prairie Fumé. Alternatively, use a red wine to give it more depth of flavor.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings, Adapted from Canal House Cooking, Volume 3

2 lb. rhubarb, trimmed and cut into 2-inch lengths

½ cup sugar

½ cup wine

3-4 star anise (optional)

Set a rack in the lower third of the oven, and preheat the oven to 350°F.

Put the rhubarb in a non-reactive, oven-safe pot (such as enameled Dutch oven, or a stainless steel pot). Add the sugar, wine, and star anise, if using. Bake (uncovered) for about 30 minutes, or until tender, stirring the pot once or twice while it bakes. Enjoy warm or cold.

Mashed Potatoes with Olives and Green Garlic Dressing

Let's face it, this is dressed-up peasant food, but such a tasty way to enjoy the spring veggies. I've featured this dressing recipe in previous years. The dressing is an essential component in [Penne, Spinach, Asparagus and Cashew Salad](#), a recipe I recommend every year during green garlic and scallion season. It is a personal favorite in our household. *Beth*

Leftover dressing can be frozen or thinned to make salad dressing (see below).

mashed potatoes

steamed spinach

slivered olives

optional toppings: hard-boiled eggs,

cooked asparagus, cut into 1-inch pieces

dressing ingredients:

1/2 cup olive oil

1/2 cup sliced green garlic (or 3/4 cup sliced scallions)

6 tablespoons white wine or sherry vinegar

2 tablespoons soy sauce

I suggest that you use just the pale green stems of the green garlic in preparing this dressing. Blend 1/2 cup oil, green onions, vinegar and soy sauce in blender until smooth, about 2 minutes.

Place warm mashed potatoes in a bowl. Top with spinach, olives, optional toppings, and a drizzle of dressing.

Green Goddess Salad Dressing

You can prepare a variation of green goddess dressing. Prepare the dressing in the recipe above, then thin to taste with a bit of water. The dressing above is quite strong so it remain vibrant in a pasta salad, whereas thinned dressing is better for salads.