



From Far Afield

A newsletter of the Tolstoy Farms CSA - August 12 & 15, 2015

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YOU HAVE AN UNUSUAL item in your box this week: grape leaves. Laura wanted those to go in in conjunction with her brining recipe (see back page). Brining is a lacto-fermentation form of pickling, widely used before vinegar was readily available and still used commonly for sauerkraut and Kim Chee. Grape leaves were an old-time addition to keep pickles crisp. It is now understood that the tannins in the grape leaves inhibit softening agents in the blossom end of cucumbers, which is why recipes nowadays recommend trimming the blossom end and do not typically have grape leaves in their list of ingredients... trimming the end achieves the same goal. But, hey, if you

are doing an old time ferment, may as well throw in the grape leaves. Grape leaves can also be used for dolmas (stuffed grape leaves), though you would be making a small recipe with the amount you have in your box. They can also be chopped up for salad, or steamed for use in a pureed soup... pureeing together broccoli, kale, grape leaves, onions, salt and garlic makes for a delicious and nutrient packed dish. Grape leaves are actually very nutritious, with high amounts of fiber, calcium, magnesium, iron, and omega 3 fatty acids.

Your **onions** this week are sweets. The Wednesday folks will get fresh harvest ones, while the Saturday folks will have cured onions. Store your cured onions someplace cool, dry, and relatively dark... not in the refrigerator.

Beets this week are Chioggia. Chioggia beets have red and white concentric rings inside (bull's-eye pattern.) Their flavor is sweet, somewhat milder than red beets. Chioggia originated in Northern Italy before 1840, and first came to the United States in 1865. To preserve the color when boiling this heirloom beet, add a splash of lemon juice or white wine vinegar.

Your **garlic** this week is Armenian. This rare porcelain strain originally hails from the Armenian village of Hadrut Karabach near the Azerbaijan border. It has large, easy-peel cloves, a rick flavor with a bit of a bite, and is quite gorgeous. It holds well when baked, getting a deep, mellow flavor. Those who like to eat raw garlic like this variety.

More corn this week, a mix of yellow and bicolor. We harvested all four varieties on Tuesday, and will do so again on Friday.

So last week I was talking about GMOs. I had discussed the first reason for genetic modification, insect resistance. The second main reason for genetic modification is weed resistance

and the main expression of this is Roundup Ready crops. Roundup, for those unfamiliar is a glyphosate herbicide. It acts upon broadleaf and grass plants, as well as some bacteria, to prevent synthesis of certain amino acids, leading to death. Due to it's very broad-spectrum capabilities, Roundup used to be limited to use prior to planting; using roundup once crop plants had emerged would kill them. Monsanto engineered resistance into certain patented crops, most notably soybeans, corn, and canola, so that roundup could be sprayed throughout the growing season.

Thus genetic engineering contradicted one of the main claims for its viability: that it would decrease pesticide usage. With Roundup Ready crops the amount of glyphosate usage went up enormously. This has had huge environmental impacts; glyphosate is a chemical Monsanto describes as "safer than table salt", but which the World Health Organization describes as "a probable human carcinogen" which has been linked to non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. But as with Bt corn, there has been an irony: due to much wider usage of Roundup, resistance in weeds is accelerating, and roundup is becoming less effective. A payback of sorts for Monsanto and its best selling product, but the unfortunate part of this is that chemical farmers are increasing their reliance on even more dangerous chemicals, such as 2,4-d. And Monsanto is moving right along, releasing new transgenic crop varieties that resist these chemicals, so farmers can purchase and spray even more of them thus continuing the toxic cycle.

There are other reasons to be concerned with GMO crops: perhaps I will discuss them in later newsletters. For now though I will sign off and wish you all a good week. Enjoy your produce.

In Your Box

- 2 pound Carola potato
- 8 ears corn
- 2 tomato
- 1 cabbage
- 1 broccoli
- 1 bunch carrots
- 1 bunch Chioggia beets
- 2 sweet onions
- 1 head garlic
- 1 lettuce
- 4 cucumber
- 2 pounds zucchini
- 1 zapalito squash
- 1 patty pan squash
- 1 bunch kale
- Grape leaves
- 1 bunch sage

Corn Basil Cakes

1/2 cup white whole wheat flour
1/2 cup milk
2 eggs
2 tablespoons canola oil, divided
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper, freshly ground
2 cups corn, steamed, cooled, and cut off cob
1/2 cup fresh basil, chopped

Whisk flour, milk, eggs, 1 tablespoon oil, baking powder, salt and pepper in a medium bowl until smooth. Stir in corn and basil.

Brush a large nonstick skillet lightly with some of the remaining 1 tablespoon oil; heat over medium heat until hot (but not smoking). Cook 4 cakes at a time, using about 1/4 cup batter for each, making them about 3 inches wide. Cook until the edges are dry, about 2 minutes. Flip and cook until golden brown on the other side, 1 to 3 minutes more. Repeat with the remaining oil and batter, making 10 cakes total. Reduce the heat as necessary to prevent burning.

Brined Vegetable Pickles

This recipe is from Laura, one of the Farmers and long term residents here at Tolstoy.

This is an easy quick way to preserve your vegetables, especially if you are overwhelmed with too much of anything. You can make small batches and each one will be unique.

Ingredients & Supplies:

- Sea or Pickling Salt (not iodized),
- Water
- Any Type of Firm Vegetable, (carrot, beets, beans, summer squash, cucumbers, broccoli, cauliflower, thinly sliced cabbage, onion, bulbing fennel, garlic, peppers, bruised kale, ect. even apples)
- Herbs and Spices
- Optional but preferred: a tannic leaf like grape leaves.
- Wide Mouth Jar or Crock
- A weight that fits in the top of the vessel, (clean rocks work well)

Pick a jar that fits the volume of vegetable you wish to use. Start with a quart if you are timid, or go for a whole gallon if you have a gallon jar.

Brine Solution: 2 T salt to 1 Quart filtered warm water. Mix up as much of as this is you think you'll need. It keeps if you don't use it all.

Line the jar bottom with a grape leaf If you have one, and add some spices. Garlic and dill are common favorites, but whatever you like will do. Add raw chunks/slices of vegetables. These will retain all of their crispness, so things like beets and beans can be precooked if you want them to be soft. Pour the brine over the vegetables and leave at least an inch of headspace. Add another grape leaf to the top and then a weight that fits inside the jar to keep

the veggies submerged. Jiggle it to assure all the air bubbles rise. Cover with a loose fitting lid, or a cloth and rubber band. Label it with the date and put in a saucer or plate and keep it on your kitchen counter. It will start to bubble in a day or so, and it might spill over if it is too full, but let the bubbles get out and the plate should catch any messes. Do not tighten the lid. Give it a few days to ferment, then sprinkle a little bit more salt on top to make up for the liquid that seeps out of the vegetables. It will start smelling like sauerkraut and that is basically what you are making. After a week or so, move it to a cooler place like a basement, garage or root cellar, for a second week.

You can try them out at any point, and when they are to your liking, put them in your fridge for safe keeping, or start eating them. These will be full of live beneficial bacteria just like sour kraut or kim chee so eating them raw is best, (but you can also can them which will make them last much longer.) They will keep for at least a few months in your fridge as long as you keep them weighted and submerged. If they are too salty right out of the jar, rinse them off before eating.

I have made five batches so far, each one different. I used raw beans garlic, mustard seed and dill and the beans are still as crunchy as they are raw, so next time I'll steam them first. I made a gallon of Broccoli-carrot-onion with garlic & hop pepper, Then, mixed vegetables-apple with bulbing fennel, black pepper, jalapeno, garlic, and today pre boiled beet slices with raw apple, cloves, star anise, cardamon, and stevia. I also made a 2 gallon crock of whole cucumbers with dill garlic and onion.

Try a batch each week using whatever vegetables and herbs come in your box!