



From Far Afield

A newsletter of the Tolstoy Farms CSA - August 26 & 29, 2015

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A COUPLE OF THINGS in the box for the first time this season. But first a couple of reminders. Please return your boxes.

If you are a Davenport CSA who gets a cloth, please return that, too. We reuse these things.

So, about the produce: You have celery for the first time this season. Celery is not something we grew when I started working on the farm a couple decades ago. But I am glad we started growing it. Celery is mainly enjoyed raw in the United States, on vegetable platters or in salads, for which is wonderful; but one should not ignore celery's culi-

nary cooked qualities in such things as soups, stews, stocks, ragouts stuffing, and stir-fries (the Chinese are especially attuned to celery's place in the latter dish.) Celery, onions, and bell peppers are the "holy trinity" of Louisiana Creole and Cajun cuisine. Celery, onions, and carrots make up the French mirepoix, often used as a base for sauces and soups. Celery is a staple in many soups, such as chicken noodle soup. The leaves are a nice seasoning, able to replace or mix with parsley to good effect. If your celery gets to be a bit old, peeling the outer ribs makes it more pleasant to eat. Celery has been cultivated for about 3000 years. It contains several vitamins and minerals, fiber, and has excellent anti-inflammatory and anti-oxidizing properties. And it tastes good, cooked or raw.

You have a single **eggplant** this week. Eggplant is good grilled, roasted, or sautéed. First cultivated from a wild relative in either China, India, or both independently, eggplant travelled through Asia, to Africa, the middle East, and Europe, before coming to the Americas centuries later. Compared to the varieties we eat today, early eggplants were very bitter, with non-bitter varieties not being developed until the 18th century. Its bitter flavor made it initially unpopular as a food in Europe, with many Europeans claiming its bitterness caused insanity, leprosy, and cancer. It is now a staple of the cuisines of such places as Italy, Greece, Turkey, and France, as well as India, China, Thailand, West Africa, and the Middle East. Eggplant is terrific in eggplant parmesan, in lasagna, on pizza, stuffed, in pasta sauce, on sand-

wiches, or as a spread, such as baba ganoush. Incidentally, bitter eggplant varieties are still popular in some cuisines, such as Thai, Hmong, and West African. These varieties are typically small, round or ruffled, and ripen orange or red. We do not grow these types on our farm.

The **corn** dropped faster than Fannie Mae stock after the financial crash. Last Tuesday we picked about 900 ears and today we got 180. You are getting two ears for full shares this week, and it will be a stretch just to get that much for Saturday. The third planting is lagging very far behind the first two plantings, for reasons that elude me completely. One factor is that we did not have our earliest variety, Spring Treat, planted in our third planting. But even taking that into account, the third planting is still farther behind than I would expect. Ah, well, I expect we will have more in future weeks.

Speaking of corn, even if you do not want a replacement or credit, let us know if you have ears that were damaged by corn earworm or had a worm inside. Hopefully it is rare, but I am trying to ascertain how common it is and how adept we are at catching and culling out the ears with it.

Your beets this week are a mix of reds and Chioggia (the bulls-eye beet). Your garlic is a variety called Tochliavri. Tochliavri stores well and has an excellent, hot flavor. You have a jalapeno pepper this week. The half shares have a small Early Jalapeno, which is very hot. Full shares have a large Concho jalapeno which is not as hot. Enjoy your produce.

In Your Box

- 2 pound Purple Majesty potato
- 2 ears corn
- 1 eggplant
- 2 pounds tomatoes
- 1 head celery
- 1 bunch carrots
- 1 1/2 lb. beans
- 1 bunch beets
- 2 sweet onions
- 1 head garlic
- 1 lettuce
- 2 cucumber
- 1 pounds zucchini
- 1 zapaalito squash
- 1 bunch kale
- 1 bunch basil
- 1 sweet pepper
- 1 Jalapeno pepper

Rustic Zucchini Tian

This recipe is from Sylvia Fountaine's website Feasting at Home (feastingathome.com). Sylvia is a great local chef who runs her own catering business, Feast.

- 2 large onions, sliced
 - 2 T olive oil
 - 10 garlic cloves, roughly chopped
 - 4 large tomatoes, diced
 - 1 small Lemon - zest and 1 T juice
 - 2 tsp cumin seeds (whole)
 - 1 tsp ground coriander
 - ½ tsp kosher salt, plus more for sprinkling
 - cracked pepper
 - 2 lbs zucchini or summer squash- sliced into ¼ inch disks
 - ¼ C chopped Italian parsley
1. In a large heavy bottomed, oven proof skillet (cast iron works great), heat olive oil until hot on medium heat. Add onions and saute for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally until golden brown. Add garlic, stirring more frequently, until garlic is lightly browned.
 2. Turn heat to med- low and add diced tomatoes, lemon

zest and lemon juice, salt, pepper and spices. Simmer on low until tomatoes cook down a little, about 5 minutes. This will seem like a fairly "dry" tomato sauce, but remember, zucchini will release their liquids in while baking.

3. Remove all but ⅓ of the rustic tomato sauce, placing ⅔ in a separate bowl.
4. Spread the remaining tomato sauce (about ½ C) evenly on the bottom of the pan. Place one single layer of zucchini in slighty overlapping concentric circles.
5. Sprinkle with a pinch of kosher salt and pepper.
6. Spread another third of the rustic tomato sauce over the zucchini, as evenly as possible. It won't seem like a lot, but don't worry.
7. Add the second final layer of slightly overlapping zucchini. Sprinkle with salt, pepper and the rest of the tomato sauce.
8. Cover with foil. Place in 350 F oven for 45 minutes. Uncover and give a good shake, and bake uncovered for additional 20 minutes. Let stand 15 minutes before serving. Sprinkle with parsley and a give a drizzle of olive oil.

Celery Risotto with Kale

- 7 cups well seasoned chicken or vegetable stock
 - 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
 - 1/2 cup minced onion
 - 6 celery branches, preferably from the heart, diced (2 cups diced celery)
 - 1 1/2 cups Arborio rice
 - 1 to 2 garlic cloves (to taste), minced
 - Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
 - 1/2 cup dry white wine, such as Pinot Grigio or Sauvignon Blanc
 - 1 cup chopped dandelion greens or kale
 - 2 tablespoons chopped flat leaf parsley
 - 1 tablespoon chives
 - 1/3 cup (1 1/2 ounces) freshly grated Parmesan cheese
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1. Put your stock or broth into a saucepan and bring it to a simmer over low heat, with a ladle nearby. Make sure that it is well seasoned.
 2. Heat the olive oil over medium heat in a wide, heavy skillet or saucepan. Add the onion, celery and a pinch of salt, and cook gently until just about tender, 3 to 5 minutes. Do not brown.
 3. Stir in the rice and the garlic and stir for a few minutes,

just until the grains separate and begin to crackle. Add the wine and stir until it has been absorbed. Begin adding the simmering stock, a couple of ladlefuls at a time. The stock should just cover the rice and should be bubbling, not too slowly but not too quickly. Cook, stirring often, until it is just about absorbed. Add another ladleful or two of the stock and continue to cook in this fashion, adding more stock and stirring when the rice is almost dry. You do not have to stir constantly, but stir often. After 10 to 15 minutes stir in the dandelion greens and kale with the next addition of stock. When the rice is just tender all the way through but still chewy, usually about 25 minutes after you begin cooking, it is done. Taste now and adjust seasoning.

4. Add the parsley and chives, and another ladleful of stock to the rice. Stir in the Parmesan and remove from the heat. The mixture should be creamy. Serve right away in wide soup bowls or on plates, spreading the risotto in a thin layer rather than a mound.