



# From Far Afield

A newsletter of the Tolstoy Farms CSA - July 15 & 18, 2015

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**T**HE WEATHER HAS turned cooler as of late, which is nice, both for us and for the crops. Most of our crops appreciate hot sunny weather, but temperatures in the upper nineties or hundreds day after day can sap even the most heat tolerant among them. I was not expecting the weather to get cooler in July. There is still lots of time for the weather to get back up to the extremes, but for now it is a relief to have temperatures in the eighties.

Several things are in your boxes for the first time this season. You have an assortment of **summer squash**. In addition to zucchini, which you had last week, you have a zapalito squash and a patty pan squash. **Zapalito** and **Patty Pan**. Zapalito is the round green one. It

can be used like any other Summer squash, but has a denser, richer flesh. I like slicing them in 1/2-3/4" rounds and pan frying or grilling them. They are great on a sandwich this way. They are also very good in stir-fries, and make an excellent faux eggplant parmesan. Patty pan squash is also known as sunburst or yellow scallop squash. It is interchangeable with zucchini. Some folks like cooking patty pans whole in a pan with a roast, much like you would use small potatoes or onions.

Your **potato** this week is Warba, also known as Warba Pink Eye. The latter name is due to the pink eyes on the buff skin. The eyes on a potato are the sunken areas from which, eventually, sprouts will emerge. I usually just refer to them by their shorter name, Warba; somehow, adding "pink eye" to the name of a food does not seem like the best marketing idea... In any case Warbas have a waxy flesh which is great steamed, boiled, or fried. They are good keepers, though these ones being new potatoes, I would not plan on trying to hold them into the winter.

Speaking of eyes and sprouts on potatoes, sometimes people ask me when potatoes are not safe to eat. Basically, potato sprouts and green potato skin and flesh have an alkaloid called solanine. This chemical is toxic to humans having the action of stopping neural transmissions. As long as the potato is still firm these parts can be cut off and the rest of the potato is fine. But while it is always a good idea to not eat these parts, it is not a great worry either, as individual potatoes have very little

of the toxin. Ingesting toxic levels of solanine for a 200 pound adult male would involve eating 20 pounds of very green potatoes, skin included, in one day.

You have a mix of **red and Chioggia beet** this week. Chioggia have a lighter, rose-pink skin and have white and red concentric rings inside. They have a milder flavor than red beets. Chioggia beets get their name from the coastal town and municipality of Chioggia in Venice, Italy, where they were originally developed. Chioggias can be used like any other type of beet.

You have both **cauliflower and broccoli** this week. The full shares have a whole head of cauliflower, whereas the half-shares have a half head. For broccoli the half-shares have a smaller head than the full shares. I may have mentioned in an earlier newsletter that cauliflower and broccoli are the same species, *Brassica oleracea*. Kale and cabbage are also in this species, all brought about through centuries of selection by farmers and plant breeders. Broccoli and cauliflower are excellent prepared in a variety of ways, such as steaming, sautéing, or cooked in casseroles. They are good in stirfries and curries, or served with cheese, balsamic vinegar, or sesame. Cauliflower and potatoes are delicious partners, and broccoli sautéed in olive oil with garlic is so good... add a little tofu or chicken to the sauté and you have a main dish.

Your **garlic** this week is Uzbek again, but unlike last time it is cured this week. Do not store in your fridge, but somewhere rela-

## *In Your Box*

- 2 pound Warba potato
- 1 bunch carrots
- 1 bunch beets
- 2 fresh sweet onions
- 1 fresh Red of Tropea onion
- 1 head cured garlic
- 2 lettuce
- 1 head cauliflower
- 1 head broccoli
- 1 cucumber
- 1 1/2 pound zucchini
- 1 zapalito squash
- 1 patty pan squash
- 1 bunch chard
- 1 bunch basil

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tively cool and dry, out of direct sunlight.

You have a couple of **sweet onions** this week. As you can see, these are fresh harvest sweet onions. Being uncured you should store these in the fridge for longest freshness and best quality. You can store them out of the fridge, too; they will get a little withered on the outer peels but should be good for a week or so when peeled down.

One cucumber this week and a bunch of basil. Enjoy.

## Basil Herb of the Week

A fragrant herb, the leaf of which is used culinarily. The French call basil "herbe royale," and in Italy it is a sign of love: traditionally, when a woman set a pot of basil on the balcony outside of her room, it meant she was ready to receive her suitor. Basil is suggested as a medicinal for digestive complaints...a cup of basil tea is said to aid digestion, and expel gas. As well it is described as having a slight sedative action. North Americans are not alone in their culinary love of basil, with it's rich, spicy, mildly peppery flavor with hints of clove and mint. It is traditional in Italian, Mediterranean, and Thai cookery. Basil adds a snap to mild vegetables, soups and sauces, and creates excellent flavored vinegars. It is great in salads and garnishes. Purple basil adds wonderful coloration to vinegars and dishes in which it is used. Basil is almost a requirement in tomato sauces. And of course there is pesto. Basil dries well, or stored in an oil, vinegar, or frozen paste.

## Beet Cucumber Salad with Yogurt

- \* 6 medium beets or 3-4 larger ones
- \* 1 red or sweet onion, thinly sliced
- \* 1/2 cucumber, sliced
- \* 5 tablespoons plain yogurt
- \* 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- \* 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- \* 1/2 teaspoon prepared Dijon-style mustard
- \* 1/2 teaspoon prepared horseradish
- \* 2 tablespoons dried dill weed
- \* 1/3 teaspoon salt
- \* 1/3 teaspoon ground black pepper

1. Scrub, top, and tail beets. Boil in salted water about 45 minutes, or until tender. Drain hot water from pot, and fill with cold water. Set aside until beets are cool enough to handle.
2. Slice beets thinly, and transfer to a salad bowl. Add onion and cucumber.
3. In separate bowl, combine yogurt, mayonnaise, vinegar, mustard, horseradish, dill, and salt and pepper. Pour over vegetables, and toss to combine. Refrigerate 2 hours, or overnight. Serve chilled



## Alloo Gobi

- 1 tablespoon ginger, grated on a ginger grater
- 1 tablespoon garlic, grated on a ginger grater
- 2 teaspoons canola oil
- 1 tablespoon ground coriander
- 1/4 teaspoon turmeric
- 1 cup water, divided
- 2 tablespoons peanut oil
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1 small head cauliflower, cut into small florets
- 1 large or two medium potatoes cut into 1/2-inch cubes (similar size to cauliflower)
- Kosher salt

Mix the ginger, garlic, and canola oil in a small bowl or measuring cup until smooth. Add coriander, turmeric, and 1/2 cup water and mix well. This is a simple wet masala (spice mix). Set aside.

In a large pot or wok, warm the oil over medium-high heat until shimmering but not smoking. Add the cumin seeds and wait until they're done spluttering.

Add the wet masala (careful, it will also splutter). Cook, stirring occasionally, until the paste thickens, deepens in color slightly, and oil oozes out of the perimeter of the masala, about 2 minutes.

Add the cauliflower and potatoes, stirring to coat the vegetables with the masala. Season with salt and add 1/2 cup water. Cover and cook over medium heat, about 15 minutes. Then, remove the lid, stir, and cook until the cauliflower and potatoes are cooked through, about 5 minutes.