



From Far Afield

A newsletter of the Tolstoy Farms CSA - July 22 & 25, 2015

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THE GARDEN IS DOING well. The corn is getting tall and the earliest varieties are forming ears, which should start producing in the next week or two. Walking through the garden we see many squash setting on the winter squash plants. We are staying fairly well ahead of the weeds... the carrots at this point look about as weed free as I have seen them at this point in the season. The intense heat in June set some plants back, but by and large everything is growing well.

You have a new type of

squash this week, a yellow straightneck squash. Of your squash varieties this week, the patty pan, also known as yellow scallop squash, is the oldest known type, with European drawings of and references to it from the mid-1500's.

Straightneck, crookneck, and zucchini squash were all developed in the early 1700's, while zapalito squash are thought to have been developed in the last 150 years.

Squash is indigenous to the Americas, with two distinct areas of independent cultivation from their wild predecessors: in what is now the southeastern United States, and in what is now northwestern Mexico. They have been grown in the Americas for nearly ten thousand years.

Your **potato** this week is Carola. This buff potato's gold flesh is smooth and creamy, not starchy or waxy, soft and buttery. It is good for frying and roasting, but especially shines as a mashed potato. Carola was originally bred in Germany.

You have a **bulbing fennel** this week. Fennel's flavor is similar to anise or licorice. This flavor is more pronounced when eaten raw, becoming mellow, yet richer when cooked, becoming sweet and succulent with a rich flavor that enhances vegetable, meat, poultry, pasta, and fish dishes. Raw, the bulb and stalks of bulbing fennel taste like a nutty anise celery. The raw bulb can be

minced for use in fruit or green salads. Brushed with olive oil and grilled, fennel makes a great side dish for grilled fish, especially salmon. Fennel goes well with barley, rice, cabbage, sauerkraut, beets, pickles, potatoes, lentils, bread, & cheese. One of our CSA's recommends broiling the bulbs until soft & mashing into mashed potatoes. Roast halved or quartered fennel bulbs (depending on size) with chicken or with pork and apples for a meltingly delicious combination of flavors. To braise fennel, sprinkle sliced bulbs with good virgin olive oil, bake until tender, then finish with freshly grated Parmesan cheese, if desired, and brown under the broiler.

The leaves can be used in salads or added to cooked recipes at the last moment, as heat destroys the ferns delicate flavor. The leaves add aroma & flavor to herb butters, salad dressings, & Chinese marinades. You can also put the chopped leaves in breads or cookies.

You have **gold beets** this week. Gold beets have a very sweet flavor. Some cooks prefer them because they do not stain the way red beets do. I like them because they taste good and are a beautiful color. If you mix them with red beets it is good to cook them separately, other wise they absorb the beets red coloring and their own is lost.

Enjoy your produce.

In Your Box

- 2 pound Carola potato
- 1/2 pound mixed green and yellow beans
- 1 tomato
- 1 bunch carrots
- 1 bunch gold beets
- 2 fresh sweet onions
- 1 head cured garlic
- 1 lettuce
- 1 head cabbage
- 1 cucumber
- 2 pounds zucchini
- 1 zapalito squash
- 1 patty pan squash
- 1 yellow straight neck squash
- 1 bunch kale
- 1 bulbing fennel
- 1 bunch basil
- 1 bunch savory

Savory Herb of the Week

Savory is an herb so bold and peppery in its flavor that since the time of the Saxons it has come to denote not only the herb itself, but also a whole segment of cooking. It is synonymous with tasty and flavorful foods. Most commonly used as a seasoning for green vegetables, savory's special affinity is for beans. It is no coincidence that the German word for the herb is Bohnenkraut, meaning bean herb, as one of the components of the herb naturally aids the digestion of these sometimes problematic legumes.

The savory plant produces fragrant white to lilac colored blossoms that are attractive to bees. Virgil encouraged the planting of savory near one's beehives because of the wonderful flavor it adds to the honey.

The leaves of winter savory are bright green, narrow, and tough. They are best used for dishes that require long cooking, such as stews, or added to the water when cooking dried beans so that there is enough heat and moisture to break them down. This not only releases the flavorful oils, but also softens the leaves so that they are palatable. Winter savory is often used in stuffing, with vegetables, as a seasoning for fowl, and in making sausages. In fact, it is used today in the commercial preparation of salami.

Savory has a peppery bite to it. It has been suggested to use this herb as a seasoning for salt-free diets as the strong flavor makes food more appealing.

Swiss Chard & Green Bean Potato Salad with Herbs & Yogurt Rice

- 1 pound Potatoes, (use small or bite size size pieces)
- 1/2 pound Green beans,
- 1 bunch Swiss chard,
- 2 medium size zucchini
- 1/4 sweet onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- Basil, 4 leaves
- 1/2 tablespoon oil
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- Dijon mustard, 1 teaspoon
- Anchovy paste, 1 teaspoon
- 1 cup white rice,
- 1 cup yogurt,
- 1 teaspoon allspice
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon minced savory leaves

Slice the Swiss chard and basil leaves in thin strips. For this remove the thick stems. Then stack a few leaves, roll them into a cigar shape and slice thinly. Dissolve the mustard, anchovy paste, in two tablespoons of wine vinegar. Cut the zucchini in slices.

Rinse rice to remove starch. Generally you should rinse until the water running through the rice runs pretty clear. Place a medium pot over medium heat and add 1 cup of rice and 2 cups of water. Cover and let it come to a rolling boil. Add 1 tablespoon of salt. Immediately lower the heat and cook at a gentle simmer until the water is almost absorbed (about 8 to 10 minutes). Since the rice will be cooked with yogurt at later time, it doesn't need to

cook through just yet. So turn off the heat and remove the rice when the rice becomes al dente (just a small crunch in the center of the rice grain).

While the rice is cooking mix yogurt, 1 teaspoon of all spice, 1/2 teaspoon of nutmeg, and 1/2 teaspoon of savory. Remove rice from the pot and take 3/4 of the rice and put in a medium bowl and combine with the yogurt mixture. Reserve the remaining rice and set aside.

Heat 1 tablespoon of oil in a cast iron skillet set on low heat. Then spread the rice and yogurt mixture covering the entire skillet. Add the reserved rice on top of the yogurt rice layer and spread evenly. Cook for 30 minutes more uncovered. A crust will form on the bottom of the skillet. Using a spatula scrape out the rice from the skillet. Divide the rice saving a piece of the crust on each plate.

Place the potatoes in a small pot and cover with water. Cover and bring to a boil. Cook for 20 minutes or until you can easily pierce them with a fork.

Bring water to a boil in a large stock pot and add the beans. Cook for 2 minutes or until they turn bright in color. Transfer beans to a bowl with ice water to stop the cooking process. Drain beans and cut in 1" pieces. Heat a skillet with 1 tablespoon of oil and sauté the beans for a couple of minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Add zucchini slices and sauté for a minute. Add the Swiss chard in bunches, seasoning with salt and pepper, and letting it wilt as you add each bunch. Add the diced onion, garlic, and cooked potatoes and stir in the mixture of wine vinegar, mustard, and anchovy paste. To serve, divide the salad in four plates and top with basil. Divide the rice and serve with slices of cucumber on the side.