



# From Far Afield

A newsletter of the Tolstoy Farms CSA - July 29 & August 1, 2015

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**A**S OF THIS WRITING, we are entering the final days of July. The weather forecast is calling for hot temperatures for the final few days of this month, low- to mid-nineties. This morning (Tuesday) when I first walked onto my porch, the temperature was 43.5 degrees, which means out in the yard it was probably about 41. Everyone out in the garden initially was wearing jackets and hats. Though the cold weather gear came off when the sun came onto the garden, it is still rather remarkable that we

were even wearing such, that my hands were quite cold picking beans in late July. The weather hereabouts is always rather topsyturvy, but this year seems especially so, what with scorching heat making it hard to keep the garden watered and causing crop damage in June, to temperatures with highs in the low seventies and lows in the low forties in late July. And now, according to the weather forecasts, we will soon have several days in the mid- to upper-nineties. Whoosh. Most crops are doing well, and we are planting our late season crops... Chinese cabbage, turnips, bok choy, radishes. And I see lots of winter squash growing and starting to color, and the first corn should be coming on next week. So goes the season.

The **beans** picked up their production this week, so you have twice as much as last week. Hopefully they keep producing for a couple more weeks. Picking beans is a laborious chore, it takes a lot of time. It used to be a job I did not like very much, but now I like picking beans. There is something soothing in the repetitive monotony of the job, time to think, with the satisfaction of seeing the bucket fill up with beans.

Your **beets** this week are cylindra. These long, slender beets have a smooth, silky texture. They are nice for pickling or cutting in slices due to their uniform shape. Their flavor is very

good, and their tops are high quality. This Danish heirloom is also known as "Butter slicer" for its texture. It is believed to have been developed in the 1800's with it first reaching American gardens in the early 1900's.

Your **potato** is Purple Majesty. These potatoes are purple throughout, making a beautiful addition to any meal. They make excellent fries or chips, are good roasted, and I like them on their own or mixed with other varieties in mashed potatoes. Purple Majesty were developed in the past few years by plant breeders at Colorado State University. They are high in bioflavonoids and other anti-oxidants, which makes this potato variety especially healthy.

Your garlic this week is a variety called Novo troitsk. This is a rare garlic variety which was first brought to the U.S. by a collector who procured it at an open-air market in the city of Aktobe in NW Kazakhstan. It has a rich, spicy flavor. Novo troitsk is a variety of the purple stripe group of garlic. Purple stripe garlics are ancestral to all other garlic strains. Garlic, incidentally, has been used by humans for over 7000 years.

Enjoy your produce.

## *In Your Box*

- 2 pound Purple Majesty potato
- 1 pound mixed green and yellow beans
- 1 tomato
- 1 bunch carrots
- 1 bunch cylindra beets
- 2 fresh sweet onions
- 1 head cured garlic
- 1 lettuce
- 1 head broccoli
- 2 cucumber
- 1 1/2 pounds zucchini
- 1 zapalito squash
- 2 patty pan squash
- 1 bunch kale
- 1 bunch basil
- 1 bunch tarragon

## Tarragon

### Herb of the Week

Tarragon is native to the Caspian Sea area and Serbia. It is cultivated extensively in Europe, the U.S. and Asia. This variety is French Tarragon, which as its name implies is widely used in French cooking. In contrast to the other variety, Russian Tarragon, French tarragon has a milder, sweeter flavor, preferred absolutely culinarily. French Tarragon has an anise-like flavor which is commonly associated with flavored vinegar and fish. It is very well suited to both of these but has much wider culinary applications. Its flavor can dominate or clash with other herbs, and in general one should avoid using too heavy a hand in its application, as well as avoiding cooking it too long, which can bring out its bitter side. Use the leaves fresh in salads and as garnish. Tarragon enhances fish, shellfish, pork, beef, lamb, game, poultry, pates, leeks, potatoes, tomatoes, onions, artichokes, asparagus, mushrooms, broccoli, beets, peas, parsley, garlic, chives, lemon, oranges, rice, and barley. It is great in flavored vinegars, herbed mayonnaise, herbed butters, cream sauces, soups, and with cheese, eggs, sour cream, and yogurt. For best flavor in long cooking soups and stews, add tarragon during the last 15 minutes only. Create a fish salad by poaching salmon or haddock, and combining it with feta cheese, pitted green olives, and fresh tarragon. Dress with a garlic vinaigrette. Or stuff tarragon and garlic slivers under the leg and breast skin of a chicken before you roast it. Though tarragon dries easily, its flavor is better if frozen or stored in vinegar.

### Green Beans With Caramelized Onions & Tarragon

- 2 teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 large sweet onion thinly sliced
- Coarse salt and ground pepper
- 1 pounds green beans, trimmed
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh tarragon leaves

In a large nonstick skillet, heat 1 tablespoon oil over medium-high. Add onions and season with salt and pepper. Cook, stirring often, until softened and just beginning to brown, 10 minutes. Reduce heat to medium; cook, stirring occasionally, until onions are deep golden brown and very soft, 30 minutes. (Refrigerate in an airtight container, up to 1 day. Bring to room temperature before using.

Meanwhile, in a large pot of boiling salted water, cook green beans until crisp-tender and bright green, about 6 minutes. Drain and toss with tarragon and 1 teaspoon oil; season with salt and pepper. Transfer beans to a platter and top with onions.

### Summer Squash Salad with Beets

- 1 bunch beets
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt & pepper
- 1/4 cup chopped sweet onion
- 1 lb. zucchini or patty pan squash
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar or fresh squeezed orange juice
- Crumbled goat chevre or feta cheese (optional)

Cut the tops off of beets. Soak the leaves in a bowl of water while you slice the roots in rounds about 1/4" thick.

Toss the sliced beets with 1 tablespoon olive oil, salt, and pepper. Arrange on a baking sheet and bake at 350. When they are lightly browned on the bottom — which will take 15-20 minutes — flip them. The other side will brown much more quickly.

Meanwhile, drain the beet leaves, cut the stems off and then chop roughly. Cook chopped onions in 1 tablespoon olive oil until soft and beginning to brown, then add the beet greens and cook until tender, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

Slice zucchini or sunburst squash thinly. Cut the squash slices into ribbons. Toss in a bowl with the hot beet greens and allow to sit for 5 minutes. Dress with balsamic vinegar or fresh squeezed orange juice, 1 tablespoon olive oil, salt and pepper.

Serve the salad topped with crumbled goat chevre or feta cheese and the roasted beet slices.