

May 20, 2004

This (past) week's share:

- Four Seasons Lettuce*
- Baby (or not baby) Carrots*
- Scallions (white or purple)*
- Onions
- Komatsuna*
- Swiss Chard*
- Hakurei Turnips*
- Herbs: parsley and chives
- Optional (for members who pick up at the farm): flowering Mei Qing Choi (baby pac choi—remember the discussion of veggies in a form you don't see at the store? Voila)*

*=items from the hoopouses (i.e. "WOW! That grew in Michigan this early in the spring???)")

Announcements:

1. Is everyone clear on where, when, and how you pick up your share? I just want to be sure everyone is getting their shares -- especially those of you who pick up on campus. Please email me and let me know if there are any mix-ups or problems, so we can fix them.

2. Repeat: Recipes Wanted! We try to include seasonal recipes in

each newsletter, especially for new or unusual veggies, herbs, etc. If you have favorite recipes

using produce we grow at the farm, send it to me via email (ferrares@msu.edu). In fact, send me several – the more the better. I'll try to include them all in the newsletters as those crops come into season. Several of you mentioned recipes you like when you came on Thursday – send them along!

3. Share Balances Due by June 17, 2004.

You should have received a receipt in the mail by now for your deposit or payment in full. You should also have received a confirmation letter which includes your balance due, if any. Unless we've made alternate arrangements, all balances are due by June 17, 2004 (third Thursday in June). Make checks out to MSU. Either hand-deliver to us at pick-up, or mail to me at Michelle Ferrarese, MSU Dept. of Horticulture, A288 Plant and Soil Science Building, East Lansing MI 48824. If you split a share, we request that you make out one check for the total balance – it

makes our record-keeping simpler. If your receipt and/or confirmation letter has still not arrived, please email or call me at 355-5191 ext. 342.

4. Carpooling to the farm:

Several folks are interested in carpooling to pick up shares, or rotating weeks with other members (you pick up your own and your friends' shares one week, they pick them all up the next week, etc.). If you'd like to be put in touch with other members to carpool/trade off, save gas, and get to know another member or two, please drop me an email with your name and location (where you come from to go to the farm) within the next week. I'll send out the list of names, arranged by location if possible, to those who respond. Thanks for thinking of that – even though we're reducing the number of miles your food travels (compared to California-grown produce, for example), it makes all kinds of sense to minimize driving here, as well.

5. Repeat: Volunteer Days and Community Potlucks: We consider every day a volunteer day. Thursday mornings are a good time for regular, committed volunteers (our main harvest day). Other weekdays are better

for drop-in or first-time volunteers. We will, however, plan a few weekend volunteer days and community meals together throughout the summer. Please let me know if you are interested in coordinating and/or hosting a member potluck either at the farm or at your home.

6. Repeat: Visits and outreach:

If *you* teach or are in a class or organization that would like to visit the farm, either for fun or as part of the coursework, please contact Emily Reardon, our Education and Outreach Coordinator, at reardone@msu.edu. We host walking tours, volunteers, interviewers, courses that use the farm as part of their curriculum, prospective or current farmers, and more.

What About Funny, Unfamiliar Vegetables?

This week's big question is probably the komatsuna. According to student farmer Michael Rodriguez, "Komatsuna (*Brassica rapa* var. *komatsuna*) is a typical Japanese leafy vegetable, and is often called Japanese Mustard Spinach 'round these parts. You can toss the whole plant -leaves, stalks, flower shoots and all- in a salad or stir-fry. It is also very popular

for salt pickling if you're into preserving your food. Giving new meaning to the term "fast food," Komatsuna is ready for harvest 20 to 30 days after sowing. Plants can be grown all year round in temperate and subtropical areas (or if you live in Michigan and happen to know someone with a hoop house)." I will state here for the benefit of new members, and reminder to old members, that **YOU CAN USE ANY GREEN LEAFY VEGETABLE YOU WANT IN ANY RECIPE THAT CALLS FOR A GREEN LEAFY VEGETABLE!** Being mindful of the heartiness, flavor, and texture of the leaf, you'll learn to substitute kale, collards, chard, mustard greens, spinach, any of the chois, and more, with ease. Spinach and chard are mild-flavored, tender, quick-cooking greens, while kale and mustard and turnip greens tend to be heartier, have a little bite (they're in the mustard family after all), and take longer to cook til tender. Collard greens and Brussels sprout greens (you'll see those in the fall) are heartier yet, and take longer to cook (OR need to be chopped more finely and marinated a little longer to tenderize, if enjoying them raw). That said, if you budget preparation/cooking time and timing accordingly, and you

learn what your preferences are (e.g. do you need a little salt or vinegar to balance out the strong flavor of mustard or collards? Do you LOVE spinach, the more the better? Does kale go well with more black pepper, or lemon juice?), you can switch from chard to collards to radish greens, etc. effortlessly.

One of my favorite cookbooks is *Tomato Blessings and Radish Teachings* by Edward Espe Brown (the author of the *Tassajara Bread Book*). He advises cooks to taste, taste, taste, every step of the way. His recipes go something like: "chop up the onions. Taste them. Saute them lightly, and add the chopped greens. Taste it. What does it need? Add that. Taste it – did you get it right? What else does it need? Add that. Taste it..." You get the idea. And he's right on, especially for CSA members presented with a host of new, delicious veggies, each of which has a unique flavor, texture, and a jillion possible uses. Try nibbling on each of your veggies on the way home, raw, unadulterated, to get to know them – you may find that over time you do less cooking, and more raw- or minimally-cooked preparation, as you become familiar with the produce and enjoy it in its most simple state. Let me know if you invent

any great preparations, simple, complex, whatever!

OK, that was a digression from komatsuna, but do you get the idea that you can do whatever you want with it? Chop it small, and douse with lemon juice, salt and pepper, and voila, a salad. Saute it gently with chopped onions or scallions, add cubed, pan-fried tofu or meat, and voila, a stir-fry. Make an Asian noodle soup, add chopped komatsuna, and voila, Asian noodle-komatsuna soup. Top that soup with finely sliced fresh scallions, chives, and/or parsley, and voila, an SOF special. Make a pizza, and besides tomato sauce, cheese, onions, whatever you like on pizza, add chopped komatsuna (under the cheese so it won't dry out in the oven), and voila, komatsuna pizza.

And turnips? If you've had turnips before, you may not be ready for these – they're the most tender, sweetest turnips I've ever had. We eat them raw, like apples, in the hoopouses while working. They are also excellent in stir-fries (as in that komatsuna stir fry above), sautéed just a few minutes to soften, but really just to heat a little – they're already so tender. One member suggested turnip ravioli – you hollow out the turnips and stuff them, instead of noodles! I'm looking forward to that recipe.

I think everyone knows what to do with lettuce, but let me mention that this particular variety of lettuce, Four Seasons (most of you got Four Seasons, though a few got Envy or Tango, also green leaf lettuces), is actually called *Quattro Stagioni*, and the seed came from a company called Seeds From Italy, that specializes in heirloom and traditional Italian veggie and fruit crops. I hope you enjoy the delicate, tender leaves as much as we did (they're so tender, the heads kept breaking during harvest, so we had lots to sample).

I'm writing this Saturday morning, so the timing is a little off, but if you get this right now and have time, jet down the to the Okemos (Meridian) Farmers' Market --- there's a book signing by an author who wrote a wonderful book all about greens! The books will be for sale, of course, and would be a great resource for CSA members. I'll forward the email announcement after the newsletter, just in case.

Recipes

The following are all recipes contributed by past members and student farmers, written for Swiss chard, but as you know, you can substitute any green if you like. Also, please try chopping the turnips coarsely and

adding them to any of these recipes. Cheers!

Chard or spinach crepes –Linda French

Crepe filling

A bunch of coarsely chopped chard or spinach

1 grated carrot

1 small finely diced onion

1/4 cup of tomato based pasta sauce

1 tsp ground cumin

salt to taste

Saute onion and carrot, then add the rest and a little water and simmer about 15 minutes

Crepes

2 cups milk

2 egg

2 tablespoon melted butter or oil

flour to consistency (about 1 1/2 to 1 3/4 cup)

Batter should be liquid enough to cover the bottom of the skillet with gentle rocking motion. Brown on one side and flip over briefly.

Spread filling on the crepes and roll up. Can add a mild shredded cheese inside with the filling and/or as a topping.

French Lentil and Swiss Chard Risotto

Serves 6

Lentils add an interesting textural note as well as a nutritional one; combined with rice, they form a complete protein.

1 bay leaf

6 sprigs fresh thyme, plus 2 teaspoons leaves

1/3 cup French green lentils, picked over

1 large bunch Swiss chard (about 1 1/4 pounds)

2 large leeks (about 3/4 pound), white and light-green parts only OR onions

4 cups Homemade Chicken Stock, or canned low-sodium chicken broth, skimmed of fat OR veggie broth

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 cup finely chopped onion

2 1/2 teaspoons minced garlic

1 1/4 cups Arborio rice

1/2 cup dry white wine

1 teaspoon salt

1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

1/3 cup finely shredded radicchio, for garnish

1. In a medium saucepan, combine 6 cups water, bay leaf, and thyme sprigs, and bring to a boil. Simmer for 5 minutes. Add lentils, reduce heat to low, and simmer until tender, 15 to 20 minutes. Drain lentils, discard bay leaf and thyme sprigs, and set aside.

2. Meanwhile, wash Swiss chard, and remove the leaves from the stalks. Slice the leaves into very thin 2-inch strips, and cut the smaller stems into 1/4-inch dice. Discard the larger stems. Cook Swiss chard in a wok or a large skillet over high heat, tossing constantly, until just wilted, about 3 minutes. Set aside in a colander.

3. Cut leeks in half lengthwise, and slice into very thin semicircles. Place in a large bowl of cold water, and let sit for about 5 to 10 minutes to rid them of dirt and sand. Lift out of the water, and drain in a colander. Set aside.

4. In a medium saucepan, bring stock to a boil, reduce heat to low, and keep at a bare simmer.

5. Heat olive oil in a heavy 4-quart saucepan over medium heat, add leeks, onions, and garlic, and cook, stirring frequently with a wooden spoon, until soft but not browned, about 6 minutes. Add rice and thyme leaves, and continue stirring until the edges of the rice are translucent, about 3 minutes. Add wine and cook, stirring constantly, until nearly all the wine is absorbed, about 30 seconds.

6. Raise the heat to medium high, add salt and pepper and about 1/2 cup of the simmering stock, and cook, stirring constantly, until nearly all the stock is absorbed. Continue adding stock, about 1/2 cup at a time. Cook, stirring constantly, allowing each addition to be nearly absorbed before adding the next, until rice is creamy but still a little firm in the center, about 15 to 20 minutes.

7. Remove the pan from the heat, and stir in lentils, Swiss chard, and Parmesan. Adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper, if necessary. Divide the risotto among six plates, and garnish with the shredded radicchio. Serve immediately.

Creamed Swiss Chard

Serves 4

Swiss chard, a member of the beet family, has

bumpy, dark-green leaves and white or red (or rainbow –MF) stalks and veins.

2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1/4 cup coarsely chopped shallots (2 medium) OR
scallions OR onions
1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
1 cup milk
1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1 large bunch green Swiss chard (about 1 pound
10 ounces), ribs removed, leaves roughly chopped

1. In a large skillet, melt butter over medium heat. Add shallots, and cook until translucent, about 3 minutes. Add flour, and cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute. Add milk, nutmeg, salt, and pepper; raise heat to high and cook, stirring constantly, until mixture is reduced by half, about 2 minutes.

2. Add chard, and cook until tender and coated with the thickened milk mixture, 3 to 4 minutes. Serve immediately.

That's it for this week – enjoy the produce, and I will get all those email addresses you've sent me onto our list this week (haven't had much computer time this past week) – meanwhile, please forward as necessary if your share splitters haven't gotten it yet. Thanks. -MF