

May 27, 2004

**This (past) week's share:**

- Ermosa or Four Seasons Lettuce\*
- Scallions (white or purple)\*
- Onions
- Joi Choi or Pac Choi\*
- Red Ace Beets\*
- Baby Salad Mix\*
- Herbs: oregano, mint, or chives

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

**Announcements:**

**1. 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.

**2. Volunteers Wanted:**

Now's your chance to pitch in at your farm: Weekends, the plants in the hoopouses need watering. We'd like to train a pool of volunteers to learn how to open and water on weekends, so we can either schedule you into our regular weekend shift rotation, or call on you in a pinch if we need a substitute. It takes about two hours total to open and water, but you can learn how to do it in about half an hour. Please email (ferrares@msu.edu) or call (355-5191 ex. 342) to set up a visit to learn the ropes.

**3. Carpooling? Any more takers?** Email if interested in carpooling to the farm. (See last week's newsletter for details)

**Oh Boy, it's Joi Choi**

This week's "what's this?" is called Joi Choi. (some shares got Pac Choi—closely related Asian

greens in the mustard family). Most of the Chois are succulent-stemmed, green leafy veggies (remember the green leafy veggie story last week? You can do anything with any of them!) with tender leaves, and a fresh, cabbage-y flavor. Try a stir fry with green garlic, Pac Choi or Joi Choi, and sliced scallions on top. Or make any Asian-style noodle soup and add thinly sliced choi stems floating on top. Any recipe that calls for Pac (or Bok – same thing) Choi can use Joi Choi, and vice versa.

When asked to describe the joy of choi, student farmer Miguel Rodriguez recounts the following tale:

Once when I was stationed in Guantanamo Bay, I hadn't eaten in four hours. I got word of my transfer and was told I could only take what I could carry in my two hands. I took my Yorkie Beaugard and my Joi Choi, if that tells you anything.

**Green Garlic:** Green garlic is nothing more than garlic harvested early, before the stems grow woody and the paper skins develop around the cloves. You can use the stems, leaves, scapes (curly flowering stalks) and bulbs. Use the little cloves just like full-sized cloves – ideally the papery skins won't be formed yet, and you can eat the whole

bulb, but these have started to form skins – see if you like eating the whole clove or if you want to pop them out of the skins. The stems and leaves can be used just like scallions, sliced thinly and eaten raw or cooked; they'll just taste like garlic instead of scallions. The curly flowering scape is delicious in tempura, breaded and deep fried, sautéed, chopped and used like garlic cloves, or any other way you can think of. The point is that you can use the entire thing—enjoy.

**Herbs: Oregano, Mint, Chives:**

Oregano is Greek for “joy of the mountain” and is delicious in salad dressings, marinades, and tomato-based sauces (e.g. spaghetti sauce). Try the salad dressing in the recipe section, and try using fresh oregano, minced with olive oil, lemon juice, salt and pepper as a marinade. I like to put a couple sprigs of fresh oregano, along with a fresh or dried hot chile, in pinto or black beans while cooking. The flavor of dried oregano is more concentrated than fresh oregano, so if you have extra, it's always a good idea to dry it and save it for later. To dry: either pluck leaves from the stems and lay flat on a screen, or hang small bunches from a string, and break off leaves once

dried. Always dry herbs in a dry, dark area.

**Mint:** According to *Food Lover's Companion*, mint is long a symbol of hospitality. Greek mythology claims that mint was once the nymph Mentha. She angered Pluto's wife Persephone, who turned her into this aromatic herb. Mint grows wild throughout the world and is cultivated in Europe, the US, and Asia. You can store mint, stems down, in a glass of water with a plastic bag over the leaves. Refrigerate this way for up to a week, changing the water every few days. I like to sprinkle chopped fresh mint on almost anything – salads, steamed veggies, iced tea, fruit salad, any mid-eastern salads like hummous, tabbouli, etc. It can act as a stimulant and can settle upset stomachs, as well as freshen breath (for example, when you've been eating green garlic).

**Chives:** As you know, chives are one of the first spring plants up in the garden or wild in the city or woods. Our plants, planted last year, came back bigger and fuller than last year, and we're just now on the tail end of chive flower season – the flowers are edible, just like the stems/leaves. See dip recipe below in Recipes.

### **Soggy, Soggy Spring**

You may have heard this is the wettest spring since the 1950's, or since we started keeping track of precipitation, or for a long time, anyway. Ducks are swimming in the corn fields, trees appear to grow out of the middle of the river, water is everywhere. And our fields are no exception. Our slow start in spring planting was a mixed blessing: Because we had the hoopouses to buffer our spring rush, we didn't hurry to work up the soil and plant this spring, as we might have without the hoopouses. We had only worked up and started to plant one of our three fields so far. So we didn't have any crop losses due to washout or inundation. We also can't get into the fields at all until they dry out. So planting is on hold until we can till or spade the soil, and tillage is on hold until we can mow last fall's rye down. Mowing is on hold until the soil has dried out enough that driving the tractor across it won't compact and destroy the soil structure. And drying... drying is happening, slowly, and if the predicted rain holds off, we'll maybe get to mow next week. We'll see.

This is where the beauty of CSA shines through – we are together sharing the benefits and

the risks associated with agriculture – we have you to thank for operating costs this season, and we'll do everything we can to make sure you still get a bountiful, diverse share each week, but if cucumbers, tomatoes, squash, beans, and sweet corn are all a little later than usual, we'll all be in the same boat. (I hope not literally) Many corn and bean farmers in this area have already cut their losses, around 10% in many cases, or will try to replant to compensate for washed out or inundated crops. We're thankful for you and your support, both financial and social, to see us through this soggy period. We'll all see together how it plays out this summer. As one seasoned CSA member remarked, once you've weathered a few years of CSA, you start to take the good with the bad, the bonuses and the losses, with the knowledge that it will balance out over the years. I hope that even if this is your first CSA season, we'll all be able to pull together to make it a good one. We'll keep you posted.

### Recipes

#### Melissa's Famous Yard Dip

A few tablespoons mixed minced herbs, specifically whatever's growing in Melissa's yard in a given week (our favorites include chives,

thyme, mint, savory, oregano, dill, and fennel)

1 cup sour cream

½ cup cream cheese

Mix everything together well, enjoy with veggies, chips, spread on crackers or bread. Refrigerate as long as you'd keep the sour cream or cream cheese.

#### Mint Tea, Hot or Iced

Two different ways to make mint tea: one is Sun Tea – stick a lot of mint, like ½ a bunch, in a large, clear, glass jar or pitcher. Cover, set out in a sunny spot for a long time – the longer, the stronger, at least a few hours. Add a squeeze of lemon juice, a dash of honey, maple syrup, or sugar, and/or a little orange zest if you like (all optional). Chill or drink at room temperature.

The other is to steep a pot of hot tea – pour boiling water over a few sprigs of fresh mint, and let steep 5-30 minutes, depending on desired strength (stronger for iced tea, which will be diluted with ice). Drink hot, or cool down and serve over ice.

French recipe for beet salad: super quick and easy:

Just boil beets, unpeeled, with about 1 inch of stem left on, in water to cover until tender. Drain, and while beets are still hot (use a paper towel to protect your hands) cut off root end and "pop" the beet out of its skin by squeezing the root end. Slice beets and toss in your favorite vinaigrette while

still warm. Add thinly sliced onion, red or sweet white. Allow to marinate at least 15 minutes. This is good warm or cold. That's all for this week. -MF