



MSU STUDENT ORGANIC FARM NEWSLETTER

February 22, 2007

IN YOUR SHARE THIS WEEK

- Turtle Spring Garlic
- Potatoes
- Butternut Squash
- Copra Onions
- Carrots
- Komatsuna
- Salad Mix (beet greens, mibuna, mizuna, vitamin greens)
- Thunder Bay Kale
- Rubicon Napa / Chinese Cabbage

FARM CALENDAR OF EVENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Rotation

This is the last week of the first rotation! Kathy, Teri, and Rosemary will be moving on to other aspects of the farm....but they will be back later in the season. We will have profiles of our next CSA crew in next week's newsletter!

Farm Update

Wait. Is it true? We're holding our breath—we don't want to jinx things—but things may actually be getting warmer. Don't talk too loud! It's BALMY! And, and, and....it sounds like it is going to stay that way?? Today we actually got to walk through all of our hoopouses and assess the damage of the past month. We had to hold back our tears as we walked through each house looking at our sad plants. Our certificate students gave us sideways looks as if to ask, "Does this winter unheated hoopouse thing in Michigan REALLY work?" We have also heard comments like, "So, you all told us you can grow greens and other crops in the winter. When do we start doing that?" Just kidding, despite the challenges we have had this winter, we still, remarkably have a lot of nice looking crops. Here is what we have figured out:

- 1) December was abnormally warm = softer, weaker, less hardy crops going into January.

2) Our veggies can withstand freezing, obviously, but different species can withstand fewer or more freeze / thaw cycles. In some weeks, our poor veggies just stayed frozen for days on end. That is not so good for some of these plants.

3) We used Remy to cover some of our plants and plastic on the others. Remy is a cloth-like cover that is not as protective as plastic. For the past 6 years, the Remy side of the houses have been fine, but with this cold snap, we realized the Remy didn't cut the mustard (or protect the mustard in our case!)

So, with all of these factors, we have been happy that we have actually fared okay. We will continue to see truly what damage or loss we have suffered.

Featured Vegetable of the Week: KOMATSUNA

This is an excerpt of an article I found online. Here is the web address if you'd like to read the whole thing: <http://www.consciouschoice.com/2000/cc1310/cooking1310.html>

Choy to the World

by Terra Brockman

There are many reasons to sing the praises of Asian greens. They are easy to prepare (no trimming, peeling, or other busy work), quick to cook, and versatile — excellent in stir-fries, sautés, and soups. In addition, they are crunchy, delicious, and nutritious. In fact, they are the original fast food — quick and healthy — as far as you can get from those "fat foods" masquerading as "fast foods" all around us.

Asian greens are in the crucifer family, the superstars of good-for-you food. Cruciferous plants provide lots of vitamins A and C, potassium, calcium, folic acid, beta-carotene, zinc, manganese, and magnesium. They are low in calories and high in fiber. If you think you eat a lot of greens, compare yourself to the Chinese, who typically eat one pound of greens a day, one-half of which are from the crucifer family.

The choys were first cultivated primarily for the oil that could be pressed from their seeds. But the young plants that were thinned from the fields were also used as a fresh vegetable. Bok choy has been grown in China at least since the fifth century and made its way to Europe in the mid-eighteenth century. Soon after, it came to North America, but it has only been in the last decade or so that Asian greens have moved into the mainstream.

The Asian greens are cool-weather crops, locally available in spring and fall. Start looking for them now in your local farmer's market. Try a number of different kinds and feel free to substitute one type for another in most recipes, including the ones below. In all choy preparations, quick and simple are the watchwords. Don't overcook and don't overwhelm them with too many seasonings. After all, it's the simple choys that give life its meaning.

Komatsuna is a beautiful blue-green Japanese choy that is longer, leafier, and more slender than the Chinese choys. It has a slightly more assertive flavor than bok choy or mei qing choy but is not at all bitter or sharp.

Upcoming Events

Saturday, March 3rd, ALL DAY. Michigan Organic Ag Conference at the Kellogg Center. Come learn all about issues in organic production happening right here in Michigan. This conference is geared towards both producers and consumers who are interested in organic. For more information go to www.moffa.org and click on the Michigan Organic Conference link.

Tuesday, March 6th, 4:30 – 8:30ish. SLOW FOOD Red Cedar first ever event! Kellogg Center. Come to this SLOW FOOD extravaganza to celebrate and participate in a local, slow meal prepared by Michigan chefs and food provided by a whole host of Michigan growers and producers. There will be a full course dinner as well as speakers and a “farmer’s market” exhibit area. Want to learn more about SLOW FOOD RED CEDAR? Contact Barb Mutch at mutchb@msu.edu.

RECIPES

Hiroko’s Fusion Choy with Tahini-Soy Sauce Dip

1 medium head komatsuna (or 2-3 heads smaller choys)
1/4 cup tahini
1-3 Tablespoon water or lemon juice
1-2 teaspoons soy sauce to taste

1. Coarsely chop the komatsuna, leaving the stem portions about four inches long so that they will be a nice size for dipping.
2. Put stems into a steamer for two minutes; then add the leaves and steam for three to four minutes, until tender-crisp. Drain, pressing lightly to remove excess water.
3. Mix the tahini, water or lemon juice, and soy sauce in a bowl.
4. Serve, either by pouring the sauce over the komatsuna and tossing, or by letting each person dip pieces into the tahini-soy sauce. (This is the part children like.)

Komatsuna and tofu soup

Komatsuna (1 bunch)
Silken Tofu (half a pack)
minced garlic (1 teaspoon)
minced ginger (1 tablespoon)
Chinese style chicken broth (about 4 cups)
salt, pepper to taste

sesame oil to taste
cornstarch(1 1/2 tbs)
water for cornstarch (3 tbs)

1. Wash Komatsuna and cut it 1 inch wide.
2. Boil chicken broth and put minced garlic and ginger and cubed tofu into the broth.
3. Flavor the broth with salt and pepper, then pour cornstarch with water into the broth and boil the broth again.
4. Put Komatsuna in the soup and cook it until wilted.

Komatsuna and Beef satay

Paper thin sliced sirloin beef (7 ounces)
Komatsuna (1 bunch)
sesame oil (1 tablespoon)

(a)

soy sauce (1/2 tablespoon)
sake (1 tablespoon)
pressed ginger (1 teaspoon)

(b)

soy sauce (1 1/2 tablespoons)
mirin (Japanese rice wine) (1/2 tablespoon)

1. Marinade beef with (a) for at least 15 minutes.
2. Wash Komatsuna and cut it 1 inch wide.
3. Heat a pan and put vegetable oil and fry the beef and put the beef aside on a plate.
4. Put sesame oil in the pan, fry Komatsuna.
5. Put the beef back in the pan and flavor the beef and Komatsuna with (b).

MSU Student Organic Farm Contact Information

Farm Phone: 230-7987

Farm Managers: Jeremy Moghtader, Corie Pierce

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SOF Student Farmers: Tim Heuer, Andy Fles, Trevor Johnson, Luke Tomczak, Amanda Taylor, Aryn Labrake, Sam Cooper

OFCP Students: Rosemary Sheets, Maggie Wright, Tom Stump, Dan Bair, James Garthe, Teri Vanhall, Linda Anderson, Kathy Koch, Anna Kaschner