



# Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

August 2-3, 2013

## Amaranth and Egyptian Spinach - Summer Super Foods

by: Andrea Yoder

There comes a day in every summer when the prevailing question of the day at our farmers' market stand is, "Do you have salad mix or lettuce today." Believe me, we try....probably more than we should sometimes! Lettuce seeds germinate best in cool soil, so it's hard to even get a lettuce plant to grow in the heat of the summer. If it does come up, it's a race against time for the lettuce to grow big enough for harvest before the dreaded purslane takes over. Purslane is a weed we battle every year during the hottest part of the summer. We understand that salad mix and lettuce are considered staple items for many households, which is why we try so hard. But sometimes it's best to yield to nature and focus on what each season has to offer instead of trying to force something that's not meant to be.

So just what are we supposed to do with that void on our plate that is typically occupied by a salad made of lettuce? This is the time of year when the heat-loving vegetables of summer really shine. Have some fun experimenting with different kinds of veggies and different ways of preparing them. You can still eat salads...just make them veggie salads such as corn and black bean salad or creamy cucumber salad. There are also a lot of other interesting ways to prepare summer vegetables such as grilling, roasting, stir-frying and marinating. It's summer...have fun and experiment with some other vegetables and recipes to fill that void on your plate that the salad usually occupies. In your boxes this week, you will find two very interesting, unique and beautiful summer greens—**Amaranth** and **Egyptian Spinach**. Yes, we know we're pushing the limit on greens by putting two in the box in the same week, but they both happen to be ready at the same time and they are both too special to leave them in the field! We have chosen to grow both of these greens specifically because they thrive in the heat of summer.

**Amaranth** is the stunning magenta colored bunched green in your box. It originated in South/Central America and has spread across the world to become an important food for many cultures. In the United States, you may find amaranth grown more as an ornamental plant than for a food crop, which is a bummer since amaranth is an exceptionally nutritious

## This Week's Box

**ZUCCHINI OR CUCUMBERS:** Chilly outside? Warm up with a bowl of cream of zucchini and sweet corn soup. Garnish with pickled jalapeños and cilantro and serve with homemade tortilla chips. For your cucumbers, pickle them and add to ginger salad over pan seared Ahi Tuna and a deep-fried wonton cracker for an impressive party appetizer.

**SWEETHEART CABBAGE OR CARROTS:** Toss this crisp cabbage in a creamy coleslaw mix with carrots and place on top of a spicy shredded pork sandwich.

**BROCCOLI OR CAULIFLOWER:** Great alternative to traditional Alfredo sauce is to make a creamy cauliflower sauce. Use cauliflower, veggie broth, garlic, butter, some salt, nutmeg, coconut oil, and half and half for an easy quick sauce to top off your pasta of choice.

**SWEET SPANISH ONIONS:** These onions are great grilled and topped on a grilled cheeseburger; their sweet flavor adds a delightful flavor contrast to the savory burger.

**AMARANTH GREENS & EGYPTIAN SPINACH:** See main article for more information!

**ITALIAN GARLIC:** Make sure you set aside some of this beautiful garlic for the upcoming tomato harvest, this garlic will make an awesome marinara sauce that you can preserve and use in the winter!

**GREEN BELL PEPPERS:** Dice and sauté along with corn, onions, garlic and zucchini. Add a squeeze of lime juice and fresh basil.

**SWEET CORN:** Grill and toss with black beans, nectarines, avocado, tomato, and cilantro for a summer fresh salsa to top on grilled chicken tacos.

**DANCER, BLACK OR LILAC BRIDE EGGPLANT OR SUN JEWEL MELON:** Due to the cooler weather we've had lately, we are harvesting fewer of these items this week. You will get one of these items as a bonus in your box this week!

**TOMATILLOS:** Remove the husk and roast over an open flame. Blend with diced avocados, onion, garlic, lime juice and cilantro in a food processor for a tangy guacamole.

**CHOICE:** Basil

vegetable! The nutrient value of amaranth is about three times the value of spinach and it is high in protein, calcium, iron, and vitamins A & C as well. Another interesting fact about amaranth is that this plant is able to convert twice the amount of solar energy using the same amount of water as most other plants--it can even survive a drought!

Richard came across amaranth when he noticed a neighbor growing it in their yard. They actually got the seed from their aunt in Poland who grew the plant and saved her own seed. Our neighbors were kind enough to share some of their seed with Richard and he started growing amaranth and saving the seed. He sent some of the seed to Frank Morton, a seed breeder at Wild Garden Seeds. Frank grew the seed out and started producing this "Polish Amaranth." He continues to grow and sell this variety and still credits Richard in his annual catalog as the original source of the seed. In recent years we have found other varieties with more deeply colored red leaves and seldom grow the Polish variety any

more. While we originally grew amaranth as a salad green, we discovered the value of amaranth as a survivor of summer heat when it was one of the few salad mix components that survived in the middle of a hot summer. Since we didn't have enough other salad lettuces to pair it with, we let it grow up to a larger size and discovered it made a good mid-summer cooking green.

While small amaranth leaves can be eaten raw, we recommend larger, more mature leaves be cooked. When cooked, amaranth has a flavor similar to spinach, but better. It is best when steamed with a small amount of liquid, stir-fried, sautéed or used in soups. I boiled some amaranth and found that all of the pink pigments in the leaves were leached into the cooking water leaving the leaves green! While this is a fun experiment to do with the kids, from a nutritional standpoint it would be a shame to lose all the valuable nutrients unless you were going to use the cooking water for something else. Both the leaves and the stems of this plant are edible. Prior to cooking, remove the leaves from

the stems. You'll want to cook the stems just a little longer than the leaves. In China, amaranth is often just stir-fried with garlic. In Korea, amaranth is often boiled and then dressed with sesame oil, chili paste and sesame seeds and served as a condiment. Amaranth pairs well with many of the other summer vegetables including corn, summer squash, tomatoes, peppers, garlic and onions. You can also substitute amaranth in any recipe you might normally use spinach in.

The second green in your box is **Egyptian Spinach**. We stumbled across it one year when we were flipping through a seed catalog from a Japanese seed company. We noticed one of its qualities is that it thrives in the heat of the summer.....yes, another vegetable to fill that mid-summer gap! Egyptian spinach is also known as Molokheiya which means "vegetable for a king." It is thought to have originated in India and Egypt. The story behind this name goes back to about 6000 BC when it was used to make a soup for an Egyptian king who was sick. He drank it every day until he was healed and the soup was credited for his return to health. This green also has exceptionally high nutrient value with as much as 4-5 times more iron, carotene, B vitamins, and vitamins E, C, K than regular spinach. It is thought to have nutritional properties

that help to boost the immune system to help the body fight off illness and prevent cancer and premature aging amongst other health benefits. This green contains a soluble fiber that gives it a viscous texture you'll notice when you cut into the leaves or stems. When used in soups, it will help to thicken the soup. The viscosity of this fiber is more noticeable when the cooked green is eaten cold, but is hardly noticeable when eaten warm or in soups.

Egyptian spinach is common in middle-eastern cuisine and grocery stores where it is often sold cooked and frozen. It is most often used in a traditional Egyptian soup that contains a chicken broth base along with coriander, cumin, and garlic. I found several different versions of this soup, each with their own variations. Since I've never been to Egypt or have had a chance to eat authentic Egyptian Spinach soup, I had to settle for doing my best to adapt the recipes I found to a recipe we can make in the U.S. Egyptian spinach can also be steamed or boiled and dressed with a sauce or dressing as simple as a little bit of soy sauce, rice vinegar and sesame oil. When preparing this green, separate the leaves from the stem. The upper portion of the stem is tender and can be cut into bite-sized pieces and cooked. The lower portion of the stem is more tough and fibrous and should be

discarded. While this green can be eaten raw, it is recommended that it be cooked.

Cooking and eating out of a CSA box takes some time to adapt to. Members tell us it's a 2-3 year transition from regular grocery store shopping to planning meals around the contents of a CSA box. Recently I spent some time looking through the new cookbook, *Farm Fresh and Fast*, recently published by the Fairshare CSA coalition. This cookbook is a great resource for CSA members as it was written for those cooking out of a CSA box! It contains great resources for storage guidelines, preparation and use suggestions, ideas for appropriate seasonal substitutions, and really great recipes that jive with the Midwestern growing season. I highly recommend this cookbook as a valuable resource for every CSA household. You can purchase this book through FairShare CSA Coalition at [www.csacoalition.com](http://www.csacoalition.com).

#### Win a *Farm Fresh and Fast* Cookbook!

Send us a recipe with Amaranth or Egyptian Spinach, along with a picture of it and you will be entered into a raffle to win your very own cookbook! Submissions must be received by Saturday, August 10th. Send recipes and photos to [csa@harmonyvalleyfarm.com](mailto:csa@harmonyvalleyfarm.com)

**(We have a bonus recipe online, too!)**

#### Amaranth & Corn Stewed in Coconut Milk

by Chef Andrea Yoder

Serves 4

- 1 Tbsp butter
  - 2-3 cloves garlic, minced
  - ¾ cup onion, small dice
  - 1 ½ tsp cumin
  - ¼ tsp allspice
  - 1 tsp salt, plus more to taste
  - Freshly ground black pepper
  - 1 cup fresh corn kernels
  - 12 oz coconut milk
  - 2 Tbsp fresh lime juice
  - 1 cup green beans, cut into bite-sized pieces
  - 1 bunch amaranth greens, leaves and stems separated
  - ½ cup fresh basil, chiffonade (sliced thinly)
1. Melt butter in a small sauce pot over medium heat. Add onions and garlic and sauté until tender. Add cumin, allspice, salt and black pepper. Stir to combine, then add corn, coconut milk and lime juice. Simmer over medium heat, uncovered, for 15-20 minutes or until the coconut milk has been reduced by half.
  2. Add the green beans and simmer for another 5 minutes. In the meantime, cut the amaranth stems into bite-sized pieces and add to the pan. Simmer for 2-3 minutes. Roughly chop the leaves into bite-sized pieces and add to the pan. Stir to combine the greens until they are wilted and fully incorporated.
  3. Continue to simmer the vegetable mixture for another 5-10 minutes until greens are tender. Taste and add additional salt and pepper to your liking. Serve warm and garnished with fresh basil.

#### Egyptian Spinach Soup

by Chef Andrea Yoder

Serves 4

- 8 cups water
  - 2 chicken legs
  - 2 chicken thighs
  - 1 medium onion, diced and divided in half
  - ½ tsp cumin, ground
  - 1 tsp plus ½ tsp coriander, ground
  - 1 bunch Egyptian Spinach, leaves and stems separated
  - 1 Tbsp sunflower oil
  - 4-6 cloves garlic, crushed
  - Salt, to taste
  - Ground Black Pepper, to taste
  - 1 lemon, sliced into wedges
  - Cilantro, roughly chopped (optional)
  - 2 cups cooked rice
1. Heat water and chicken legs and thighs in a medium sauce pot over medium heat. Bring the water to a boil, then reduce heat so the liquid continues to simmer. Simmer for about 1 hour, then remove the chicken pieces from the broth and set aside to cool. Skim the surface of the broth to remove any impurities or excess oil. You should have about 5 cups of broth now. If not, add enough water to get 5 cups total. When the chicken is cooled, pull the cooked chicken off the bone, cut into bite-sized pieces and set aside.
  2. Add half of the onion, ½ tsp cumin and 1 tsp coriander to the broth and return the soup to a simmer. Cut the tender portions of Egyptian spinach stems into bite-sized pieces and add to broth. Roughly chop the leaves into bite-sized pieces and stir into the hot liquid. Add the chicken pieces and simmer for about 10 minutes.
  3. While the soup is simmering, it's time to prepare the "tasha." This is an important part of the soup and is what makes this soup unique and tasty. In a small sauté pan, heat 1 Tbsp oil over medium heat. When the oil is hot, add the crushed garlic. Stir and cook over medium heat until the garlic is nicely browned and smells toasty. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in ½ tsp ground coriander. Carefully add the tasha to the soup. You should hear a "tsssh" sound when you do so. This means you did it right—congratulations!
  4. Continue to cook the soup for about 10 more minutes. Just before serving taste a spoonful and add salt and pepper as needed.
  5. Serve the hot soup with cooked rice. Either put the rice in a bowl and ladle the soup on top, or serve the rice and soup in separate bowls and combined together bite by bite. Either way, it's important for each diner to garnish the soup with a squeeze of lemon, and if desired, the remaining diced onion and cilantro.



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August 2-3, 2013

Find our bonus recipe for amaranth and Egyptian spinach below. Read our Main Newsletter article to learn more about these two featured vegetables!

## Sautéed Amaranth or Egyptian Spinach with Hot & Garlicky Sauce

by Chef Andrea Yoder

Serves 4

2 Tbsp sunflower oil  
1-2 dried thai chiles (or other small hot pepper)  
3-4 cloves garlic, crushed  
4 Tbsp soy sauce  
2 tsp brown sugar  
½ tsp Sichuan pepper or white pepper, ground  
1 tsp fresh ginger, minced  
½ tsp ground cinnamon  
1 bunch amaranth greens or Egyptian Spinach, leaves and stems separated  
½ cup water

1. In a very small saucepan, heat oil over medium heat. When it is hot, add the garlic and chili pepper. Stir the garlic carefully in the oil to keep it from sticking. Cook until the garlic just starts to turn golden. Remove from heat and set aside to cool and steep for about 10-15 minutes.
2. When the oil mixture is cooled, add soy sauce, brown sugar, pepper, ginger and cinnamon. Heat the mixture over medium heat. When the sauce just starts to bubble, start stirring to keep the sugar from sticking. Simmer and cook for about 1 minute, then remove from heat and set aside.
3. Heat ½ cup water in a medium saute pan. When it begins to simmer, add the amaranth or Egyptian Spinach stems (cut into bite-sized pieces), then add the leaves on top. Cover and allow the greens to steam and wilt down for about 1 minute, then remove the cover. Stir the greens to make sure all the leaves are incorporated into the steam or water. Simmer for about 5-8 minutes until the leaves are tender and most, but not all of the liquid has evaporated.
4. Add the sauce, stir to combine and return to a simmer. Simmer for an additional 1-2 minutes then remove from heat.
5. The sauce and greens are very rich, so just a small portion is tasty served along with rice and sautéed fish, chicken or tofu.

## Produce Plus

**Basil, 3 pounds - \$27**

Order by 5pm on Wednesday, August 7th for delivery on **August 9-10.**

### When ordering, please include:

Name

Phone Number

Delivery Site

Quantity of item being Ordered

To order, please call 608-483-2143 x2 or email [csa@harmonyvalleyfarm.com](mailto:csa@harmonyvalleyfarm.com)

### Local, Mazo, Cross Plains and Token Creek Customers:

Place order by Wednesday, August 7th for pick-up at your site on August 9-10. Please place a check in the mail the same day as placing your order.

### Madison Customers:

Place your order by Wednesday, August 7th for pick-up at our Dane County Farmers' Market Stand on Saturday, August 10th. You may pay any market stand worker when you pick up your order.

## Have you 'Liked' us on Facebook?

Like us on Facebook to keep up-to-date on what's happening at your farm! See pictures of your produce boxes on Wednesdays, test your knowledge with our occasional trivia questions and see the crew and the farm working hard to get wonderful vegetables to your plates!

