



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

October 11-12, 2013

The Asa-Lift Crew

First thing's first: What in the world is an Asa-Lift? The Asa-Lift is a single row, root crop harvesting machine. This is not just another piece of equipment, this one is a true blessing! The Asa-Lift is new to us this year. Previously we had been using the FMC machine, which utilized at least 6 crew members and a lot of 'babying,' as it is over 30 years old. Don't get me wrong, the FMC was still way better than having 20 – 30 crew members harvesting by hand every day - we just do not have enough available crew to do that. Now, bring in the "The Asa-Lift". We had to connect with a dealer all the way in Denmark to get this crazy machine. The good news is that there is a farm in Hancock, WI that is the main contact farm and stocks the parts that are deemed necessary. When the machine was delivered, Jacob, the Asa-Lift 'teacher' from Denmark came out here and trained our crew until they were all comfortable with how it works.

This beast of a machine is a real 'work horse' if you will. With a crew of only 4, it can harvest 15 or more tons of vegetables a day. So what do we harvest with it? Well, we harvest root crops such as turnips, carrots and beets. It is a little harder, but we can also use it to harvest parsnip, rutabaga or celeriac. So let's pretend that we are harvesting turnips today. In not so technical language, this machine scoops up the leaves of each turnip while gently digging under the turnip with a plow-like piece to loosen the plant. Then the turnip gets pulled out of the ground and rides up the belt being held by the tops. Once it reaches the top area, Edward Scissorhands cuts off the green top and the turnip then rides a conveyor belt across the machine to a tractor and wagon with bins waiting to catch it. This machine is great, but we still have to have a great crew to run it.

The main man on the tractor that pulls the Asa-Lift is Rafael. Not only does he have to drive the tractor, but also control the Asa-Lift from up there. If he is off even a little, it may mean cutting off the top or bottom of the crop. Many adjustments are needed as we change from one crop to another. This is not 'rocket science', but it is just short of it. Forward speed, belt speed, plow depth and point 'torpedo' depth, Whoa! Thankfully Rafael is great at managing all these details!

What about the elevator that drops the crops into the bins? Rogelio or Angel have to coordinate their tractor alongside

Rafael's tractor so the harvested crop drops into the bin! At the end of the row, Rafael has to empty the elevator and carefully line up on the next row. As the Asa-Lift begins harvesting the next row, the veggies move slowly up the elevator until the second tractor and bins are in place. A pad is placed in the bin to cushion the fall of the vegetables into an empty bin. What a delicate dance! Two very skilled tractor operators with two assistants, Vicente or Manuel pulls leaves and culls out of the bin on the wagon and Juan Pablo walks behind picking up crops that the machine missed or dropped.

Precise adjustments make the difference between – all leaves being removed or many ending up in the bin.

Leaves would become rotten long before the stored crop and therefore it must be removed by the machine or the person who is riding on the wagon with the bins. These bins fill quickly! Only four bins fit on a flat rack wagon. Richard pulls the full wagon loads home to be unloaded and the wagon is reloaded with clean empty bins and pulled back to the field. The record unloading and reload time is 3 minutes with Andrea and Simon running forklifts and Ezequiel reloading with the skidsteer! Pretty good timing for the packing shed pit crew! Record harvest in one day is 40 bins! We have an estimated 750 more bins to be harvested before the snow flies this winter with an estimated 600 pounds per bin. We are going to need many more dry days to get all that in!

This Week's Box

RED ONIONS: These onions are great in French Onion soup with melted provolone cheese for those cool fall nights.

PURPLE CAULIFLOWER OR BROCCOLI: Place florets into a food processor and chop until rice consistency. Mix with cooked quinoa, minced garlic, crumbled feta, rolled oats, eggs, salt, and pepper. Patty the mix into mini cakes and sauté to golden brown color in olive oil.

CARROTS: Looking for a fun fall way to make your granola? Add shredded carrots to a basic granola recipe.

LEEKs: Sauté chopped leeks with pancetta in a pan. Cook until pancetta becomes crispy. Add white wine, and cook until almost dissolved. Add chopped olives and mushrooms and cook until tender. Toss with cooked pasta and top with aged parmesan cheese. Serve as a side to grilled chicken or fish.

FRENCH FINGERLING OR PURPLE VIKING POTATOES: Roasted fingerling potatoes are great tossed in a salad with spinach, smoked trout, granny smith apples, toasted almonds, and red onions. Dress the salad with a creamy lemon tarragon dressing.

RED RAIN MUSTARD: For an extra added punch of flavor and vitamins, wilt these greens in a curry coconut chicken soup.

MINI SWEET PEPPERS: Roast with chopped carrot, onion, garlic, and tomatoes, puree in a food processor and season with your favorite sauce spices, toss with pasta for an easy pasta dinner. These peppers are in a **brown paper bag**.

TOMATOES: Spread pesto over homemade flat bread, top with mozzarella cheese and a variety of sliced tomato pieces and bake until gooey, serve for an easy after school snack or party appetizer.

SPINACH: Blend spinach with frozen banana, pineapple, some water, coconut milk, and agave for a simple morning drink.

DELICATA SQUASH: Delicata is one of the quickest squash to cook. Slice thinly into rings and pan fry in butter along with apples and onions.

JICAMA: See this week's vegetable feature and recipes

JALAPEÑOS: These peppers are hot and are **red and green** this week. Be careful not to mix them with the mini-sweets. These peppers are **loose in the box**.

RED ROASTER PEPPERS: This pepper was developed at the University of Wisconsin. It is both sweet and hot. It is excellent roasted and used just as you would use a poblano or other similar pepper. **This pepper is long, red and has a blocky bottom.**

ORANGE ITALIAN FRYING PEPPERS: **These are the long, orange, pointy peppers.** They are very sweet and have awesome flavor. Despite their name, they can also be eaten raw.

*See your "What's in the Box" email for pictures of these two varieties of peppers.

Vegetable Feature: Jicama

by Andrea Yoder

One day, just 2 years ago, Jose Antonio Cervantes Gutierrez (who now answers to his HVF nickname of JAC) handed me a little home gardener's packet of seeds and said "Do you think we can grow this here?" It wasn't a seed I recognized, so he ended the guessing game and told me it was jicama! It certainly wouldn't be the first tropical plant we've pulled off! We went ahead and tried those first 25 seeds. It was a learning experience. Despite the warmer environment in the greenhouse, we learned that jicama has a long growing season and thrives best when it's warm. After a small trial year, we found some seed through our favorite Japanese seed company. The following year we planted a little bit more, a little earlier, and got brave and put it out in the field. We got around 50 pounds from the crop. It was encouraging to see that we can grow jicama in Wisconsin! We realized that Wisconsin jicama is a bit sweeter than those grown in southern zones. We have also learned that there is almost no organic jicama available on the market in stores/co-ops. So now the challenge is before us—we must grow organic jicama for the people!

Jicama is also known as yam bean, Mexican potato, chop suey bean, and the translations for jicama in Chinese include "cooling tuber." It's an interesting plant that grows vines and resembles a bean plant. Its blossoms produce a pod that contains the seeds that can be planted to propagate the plant. While all of that is happening above ground, a tuber is swelling below ground. Multiple tubers will expand off the main stem and all can be harvested.

On the outside, Jicama is not the most attractive vegetable; however, the crispy flesh is the part to enjoy. It has a crunchy, starchy and slightly sweet flavor. The outer light brown skin can easily be peeled or trimmed off to expose the flesh. One of the most basic ways to eat jicama, a common street food in some parts of Mexico, is to slice it into sticks and give it a squeeze of lime juice and a light sprinkling of chili powder. Recipes from the Yucatan Peninsula in the southern part of Mexico often pair jicama with a variety of citrus fruits in preparations such as salads or simple toppings for tacos. While jicama is typically eaten raw, it can also be cooked. In Asia it is used in a variety of stir-fry type preparations. When stir-fried, jicama should be added towards the end of cooking to retain the crisp texture. If you let it get just slightly soft, it has almost a potato-like flavor and texture.

We're still learning how to store jicama. What I've learned thus far is that it's best to just eat it as fresh as you can. If you must store it, I would not recommend storing it in a plastic bag, but rather just as it is in the refrigerator. If you find your jicama develops a sticky coating on it after being stored for a while, don't automatically assume it's bad and throw it out. Rinse it off, trim off the outer peeling and most likely the inner flesh is still good.

There you have it.....our new endeavor for this year! We still have a lot to learn about growing, cooking and using jicama, but we're up to the challenge and we hope you are too!

Mixed Greens Salad with Roasted Chile Vinaigrette, Jicama and Chicken

by Chef Andrea Yoder

Serves 2-4

Chicken

2 dark chicken quarters (legs & thighs)
5 allspice berries
1 tsp black peppercorns
2 bay leaves
2 tsp salt
4 cups water

Vinaigrette

2 Poblano or Roaster peppers
1 medium onion, rough chopped
1 clove garlic
3 Tbsp apple cider vinegar
½ cup vegetable oil
Salt & ground black pepper, to taste

Salad

6-8 oz of salad mix, spinach, or head lettuce (torn into bite-sized pieces)
2 cups julienned jicama
1 cup shredded carrots
4-5 red radishes, small diced
1 avocado, medium dice
1 tomato, small dice

1. In a spice grinder or food processor, coarsely grind allspice berries and black peppercorns. Combine chicken pieces, spices, bay leaves, salt and water in a small stockpot. Cover and bring the mixture to a slight boil over medium heat. Simmer the chicken for 25-30 minutes or until chicken is thoroughly cooked.
2. Remove chicken pieces from the liquid and cool enough to handle. Pull the chicken off the bone and set aside.
3. While the chicken is cooking, prepare the vinaigrette. Roast the peppers over an open flame or under a broiler until the skins are charred. Place peppers in a bowl and cover for about 10 minutes. Once they have cooled a bit, use the back of a knife to scrape away the charred skin. Cut the peppers in half and remove the seeds and stem.
4. Combine the peppers along with the other vinaigrette ingredients in a food processor or blender. Blend until combined, but still with some texture and small pieces. Taste and add more salt if necessary. Set aside.
5. When you are ready to assemble the salad, combine the jicama, carrots, and radishes in a small bowl. Put the greens and/or lettuce in a large mixing bowl. Drizzle dressing over the top of the greens and, using a pair of tongs, toss the greens to coat with the dressing. Add more dressing if needed to make sure the lettuce is well-coated but not soggy. Portion the greens onto dinner plates. Garnish each mound of greens with the vegetable mixture around the edge. Divide the chicken evenly amongst the plates and mound it up in the middle of the plate. Garnish each plate with avocado and tomato. Drizzle a little more dressing on top of the salad and serve.

Jicama & Sweet Pepper Slaw

By Chef Andrea Yoder

Serves 4

2 cups jicama, sliced into matchstick size slices
1 cup thinly sliced mini-sweet peppers or other sweet pepper
1 medium onion, small diced
Jalapeño (optional, with the amount adjusted to your liking), minced
3 oranges
⅛ - ¼ tsp chili powder
⅓ cup coarsely chopped cilantro
Salt, to taste
Ground black pepper, to taste

1. Combine the jicama, sweet peppers, onion, and jalapeño in a medium-sized bowl.
2. Cut the top and bottom off of 2 of the 3 oranges. With one flat end set on a cutting board, trim away the remaining rind including the pith. Carefully slice between the membranes to remove the orange segments and add them to the vegetables. Squeeze the remainder of each orange to extract the extra juice as well as the third orange and add all the juice to the vegetables.
3. Season the vegetables with salt, black pepper and the chili powder. Add the cilantro and lightly stir to combine all the ingredients.
4. Refrigerate for 10-15 minutes prior to serving. This is excellent served with grilled fish or chicken or tossed with spinach and avocado for a main dish salad.