



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

June 6-7, 2014

Cooking 101: No Need to Fear!

By Andrea Yoder

I have enjoyed cooking my entire life. As a young child, I helped my mother in the kitchen starting with simple tasks such as stirring the dry ingredients for corn bread or cutting out Christmas cookies. Once I could read, my grandma bought me my first cookbook and I was determined to make every recipe in the book. As I was learning to cook and bake, things didn't always turn out exactly the way I planned. My brothers are very good at reminding me of some of those creations. One of their favorites was the batch of blueberry pancakes that I stirred just a little too vigorously causing the blueberries to break open and make the pancakes turn green. My first attempt at a pie crust required a hammer to be able to cut through the tough crust. The pie wasn't a total loss though....we scooped out the delicious pudding filling and composted the pie crust which functioned as a "bowl." Over the years, I've come to appreciate the ways that cooking can connect us both to our food as well as to each other. We all have to eat, and cooking can open endless doors for learning more about new flavors, textures, cooking methods, cultures and so much more. Cooking is one of the most basic life skills which allows a person to feed themselves. Unfortunately in our world of convenience foods and processed products, many people have come to rely on these things for sustenance and are intimidated by the thought of having to cook with whole foods and a recipe. Cooking can be a lifelong learning adventure and it doesn't take much to get going.

It's true, we grow some unusual vegetables and pack them in your boxes mixed in amongst the familiar carrots, broccoli and green beans. Celeric, jicama, hon tsai tai....what in the world do you do with these?! Well, the first thing I tell everyone when they are facing a new vegetable is "Do not let a vegetable intimidate you....it's just a vegetable!" Find a recipe to try, do a little research, and then dive in! Chances are pretty slim that you'll ever "completely ruin" something. Life is research....and so is cooking. Remember that recipes are just guidelines for cooking. Sometimes things may not turn out exactly like the picture or how you thought it might. As long as it's still edible, don't fret. Just give it another name and enjoy your creation. Use each cooking adventure to learn more about your likes and dislikes and build upon your cooking skills. It can be helpful to make notes about each recipe in case you want to change something the next time you make it.

This Week's Box

GREEN GARLIC: This vegetable resembles a green onion. You can tell the difference between the two because green garlic has flat green leaves and the green portion on an onion is rounded. Both the green portion and the lower white portion are edible.

EGYPTIAN WALKING ONIONS: These are very flavorful onions and can be used raw or cooked. Sauté or grill them and serve them with a grilled steak.

RED RADISHES: Don't forget to eat the greens too! Radish tops are delicious when mixed with other cooking or salad greens.

ASPARAGUS: Lightly sauté with green garlic & onions. Once cooked, drizzle with a touch of soy sauce and garnish with toasted sesame seeds.

RHUBARB: Cut into chunks and cook in a saucepan with a little bit of water and a cinnamon stick until the rhubarb becomes saucy. Remove the cinnamon stick and sweeten to your liking with honey or maple syrup. Chill the sauce and then mix it into vanilla yogurt and top it off with chopped nuts or granola.

BABY WHITE TURNIPS: You'll find these spring salad turnips to be mild in flavor and tender. They can be eaten raw or lightly cooked. Don't forget the greens! They are mild and tender as well. Mix them in with other salad greens or cook them by lightly steaming or wilting them.

HON TSAI TAI: You can identify this green as the bunched item in your box that has long, slender green leaves and a thin, purple stem extending out of the top with bright yellow flowers. See the vegetable feature on the back for more information.

PEA VINE: This green is characterized by the curly tendrils and rounded leaves. If you pinch off a leaf and pop it in your mouth, you'll find it will have a subtle green pea flavor. The entire plant is edible except the lower portion of the stem that tends to be more fibrous. Use pea vine raw in salads, added to sandwiches, or make a pea vine pesto to stir into pasta dishes. You can also lightly saute pea vine as a green or wilt it into soups.

SALAD MIX: Colorful & convenient! For a quick & easy lunch, toss this mix with a flavorful oil and a splash of vinegar and top with cooked chicken, radishes and sunflower seeds.

SPINACH OR BABY KALE MIX: These small, tender leaves make a beautiful salad when lightly dressed with a simple vinaigrette and garnished with thin slices of spring radishes and spring onions. The baby kale is tender enough to eat raw or lightly sautéed.

There are just a few basic things that will help you find success in the kitchen. First, you will need some basic tools. Two good knives and a cutting board will be the most basic tools you will need. One large, sharp chef's knife and a smaller paring knife will suffice for most of the slicing, dicing and chopping you will need to do. Remember that people have been cooking and eating for thousands of years, even before the advent of fancy cooking tools and plastic wrap. If they figured out how to do it, so can we. If you do have the budget to expand your kitchen equipment line, then I'd recommend a basic food processor and/or a blender. Of course there are other handy tools such as a vegetable peeler, box graters, citrus reamer, etc that are nice to have, but by no means are they absolutely necessary.

Once you have a few basic tools, I'd recommend getting a few resources set up to help you maneuver through your food prep and cooking. First, reference our weekly newsletters and the information on our website. We have a searchable recipe database and all of our past newsletters are archived on our website. Beyond the resources we offer, I have two cookbooks I frequently recommend. The Fairshare CSA Coalition's *Farm-Fresh & Fast* cookbook was written specifically for CSA members and includes some

of those unusual vegetables you might find in your box. They also have a lot of simple recipes, information about storing, preparing and preserving vegetables, and some basic cooking information. The *Rodale Whole Foods Cookbook* is another great resource book that includes not only recipes, but also charts that serve as guides for how to store & cook vegetables, grains, legumes, etc. If you are going to purchase just one cookbook, either of these would be a good "one-stop-shop" resource guide. There are also a lot of online resources available these days. There are countless blogs that you can follow. Everyone has their own cooking style and philosophy on cooking. As you poke around the internet, you are sure to find a blogger who fits your style of cooking and you can connect with them.

This year we have partnered with the Local Thyme CSA Menu Planning Service. This is an online resource for CSA style, vegetable-centric recipes and more! As a Harmony Valley Farm CSA member, you have free online access to the Local Thyme website through our farm. Refer to your weekly "What's In The Box" email for more details about how to get signed up. The Local Thyme website has an extensive database of seasonal vegetable recipes, as well as options to build your own online "Recipe Box," create your own

menu plan and generate a weekly shopping list. Check it out!

Finally, once you find a few basic recipes you like, customize them with the seasons. For instance if you have a good recipe for cream soup, you can use that same recipe to make a lot of different cream soups based on the vegetables available at the time. In the spring you might make cream of asparagus soup, early summer might be cream of cauliflower and then in the fall you might enjoy cream of broccoli! Remember... "What grows together goes together!" Throughout the season you can adapt your favorite recipes to utilize the veg-

etables you have in your box. Similar vegetables can easily be substituted for each other in recipes. For example, you can substitute spinach for chard or a variety of other greens.

You don't have to go to a fancy cooking school to prepare and enjoy great meals. Our region is rich with so many sources for great ingredients ranging from produce to dairy, meats, eggs and more. When you start with good ingredients, it doesn't take much to pull together a great meal. We hope you have some fun in the kitchen this season. If you stumble on any good recipes or cooking tips, please share them with us!

Join Us for Strawberry Day at Harmony Valley Farm!

Sunday, June 22 is our annual Harmony Valley Farm Strawberry Day. Come visit the farm for a chance to experience all things Strawberry: from growing, to picking and, of course, eating our fresh and certified organic strawberries right from our own fields!

12-1pm - Potluck
1:15-3pm - Wagon Tours
3pm-6pm - Pick Strawberries
and eat Strawberry Ice Cream!

We're looking for Volunteers!

Every Saturday, Jose Manuel and Rogelio journey to Madison to deliver your shares.



They're looking for helping hands to volunteer to unload boxes at our sites and nicely stack them for our members. Bring your boots and gloves for a rewarding experience and get to know the people who grow your food.

If you're interested in waking with the birds and meeting up with our delivery crew for a half day of fun, contact our CSA Coordinator to volunteer or to learn more about this opportunity at csa@harmonyvalleyfarm.com

Vegetable Feature: Hon Tsai Tai

by Andrea Yoder

Hon tsai tai is an interesting green that we grow every year very early in the season. This green is a Chinese specialty also known as Kailaan or purple flowering chum shoy. It is in a group of plants referred to as "flowering brassicas." While it is related to such vegetables as mustard greens, bok choy, etc, what sets it apart is that it has beautiful purple stems that produce a sweet, delicate, edible yellow flower that is quite tasty. Hon tsai tai is unique in that it produces the flower early in its life and it actually tastes good. Other vegetables in the brassicas family will also produce flowers, but usually they do so towards the end of their life cycle and at that point there are often undesirable flavor changes in the leaf or vegetable part of the plant. Hon tsai tai grows well in the spring and has become an important part of our spring lineup.

Hon tsai tai has a mild mustard flavor. The entire plant, except for the very lowest part of the stem, is edible and can be eaten raw or cooked. The thin purple stems are flavorful, but should be cut very finely. Sometimes the lower portion of the stem can be tough. This portion of the stem should be discarded. Hon tsai tai is delicious in stir-fries or lightly steamed, but also makes a stunning addition to raw salads. The greens are very tender, so they only need to be cooked briefly, for no more than a couple of minutes at most. A common preparation in Chinese cuisine is to quickly stir fry Hon tsai tai with garlic, onions, and ginger, then add oyster sauce. Store Hon tsai tai loosely wrapped in a plastic bag in the crisper drawer of your refrigerator until ready for use.

Sesame-Soy Hon Tsai Tai & Chicken Salad

by Andrea Yoder

Serves 2-4 as an entrée

2 Tbsp soy sauce
4 Tbsp rice vinegar
2 Tbsp honey
3 Tbsp sesame oil
4 Tbsp sunflower oil
2 green onions
2 green garlic
1 Tbsp fresh ginger, minced
Black pepper, to taste
½ tsp salt, kosher, plus more to taste
½ bunch hon tsai tai
4 baby white turnips, with the greens
3 French breakfast or red radishes, with the greens
1 ½ cups cooked chicken, small dice
1 Tbsp sesame seeds, toasted

1. In a small mixing bowl, combine the soy sauce, rice vinegar, honey and sesame oil. Stir well to combine and incorporate the honey. Stir in the sunflower oil.
2. Thinly slice the lower white portion of both the green onions and the green garlic. Add the thinly sliced white portion to the bowl containing the dressing mixture. Set aside the green tops. Stir in the onions and garlic, as well as the minced ginger and ½ tsp salt. Set the mixture aside until you are ready to use it.
3. Prepare the vegetables. Start by removing the leaves from the hon tsai tai stems. Cut or tear the leaves into bite-sized pieces and set them aside in a bowl. Mince or thinly slice the remaining stems (and flowers). You can use the entire stem except the lower 1-2 inches. Put the minced stem and flowers in a separate bowl, large enough to mix the salad in.
4. Cut the green tops off of both the turnips and the radishes. Cut or tear both of the greens into bite-sized pieces and add them to the bowl with the hon tsai tai greens. Cut the turnips and radishes into quarters and then thinly slice and add them to the bowl with the hon tsai tai stems. Thinly slice the remaining green garlic and green onion tops and add them to this bowl as well. Stir to combine all the vegetables.
5. Add the chicken and half of the dressing to the bowl with the hon tsai tai stems, turnips and radishes. Stir to combine.
6. Drizzle some of the remaining dressing over the greens, using just enough to lightly coat the greens. Divide the greens onto 2-4 plates. Top with the chicken and vegetable mixture. Finish each plate by sprinkling them with toasted sesame seeds.