



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

October 16-17, 2015

Winter Squash 101- Everything You Need to Know!

by Sarah Janes Ugoretz

This week, we're honing in on all things winter squash because, let's face it, fall is here and that means it's time to embrace winter squash. Before we get into the specifics of each of the winter squash varieties that we grow, we'll take a step back and give you a little background about the planning and strategy that goes into getting these squash into your kitchen.

Long before the planting season begins, Farmers Richard and Andrea begin the process of selecting which winter squash varieties to grow in the coming year. For the most part, these decisions are based on a few simple factors: appearance & size, taste & sweetness, and how well it stores. The squash you've seen this fall in your boxes or at our market stand all possess this trifecta of ideal characteristics—albeit, to varying degrees. We also try to select squash that will span the season with some being best shortly after harvest and others that get better with time in storage.

Once planting season arrives, squash transplants are nestled in along row after row of silver—or reflective—mulch. This practice largely serves as a deterrent to common pests like cucumber beetles and squash bugs. Based on the thickness of each particular squash variety's shell, their vulnerability to these pests and their razor sharp mouthparts varies somewhat. Typically, however, any bacteria that makes its way into one of these hardly noticeable nibbles inflicted by a cucumber beetle produces a spot. This tiny spot will affect the shelf life of the squash.

Knowing this, we take great care to "baby" each and every one of our winter squash as we handle them during harvest & packing. Using large portable tanks, our crew washes each squash in the field during harvest, a process that removes both dirt and bacteria. This allows us to minimize the amount of handling, which in turn limits opportunities for puncture wounds. From the field, our crew moves the day's harvest to our warm and toasty greenhouse where they undergo a process of curing and then are held in storage.

Whether it be in the field or on the packing line, we keep an eye out for those spots I mentioned before. Any afflicted squash are culled immediately. But alas, the Harmony Valley family can only consume so much squash! While we deliver squash with nearly every box once fall sets in, you don't necessarily have to eat it right away. It's much easier for you to keep your

more thin the rind, the poorer its storage ability. These varieties should be eaten first.

As you start to accumulate more squash, it might get tricky to keep them all straight. We wanted to take some time to describe each variety, what they're best used for, and how long they will keep. Given the limited space we have here, we will refer you to our blog at www.harmonyvalleyfarm.blogspot.com where you will find descriptions and pictures of each variety. We hope this will help you identify the squash you have and choose how you want to use it.

This Week's Box

PURPLE VIKING POTATOES: These potatoes, one of our favorites, are the absolute best for a warm, comforting potato soup. They're also excellent prepared with just a little butter, salt and pepper.

BROCCOLI: We're nearing the end of what has proven to be a bountiful fall broccoli harvest! Enjoy this week's broccoli in a warm & comforting broccoli soup.

YELLOW ONIONS: A savory bowl of French onion soup just might be in order this week. Check out Bon Appétit's guide on "How to Make Flawless French Onion Soup."

ITALIAN GARLIC: For a delicious & simple side dish, sauté your choice of mushrooms with garlic and thyme.

ORANGE KABOCHA SQUASH: Feature cubed orange kabocha squash in an autumn mole, or include this squash in a batch of risotto seasoned with sage and topped with toasted pine nuts.

SPINACH: Include spinach in Bon Appétit's Caramelized Garlic, Spinach and Cheddar tart, or simply sauté it and toss with soy sauce and sesame seeds.

SALAD MIX: Get creative with your salads by including add-ons with a fall twist such as cooked wild rice, roasted squash, dried cranberries or curried chickpeas.

CELERY: Celery adds a burst of flavor to just about anything, but for celery-centric dishes, consider a savory celery gratin or a chicken and celery stir-fry.

PARSLEY ROOT: In general, parsley root lends itself to a host of preparations, including roasting, steaming, boiling and pureeing. See this week's vegetable feature for more information.

YELLOW CARROTS: Feature these sweet carrots in curried coconut carrot soup, or include fat strips of carrots in a soba noodle salad with sesame oil, garlic, ginger and red pepper flakes.

RED MUSTARD GREENS: The flavor and color of mustard greens is best in the cool of the fall. You'll find the flavor to be mild and balanced when lightly sautéed or wilted into dishes such as the lentil recipe in this week's newsletter. These greens are also excellent sautéed and tossed with bacon (or beans) and chipotle.

RED BEETS: Grate beets, along with yellow carrots, for a colorful autumnal slaw. Toss with ¼ cup of orange juice, 2 tsps of Dijon mustard and 2 Tbsps each of red wine vinegar and olive oil. Season to taste.

LEMONGRASS: Check out Martha Stewart's recipe for Grilled Shrimp (or spot prawns!) with Lemongrass Marinade. Refer to the newsletter from September 24 for more information about lemongrass.

ORANGE ITALIAN FRYING PEPPERS OR YELLOW BELL PEPPERS: These are officially the last peppers of the season. Enjoy!

FRENCH BREAKFAST RADISHES: We're in our final crop of the season and couldn't resist including these pretty things in your box. They make a lovely addition to a simple salad, or just dip them in salt and munch on them for a snack!

Vegetable Feature: Parsley Root

by Andrea Yoder

Parsley root is an interesting vegetable that we rarely have the opportunity to include in CSA boxes. We were introduced to parsley root years ago upon request of Chef Odessa Piper who recognized the subtle, yet striking, role parsley root can play in fall and winter meals. While used more widely throughout Europe, it is not as well-known in the US. Parsley root is the root of the parsley plant. While both of these crops have similar plants, there are varieties grown specifically for the root versus the herb. Parsley root is a challenging crop to grow with a limited market for selling, thus we only plant it every couple of years. In order to get a nice, straight root, parsley root must be direct-seeded versus herb parsley which is started in the greenhouse as a transplant. Parsley root seed is very hard to germinate & has a long growing season. These two factors are what make this crop hard to manage and require an investment in time to cultivate and hand weed several times throughout the season.

While parsley root resembles parsnips, they are very different in flavor. Parsley root has a mild parsley flavor and provides a sweet, subtle background flavor to dishes prepared with it. It can be eaten raw or cooked. In its raw form, you can grate it on top of a greens salad, or make it the center ingredient in a salad. Combine shredded parsley root with carrots, diced shallots and toss with fresh parsley and a lemon vinaigrette. Parsley root pairs well with other root vegetables and makes a delicious addition to soups and root mashes along with potatoes, celeriac, parsnips, etc. If you enjoy making your own homemade stock, I encourage you to consider investing all of your parsley root into a pot of stock this week. Chicken stock in particular is elevated to the next level with the addition of parsley root along with carrots, celery and onions—all included in this week's box! We have often heard that parsley root is the secret ingredient in Grandma's chicken soup...which starts with a good stock.

Savor and appreciate this little taste of something special. It will be a few years before we grow it again!

Red Lentils with Winter Squash & Greens

Servings: 4

1 cup red lentils

3 Tbsp olive oil

¼ cup chopped onion

2 garlic cloves, minced

1 inch fresh ginger, minced

¼ tsp ground turmeric

1 tsp salt, plus more as needed to taste

1 tsp cumin seeds

1 tsp mustard seeds (optional, but highly recommended)

2 Tbsp fresh lemongrass bulb, minced

1 handful fresh curry leaves (optional—the recipe is great even without them)

1 fresh red chili (such as a guajillo or red fresno pepper), sliced thinly (may substitute a pinch or two of dried pepper flakes)

5-6 cups water

1 cup diced kabocha or butternut squash

1 bunch mustard greens OR 4 cups raw spinach

Fresh lime & Cilantro, to garnish

Cooked Basmati Rice or Potatoes

1. Rinse the lentils well using a mesh strainer.
2. Heat a skillet to medium heat and add the olive oil. Once the olive oil is shimmering, add the onions & garlic. Sauté for about 5 minutes, then add the lentils, ginger, turmeric, salt, cumin seeds, mustard seeds, lemongrass, curry leaves (if using), and the red chili. Stir to combine, then add 3-4 cups of water, or enough water to bring the level of liquid over the lentils by about ½-1 inch.
3. Cover and bring to a simmer. Once the lentils are simmering, remove the cover and add the squash. Add an additional 1-2 cups of water and continue to simmer until the squash is tender, the lentils are soft, and the mixture looks smoother.
4. Reduce the heat to low and stir in the greens. If you are using mustard greens, wash the leaves and then tear or cut into bite sized pieces before adding them to the lentils. Simmer for just a few minutes more until all the greens have wilted into the lentils.
5. Adjust seasoning with salt and pepper. Serve alongside cooked basmati rice or boiled potatoes. Garnish with a squeeze of fresh lime and chopped cilantro.



I adapted this recipe from one originally written by McKel Hill for her blog—NutritionStripped.com. The mustard greens are delicious in this recipe which is quite easy to prepare.—Chef Andrea

Potato & Parsley Soup with Parsley Root

Serves 4 to 6

1 ½ pounds potatoes, peeled

2 medium parsley roots, scrubbed

1 ½ Tbsp butter or olive oil

1 medium to large onion, finely chopped

2 bay leaves

½ cup dry white wine

2 cups chopped parsley

1 ½ tsp sea salt

6 cups water or vegetable stock

½ cup cream, or additional water

Freshly ground black pepper

1. Quarter the potatoes lengthwise and thinly slice. Grate the parsley roots.
2. Melt the butter in a soup pot and add the potatoes, parsley roots, onions and bay leaves. Cook over medium heat for 5 to 7 minutes, stirring occasionally. Raise the heat, add the wine, and let it reduce until syrupy.
3. Add 1 ½ cups of the parsley, the salt and the water; bring to a boil. Lower the heat and simmer, partially covered, until the potatoes have broken apart, about 30 minutes.
4. Stir in the cream and remaining ½ cup parsley and heat through. Taste for salt and season with pepper. Remove the bay leaves and serve.

Recipe borrowed from Deborah Madison's cookbook, *The New Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone*.