



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Customers - Since 1993
Twin Cities Edition

Hon Tsai Tai

by Nichole Brandenburg

Gesundheit! Have you ever wanted to say this after something someone said? This was my original (comic) reaction when Andrea asked me to write about Hon Tsai Tai. Instead, I did as I know you would have, I was brave...and I asked....What is hon tsai tai? I knew it was a green but I had not cooked with this unusual sounding Asian green before. My mission now was to gather the three bunches of Hon Tsai tai that were waiting for me in the Chef's cooler and prepare the evening meal with my new inspiration. I researched, I looked, I tasted in the raw....and I created ...a success that is! This yummy taste of China straight from our field added a vibrant green color and a flavor profile somewhat similar to mustard greens. I found the taste of hon tsai tai to be pleasantly smooth and a bit sweet. Friday night Hon tsai tai inspired me to create a Flank steak marinated in peanut oil, mirin, lemon and soy sauce and then tossed with soba noodles, morels, toasted sesame seeds, carrots, Egyptian walking onions, dried chile pepper ristras, and green garlic. (see this week's recipe)

Hon tsai tai, also known as brassica rapa, has deep purple-green leaves and yellow flower stalks. The plant grows vigorously and produces lots of flower buds for vegetable use. Young stalks and flowers are very tender, and excellent for stir-fry. Hon tsai tai is a member of the crucifer family, which includes bok choy and mizuna. This diverse grouping of vegetables includes plants whose leaves, flowers, stems, and roots are eaten. These greens are the powerhouses of

This Week's Box

Parsnips: Sure they have been compared to potatoes but actually they contain more fiber. They can be baked, sautéed, steamed, or boiled and mashed. They stand in nicely for carrots, and sweet or regular potatoes in most recipes, and lend a gentle sweetness to soups and other combinations of root vegetables. This is our last week for parsnips. If you are not ready to use them, store them in the refrigerator for up to two weeks.

Green Garlic: It is a fresh shoot of a young garlic plant, before it develops the bulbs that we are familiar with in older garlic. It turns sweet and delicious when cooked and can also be eaten raw. Keep them in a plastic bag in the vegetable bin with a damp paper towel in the bag. They should last at least a week.

Chives: The chives this week have beautiful blossoms on them...and they are edible too! The chives as well as the blossom impart a fresh onion flavor to any dish including fresh salads and stir-fries. Chop the chives and add to sour cream to top off steaks or sandwiches.

Hon Tsai Tai: Bunched greens with tasty and tender flowers, delicious and colorful in a salad. See main article for more info.

Red Bok Choi: Also in flower. All parts of the plant are edible - stem, leaf and flower! Refer to main article for preparation and storage tips.

Radish: Try marinating in equal parts soy sauce and red wine vinegar for a spicy salad topper. The greens can be removed and added to a stir fry or a soup.

Spinach, Arugula, or Sauté Mix: These delicious greens are tender enough to eat raw as a salad, but can also hold up to cooking. Dress the greens with an Asian vinaigrette and top off with radish slices. A cooked alternative is to add them to a pot of miso soup.

Asparagus: First remove the bottom woody stalks; they snap right off. The woody ends can be added to your next stock. Keep fresh asparagus clean, cold and covered. For storing, pat dry and place in moisture-proof wrapping. Refrigerate and use within 2 or 3 days for best quality. To maintain freshness, wrap a moist paper towel around the stem ends, or stand upright in two inches of cold water. Great for grilling, steaming, raw in salads, or added to a pasta or risotto with grated parmesan cheese or a white sauce.

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vegetables providing vitamins A and C, potassium, calcium, folic acid, beta-carotene, zinc, manganese, and magnesium. Their flavors have been described as mustardy, sweet, and bitter.

In the upcoming weeks, your CSA box will contain a variety of cooking greens including amaranth, mizuna, yukina savoy, and komatsuna. These greens are all very versatile and can be exchanged for one another in sautees, stir fries, steamed as a side dish, or added to soups. The key to these delicious and nutritious veggies is quick and simple cooking so they retain their nutritional value while enhancing the flavors. Once you have mastered the basic cooking techniques of quick boiling, simmering, and sautéing, you can cook any green and it will be easier to welcome them to your dinner table as regular guests. If you are working with a bitter green, or a green with a tough texture such as collard greens, simmering or braising may be your best bet. Cooking the greens in a liquid will help disperse the bitter flavor and also allow for a better, less tough or chewy bite. You will know the greens are done by their bright green color. If you are boiling or simmering remember to keep the nutrient dense cooking broth otherwise referred to as pot-licker water.

When storing and preserving your cooking greens, keep in mind that they are alive and breathing. This means they need moisture and air to survive. The best way to store them is slightly wet wrapped loosely in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Stored properly, greens should keep for several days.

Fun for everyone! Come to your farm for a potluck lunch, wagon tours of the farm, and to pick all the strawberries you can eat! You can pick four pints to take home for free, and pay \$2.50/lb after that. Email invites and more details coming soon. Want to carpool? Check your site for a ride/rider sign up sheet!



Peanut Marinated Flank Steak with Hon Tsai Tai

Serves 4-6

1 ½ lb. Flank steak

1 stalk green garlic

1 bunch Hon Tsai Tai or 2 heads baby bok choy

Peanut Oil to taste

Mirin, to taste

Juice from one lemon

¼ cup sesame seeds, toasted

Soy Sauce to taste

4 small dried chile peppers, chopped finely

1 cup mushrooms, washed, and sliced, stems removed (can save and add to a stock)

¾ of package Soba noodles

5 Carrots, peeled, lengthwise slices

--Marinate steak in equal parts mirin, soy sauce, peanut oil and juice from one lemon for 1 hour

--In a large sauté pan over medium high heat, heat 1 tbsp oil. Sear flank steak on both sides, then reduce heat and cooked to desired degree of doneness. Set aside and let rest for 15 minutes. Slice thinly on a bias.

--Prepare soba noodles according to package, drain and set aside.

--Saute mushrooms until soft and cooked down, add carrots, green garlic, chile peppers and sauté until carrots are tender.

--Add a light drizzle of peanut oil (1-2 tsp), a dash of mirin (2-3 tsp), and a splash of soy sauce (1-2 Tbsp) to desired taste and enough to just to coat veggies.

--Cut Hon Tsai Tai and/or bok choy into bite-sized pieces and add to veggies. Cook until the greens are wilted.

--Add soba noodles and flank steak—stir until well combined and heated through. Top with toasted sesame seeds and serve.

Braised Baby Bok Choy

Serves 2

1 cup chicken broth

3 tbsp unsalted butter

2 heads baby bok choy, trimmed

½ tsp Asian sesame oil

Pepper, to taste

--Bring broth and butter to a simmer in a deep large heavy skillet. Arrange bok choy evenly in skillet and simmer, covered, until tender, about 5 minutes.

--Transfer bok choy to a serving dish and keep warm, covered. Boil broth mixture until reduced to about 1/4 cup, then stir in sesame oil and pepper to taste. Pour mixture over bok choy.

Strawberry Day! Sunday June 22 Noon-6pm