



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993
Twin Cities Edition - Brown Week Delivery

September 3, 2009

Letter to the Editor

Dear Ruth Reichl,

We have long been a subscriber to Gourmet Magazine and have read several of your books. Our farm was one of several featured in Gourmet in September, 2000. It was great fun and we would do it again if you decide to do a story on 'Eating local in the middle of a Midwest Winter'. I think it fair to say we are fans of yours. But with due respect, would like to offer a perspective on your Editorial in the September, 2009 edition. In particular the phrase, "At the moment when summer slides into fall, we revel in a few triumphant weeks when the world becomes a cornucopia—fruit drops from trees, and vegetables leap from the ground". I have always thought that you appreciated farmers and may like to hear a farmers perspective on that "few triumphant weeks".

That unique time of year when summer fruits and vegetables are still producing (the tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, melons, etc) and cool season fall crops are also starting, (fall roots and greens) does create a fantastic time to be cooking and eating. BUT, I am sure you know that fruit rarely "drops" into a farmers hand and vegetables do not "leap from the ground". They are all picked, washed, cooled and packed by many hands and machines and many hours of dedicated labor.

This year is especially unique in my 35 years of farming. It has been a very cool summer, so the summer crops are ripening sloooooowly into fall, but at the same time the cool season fall crops have loved the cool weather and are producing extra early, making this 'few triumphant weeks' into many more weeks of combined summer and fall crops! Great working, sleeping and eating time of year, but can you appreciate the workload on the farm crew? Especially here in the Midwest where we cannot call in a contract harvest crew, but depend on a season long crew and try to plan crops, plantings and harvest to be a steady, season long, full time work load. And then when we are still planting and caring for fall crops, we

THIS WEEK'S BOX

BROCCOLI ROMANESCO: We didn't have room to put this in the box, so we've sent along ONE per veggie share, in a box on the side. Make sure to pick up ONE head of romanesco at your site! See veggie feature on back.

YELLOW ONION: Make onion rings!

ITALIAN GARLIC: Mash roasted garlic cloves into an herbed cream cheese spread and make an outrageous bagel sandwich. How about some smoked ham, sliced tomatoes, and jalapeños?

TOMATO VARIETY BAG: Make up a fresh batch of salsa or pasta sauce and freeze it for winter. You may find Black Pear, Rose, Sunkist, Paragon or Evergreen in your bag.

GRAPE TOMATOES: You'll have either Sweet Olive, Sunshine, or the Suzanne variety. In cooked dishes, pair tomatoes with green beans, peppers, or corn. Add raw tomato halves to couscous, tabbouleh, quinoa, or green salads.

ORANGE UKRAINE: Thick fleshed, mild flavored, and beautifully colored, the orange Ukraine is wonderfully versatile. Use it cooked or raw anywhere you'd use a bell pepper, since it is so similar to a sweet & ripe bell.

UW ROASTER: Try it stuffed with corn, tomatoes, rice, and cheese.

JALAPEÑO: If you have more jalapenos than you are using up in salsa right now, pop a few into the freezer for chili and soups this fall and winter.

TEGGIA HORTICULTURAL BEAN: The Teggia bean is a versatile variety that can be eaten as a green bean when younger then as the pods grow larger, can be shelled and eaten as a fresh bean. Later still, the dry pods can be collected and utilized as a dried storage bean for winter. Since we have had plenty of green bean varieties this summer, we saved this one for a shelling bean. Remove the beans from the pods, then simmer for 15-25 minutes. Simple preparation with minimal flavorings is best.

GREEN TOP CARROTS: Our favorite variety of Nantes, called Bolero. Pack some tasty, crunchy carrot sticks for lunch or an afternoon snack.

WATERMELON: If you have a food dehydrator and want to give it a try, Kelly says that dried watermelon strips are just like cotton candy.

CANTALOUPE/FRENCH ORANGE MELON: Cubed melon makes a fabulous breakfast, topped with yogurt and granola. You may have Sweet Sarah, French Orange, Butter-scotch, Serenade or Mini Musketeers.

SPIGARELLO: See veggie feature.

CUCUMBER AMERICAN SLICER OR THIN SKINNED DIVA: Cut cucumber sticks, carrot sticks, and radish halves for dipping in a creamy tahini sauce.

SUMMER SQUASH: Cut into French fries, lightly coat in flour, beaten eggs, and bread-crumbs, and fry until golden brown. You'll be glad you did.

RED OR FRENCH BREAKFAST RADISH: Surprise! Your springtime treats have returned. Add radishes to salads, sandwiches, or snacks.

SALAD OR SPINACH: Top with sliced radishes, chunks of cucumber, sweet peppers, and a creamy garlic dressing.

COLORADO ROSE OR CAROLA GOLD POTATOES: Serve up a platter of "potato nachos": cut potatoes into thin slices and fry until browned, then spread over a cookie sheet and layer with shredded cheese, chopped peppers and onions, and cooked ground beef. Broil until cheese is melted and garnish with tomatoes and sour cream.

EDAMAME: Boil in the pod for 5 minutes, remove beans from the pod and toss with pasta, salad greens or use in a veggie stir fry.

are faced with the dual harvest challenge of summer and fall crops combined! Can you imagine what a challenge it is to fit all that abundance into a CSA box and into a full (and then some) delivery truck?

It is a great time of year to be a cook and eater and I am sure you understand and appreciate what a challenge it is for farmers and farm workers.

With all due respect, Richard

Spigarello Tomato Polenta

½ cup cornmeal
2 cups water
1/2 tsp salt
1 bunch spigarello
2 tsp olive oil
1 clove garlic, chopped
4 oz creamy goat cheese or Butler Farm's Brebis
Handful of grape tomatoes, chopped
4 strips bacon or pancetta (optional)
½ cup heavy cream
¼ cup grated parmesan cheese or other hard cheese

1. Remove stems from spigarello and cut into narrow strips.
 2. Heat water and salt to a boil. Slowly sprinkle in the cornmeal, whisking constantly, until fully incorporated.
 3. Lower the heat to a low simmer and cook, stirring frequently, until polenta thickens and begins to pull away from the side of the pot, about 15-20 minutes. Remove from heat.
 4. While polenta is cooking, heat olive oil in a sauté pan and add garlic and spigarello. (If using bacon, you can fry the bacon first and simply cook the garlic and spigarello in part of the bacon fat.) Cook over medium heat, turning occasionally, until spigarello is wilted. Add tomatoes and season with salt and pepper.
 5. When polenta is finished cooking, stir in cream and parmesan. Taste and adjust seasoning as desired.
 6. To finish, scoop polenta equally among 4 plates. Top each with the cooked spigarello and tomatoes, 2 tablespoons of soft goat cheese, and crumbled bacon or pancetta, if using. Serve hot.
- 4 servings

Veggie Features: Broccoli Romanesco and Spigarello

Broccoli Romanesco is perhaps the most dramatic vegetable you can hope to find in your CSA box, or anywhere. Our September 20, 2003 newsletter listed some of the descriptions this unique vegetable has earned, including "it may be part starfish, part wedding cake." I would like to suggest that dinosaur be added to the list. Although I have never actually seen a dinosaur, that's what I tend to think of when I look at the pale green vegetable's spirals of bumpy buds.

Broccoli Romanesco's spiraling shape, in fact, is that of a logarithmic spiral, or fractal. This unique shape is repeated in surprising places throughout the natural world, from the shells of mollusks, to the heads of sunflowers, to the shape of the Milky Way galaxy. The simplest way to describe the logarithmic spiral is to say that, as the spiral grows larger, its total shape is unaltered by each successive curve. To say that the shape of Romanesco is a fractal is to say that each smaller section of the vegetable is patterned after the shape of the whole. For instance, you will notice that the bumpy florets on the cone-shaped vegetable are successively smaller as they spiral toward the pointed tip. Within each floret, however, there are also spiraling bumps arranged in this same pattern. For a vegetable, that's pretty remarkable! So before you dig in, be sure to gather round friends and loved ones, gaze into Romanesco's logarithmic spiral, and ponder the mysteries of the universe.

Romanesco is more closely related to cauliflower than broccoli. Like broccoli and cauliflower, the part of the plant we eat is the flower. Its closely bunched buds have a similar texture to cauliflower, but are slightly more tender and have a shorter cooking time than cauliflower. Its light texture makes it good eaten raw as crudité. Like broccoli and cauliflower, its flavors are carried nicely by fats, such as butter or olive oil or a creamy cheese sauce. The entire head of Romanesco can be roasted whole, for a dramatic presentation. Or it can be cut into individual florets and steamed or sautéed. We recommend gentler cooking methods, to help maintain the unique shape of the florets. Like cauliflower and broccoli, Romanesco can quickly become unpleasantly mushy if cooked just slightly too long, so keep a close eye on it.

Romanesco can be stored several days in the refrigerator, loosely covered. It seems to be more perishable than cauliflower, so keep an eye out for softening or discoloration. You may be tempted to put it on display as a conversation piece, but remember to eat it before it starts to go bad. Take a few photos, then cook it up and enjoy.

Spigarello, as it has come to be known in the States in recent years, is an heirloom variety ancestor of common broccoli raab, carried over from Italy. This particular cooking green is still quite popular in Italy and is sold in farmers' markets throughout the nation, though under different names in different regions. It seems that the seed that was brought to the U.S. originated under the local name spigariello, and the 'I' somehow got dropped on this side of the ocean.

Its leaves have a familiar flavor something between broccoli raab and green kale, but free of bitterness. Spigarello is also much more tender than kale. However, unlike its close relative broccoli raab, spigarello's stems are too tough to eat and only the leaves are edible. Spigarello does produce small clusters of flowers, and these are edible too. Cook it the same ways you may cook kale or broccoli raab. It does well with steaming and sautéing, and can be added to various soups and other cooked dishes. Since spigarello has quite a sweet and mild flavor, it doesn't need much seasoning or strongly flavored sauces. Enjoy it as a simply cooked green that tastes great on its own. Store in a plastic bag in the fridge, for up to a week.

Broccoli Romanesco with Cheddar Sauce Serves 3-4

1 head of Romanesco, leaves trimmed
1½ Tbsp unsalted butter
1½ Tbsp all-purpose flour
1 cup whole milk
4 ounces coarsely grated extra-sharp Cheddar
2 Tbsp grated Parmigiano-Reggiano or Pastureland Thoten or Berne
½ tsp black pepper
1 tsp salt
Crushed pine nuts or walnuts (optional)

1. Melt butter in a heavy medium saucepan over medium-low heat and stir in flour. Cook roux, stirring, 3 minutes, then whisk in milk. Bring sauce to a boil, whisking constantly, then simmer, whisking occasionally, 3 minutes. Stir in cheeses, salt, and 1/2 teaspoon pepper until smooth. Remove from heat and cover with waxed paper until ready to use.
2. Cut Romanesco florets from stem. Cook in a steamer, or covered in a shallow pot with ½" of water, until slightly softened, about 3 minutes. Remove from heat and drain well.
3. Pour cheese sauce over hot Romanesco florets and, if desired, dust with crushed toasted nuts. Serve immediately.