



JERICHO SETTLERS' FARM

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A Reflection on the Season

Over the past few weeks I've spoken to many of you about what crops made it or didn't this year. Every year is different, with so many factors involved in determining what dies and what thrives. Here are a few of our thoughts on the season.

The cut greens are back – Finally! It was a long haul getting the fields to dry out enough to get new seedings done. Without a well prepared weed-free bed it is pretty much pointless to seed cut greens, such as baby spinach, arugula, mesclun, and lettuce mix. Thus, the long hiatus of the cut greens this summer. But now the arugula and mesclun are back and they grow beautifully this time of year, loving the cool nights and free from the pesky little black beetles that like to make holes in the leaves. These beetles, called flea beetles (they're not fleas but hop like a flea, hence the name), are voracious eaters of the mustard family of greens and arugula, which is probably their favorite. The beetles are rampant in the spring through mid-summer, but populations die back in fall, and the adult beetles that will overwinter are less active. Thus the late summer is a perfect time to plant arugula and mesclun to get delicious crops of young greens. In a typical year (whatever that is) we seed cutting greens every other week and they are available most of the season. We attempted to keep the greens coming in the form of head lettuce, which we can plant into sodden fields. You'll notice the head lettuce is more robust now than in past weeks, as it too loves the cooler weather. I have found, in eating seasonally, that I shy away from lettuce in the hottest months, instead making salads of beans, tomatoes, or corn, which are at their peak flavor.

The fall plantings of carrots are coming along nicely and we expect to get carrots back into the share at least once before the summer share ends. Usually we have carrots and beets available most of the summer, at least every other week or so. To do this we plant several times throughout the year. Well this season the first planting did well, but the second planting literally rotted in the ground. It was quite sad to pull up a handful of carrots and have the bottom half of the roots drip to the ground.

The fall brassicas (cauliflower, broccoli, cabbage) fared very poorly – their root systems were just too saturated and they never grew hearty enough roots to support thriving plants. Last year our broccoli crops were so outstanding it was quite a let down to lose them all except the first planting this season.

The peppers, however, grew larger, juicier, and more prolifically than we've ever had them produce. They are lovers of water, and they benefited from all the rain. The peppers that were in the hoop house did particularly well, as they had the benefit of additional warmth, yet still received lots of rain, since they are planted along the sidewalls of the hoop house, and most of the rainstorms dripped (or poured) in off the hoop house covering. We don't close down the hoop house once we're free of frost in the spring unless it's really windy or really cold – so the peppers were well watered all summer long.

And the potatoes – Are you potatoed out yet? Though we lost some of the baby potato crop, the storage potatoes grew handsomely. We are heading towards a yield of 14,000 lbs. We're still digging away, on a treasure hunt for spuds that are bountiful, large, and have excellent flesh. By the way, don't forget to roast those fingerlings (the funny-shaped oblong potatoes). They are famed for their flavor and texture, and are all the rage in the gourmet potato world (wherever that is).

Save the Date! October 12th

We are going to wrap up the Summer CSA season and welcome in the Winter CSA season on October 12th with a large potluck feast, music, games, and an afternoon of farm fun! Please save the date – all summer and winter CSA members and their families are welcome! Details to follow.

How to Bake Winter Squash

There are many fancy things you can do with winter squash, though I'm of the opinion that the simplest preparation is also one of the best. Winter squash have hard outer skins and firm yellow or orange flesh inside. Baking the squash softens its flesh and brings out its sweetness. To bake acorn, delicata, buttercup, pie pumpkins, spaghetti, or sweet dumpling squash do the following:

- Cut squash in half (cut lengthwise for those squash types that have a noticeably longer axis)
- Scoop out seeds and stringy inner flesh from center
- Place cut side down on a baking pan and bake at high heat (375 degrees F) until flesh is soft when pierced with a fork (20 minutes for small delicatas, up to 1 hour for large pie pumpkins). You can turn squash over for the last 15 minutes of baking if you prefer a dryer flesh.

That's all there is to it. Now you can eat from the shell, or scoop out the flesh and mash it, or puree into soup, etc...

Fried Green Tomatoes

green tomatoes, sliced eggs, lightly beaten
flour seasoned bread crumbs, crushed fine

You can purchase bread crumbs already seasoned or make your own with dried (or toasted) bread mixed with fresh herbs, salt, and pepper.

To fry tomatoes first dip them in the flour until lightly covered, then dip in the egg. Next dip them in the seasoned bread crumbs until well coated. Heat oil in a pan over medium-high heat. Once hot place the tomatoes in the pan, turn to brown both sides. Serve hot.



Meet Adam Thigpen, a member of our hardworking crew. He's up to something here, perhaps planning an escape with the sweet bell peppers. We can trust him in the tomato patch though, because he claims not to like raw tomatoes. He's mean with a transplanting trowel and a champion chicken catcher, egg washer, weeder, harvester, packer, soil block maker, pig feeder – you name it, Adam is ready to do it with a hearty “Yeah, O.K.”.

Roasted Acorn Squash Three Ways

1 acorn squash
seasonings from one of the following recipes
¼ t. salt

Heat oven to 400°F. Cut squash in half and scoop out seeds. Set squash halves on pan and rub flesh all over with softened butter (for parmesan thyme recipe drizzle olive oil all over). Sprinkle with salt. Sprinkle or drizzle remaining ingredients over the top edge of squash and into the cavity (most of the liquid will pool up there). Roast squash halves until nicely browned and tender, about 1 hour for small to medium squash; larger squash may take longer. Don't undercook! Serve warm.

Flavorings for acorn squash:

Maple with Nuts or Ginger:

1½ T unsalted butter, softened
2 T maple syrup
2 T chopped pecans (add during last 10 mins of cooking)
OR 1½ t. minced fresh ginger

Orange Curry:

1½ T unsalted butter, softened
2 T orange juice mixed with 1 T honey,
1 t. minced fresh ginger
big pinch of curry powder

Parmesan Thyme:

2 T olive oil
1 T grated parmesan
¼ t. chopped fresh thyme

Arugula

Arugula is an aromatic, peppery green. It is also known as roquette, rocket, rugula and rucola, and is very popular in Italian cuisine. It grows wild in Asia and in the Mediterranean region. In the northeastern U.S. arugula grows particularly well in the cool seasons of spring and fall, and can be successfully overwintered in Vermont. Its flavor is best when grown at cooler temperatures – nutty and peppery without too much bite! While excellent as a salad green, it can also be sautéed, made into pesto, or added to soups.

For salads I like to toss arugula with a soft goat cheese, toasted almonds or walnuts, and sometimes dried fruit such as raisins or cranberries. A balsamic vinaigrette or similar oil/vinegar dressing tops it well. Experiment to find the flavor combinations you like.

Once thought to be peasant food, baby arugula is apparently now a sign of gentrification in NYC neighborhoods. Go figure.