



News from the Farm



Volume 3, Issue 10
August 22, 2011

© 2011 Grassroots Farm, LLC, all rights reserved
Monroe, Wisconsin

Our Amazing Garlic

FOR the last six weeks you have been receiving regular delivery of garlic in your share box. Initially, the garlic was “fresh” (uncured) and assertive in flavor until sautéed. In the last three weeks or so we have switched to “cured” garlic, which is probably more familiar to you.

A little explanation about our garlic: In general, garlic can be classified as hardneck or softneck. Soft neck garlic is primarily imported by the container load from China and is smaller in size with numerous small cloves in a bulb. Higher quality softneck garlic is grown in Gilroy, CA. It can be braided into attractive cords when the leaves are left on. We do grow some soft neck garlic, mostly for

uncured, or fresh, sales.

The hardneck variety that makes up the majority of our crop (about 2,000 bulbs) has an interesting back story. It was acquired from another Madison area organic farmer who was ready for retirement. He had carefully selected and replanted his own garlic for at least 15 years before Lindsey was able to purchase several bushels for her own stock in the fall of 2008.

Aside from genetic modification, if you want to change a crop fast, hybridizing is the route. This involves carefully controlled crossing between varieties with desirable characteristics to ultimately produce a final plant that is an improved variety of the origi-

nals.

However, if you have more time than money and want to improve a crop, use the process of selection, where you only reproduce plants with the most desirable characteristics and do NOT continue to plant inferior plants. That is what was done for 15 years prior to acquisition of our hardneck garlic. We have carried on that same approach in the 3 season we have grown garlic for market and intend to do so indefinitely.

Garlic for next year’s crop is selected based on three important factors: size of bulb, size of cloves, and disease-free. Eventually we will have a garlic variety with a unique genetic pattern that could be private label-marketed.



Special points of interest:

- Our Amazing Garlic
- Book Review—*Chef, M.D.*
- The Sentinel Maple
- Recipes using this week’s produce
- Questions and Answers

What is in your share box this week?

Garlic

Basil

Fresh Onions

Tomatoes *

Baby Leeks

Swiss Chard

Green or Yellow Romano Beans or Green String Beans

Sweet corn

A few notes: Having trouble keeping **basil** fresh? Remember to place the stem of the sprig in a glass of water **ON THE COUNTERTOP**, out of the sun.

I probably don’t have to mention that sweet corn is best eaten as soon after

picking as possible. This sweet corn was picked on Tuesday. Enjoy as soon as possible.

Repeat: Please do not put **tomatoes** in refrigerator.

* Featured Produce this week



Book Review—*Chef, M.D.*, by John La Puma

RECOMMENDED by a friend who is a fabulous home cook, I checked out this cookbook/nutritional information resource from my public library the next day after our conversation.

I confess I have, by count, 174 cookbooks on my shelves and I do use every one of them. Naturally, I am cautious about acquiring yet another. However, I highly recommend this resource for a wide variety of recipes using methods of preparation that pre-

serve nutrition, ingredients that emphasize healthful choices and combinations, and selecting foods for certain medical problems for therapeutic reasons.

What I like about the format is the additional discussion with each recipe, including nutritional analysis, food as medicine, culinary techniques, and tips for seasonings, variations, and/or substitutions.

This format works whether

you “cook by the book” or just use a recipe as a springboard for something completely original.

The selection of recipes covers gluten-free, vegan, vegetarian, and other special diet interests in addition to a broad spectrum of choices for the busy cook in all categories.

Move over, Betty Crocker, and make room for one more book on the kitchen book shelf. Karen is right, this cookbook more than just recipes.

The Sentinel Maple

Fourth in a series of trees on the farm.

Our Sentinel Maple isn't QUITE this colorful yet (see right), but it will be just a matter of another week or two. The reds and yellows will begin to come up before the first week in September, and, depending on the weather, linger through the first week of October.

This sugar maple is in the prime of life. The age of the tree is between 45 and 50 years and it is likely that previous owners may have taken a seedling from sugar maples along the old granary foundation and deliberately planted this tree in this spot. It is located on the east

side of Orchard Hill and near the east edge of the barnyard and several hundred yards from the rest of the maples. Sentinel Maple and the Black Locust to the right in this photo, are the only two trees between the barnyard and the east fence line hedge-row.

We first see fall color when the night temperatures fall into the 50's for a couple of days. In total we have four Sugar Maples and, in the future, have a mind to try sugaring in the spring. In the meantime, we enjoy their deep summer shade and beautiful Wisconsin fall color.



Questions and Answers

Q. I'd like to try your tomato ketchup recipe from last week. Will you be selling crates of tomatoes? If so, how can I order some?

A. Yes, we will be taking orders for “flats” of tomatoes. A flat is 18—20 pounds. First quality flats will sell for \$3.00/pound. Seconds, which are still usable, but have cosmetic “issues,” will sell for \$2.50/lb. We suggest you only consider seconds if you are planning on preserving by cooking the product beyond 180° before canning. Be prepared to can within just a day or two of pick up of

your order because we tend to pick only vine-ripe and they will go past their peak in 24—48 hours.

We may have a flat or two each week without advance notice, so be sure to ask. Also, if you want paste (sauce) Italian-type tomatoes only, we need an advance order.

Q. Have you ever frozen pesto?

A. Absolutely. Pesto (of all kinds) freezes well. Try ice cube trays for portion control. Be sure to label the bag. Most pestos look the same once they are frozen.



Featured Produce— Tomatoes

THE tomato originated in South America and spread around the world to touch almost every cuisine. Although botanically it is classified as a fruit, it is considered a vegetable for culinary purposes.

Tomatoes are loaded with beneficial nutrition, most notably lycopene, which assists the body in reducing inflammation and fighting some types of cancers.

In addition, tomatoes are high in Vitamins A and C and promote vision and skin health.

If you are a “beginner” in canning, you will find tomatoes to be particularly successful. Their natural acidity makes canning safely easy and a large number of recipes and instructions are widely available to get started on this rewarding aspect of preserving the bounty.



THE best heirloom tomato in our market garden... Cherokee Purple.

Roasted Heirloom Tomato Soup

- 4 pounds ripe heirloom tomatoes (washed & cut in half)
- 2 Spanish onions (peeled & cut in half)
- 6 cloves garlic
- 1 cup extra virgin olive oil
- to taste coarse salt & fresh ground black pepper
- ¼ cup basil fresh
- 8 cups chicken or vegetable stock
- ¼ cup Parmesan cheese (grated)

Place heirloom tomatoes, onions and garlic on a large baking tray with low sides. Drizzle with extra virgin

olive oil and season with salt and pepper. In a large heavy-bottomed sauté pan, heat olive oil over medium heat; add onion cut side down. Caramelize onions for four minutes on each side; return onions to the baking tray with tomatoes and garlic. Roast the tomatoes, garlic and onions in a 375° preheated oven for thirty minutes.

In a large heavy-bottomed saucepan, place the tomatoes, garlic, onions, basil and chicken or vegeta-

ble stock; simmer slowly for thirty minutes stirring occasionally. Using a blender, puree the soup in small batches (only fill the blender up half way and place a towel over the top so it covers the blender) and pass through a fine strainer. Season with salt and fresh ground black pepper.

Serve soup in warm soup bowls and garnish with Parmesan cheese. This soup can also be garnished with lobster, scallops, shrimp, English peas, scallions and croutons.

Simple Fresh Tomato Salsa

The extra step of blanching the onions and garlic takes the “bite” out of the mixture and allows the tomato flavor to dominate.

- 3 t. finely chopped onion
- 2 small cloves garlic, minced
- 3 large ripe tomatoes, peeled and seeds removed, chopped
- 2 hot chile peppers, Serrano or Jalapeno, finely chopped
- 2 to 3 T. minced cilantro
- 1 1/2 to 2 T. lime juice

salt and pepper

Put chopped onion and garlic in a strainer; pour 2 cups boiling water over them then let drain thoroughly. Discard water. Cool.

Combine onions and garlic with chopped tomatoes, peppers, cilantro, lime juice, salt, and pepper. Refrigerate for 2 to 4 hours to blend flavors. Makes about 2 cups of salsa.

A Word About Heirloom Tomatoes

So exactly what IS a “heirloom” tomato? To be considered an heirloom, the tomato must be open-pollinated (non-hybrid) and a distinct cultivar. As a result, some of the characteristics that make the perfect looking tomato are absent. On the other hand, when plant hybridizers are breeding for looks, they are less concerned about flavor. You can bet your sweet tomato that heirlooms have the best flavor available.