



IN THE KITCHEN

NOPAL, NOPALES, NOPALITOS

by Sara Jones

Nopales thrive in our desert conditions and, once established, will produce a reliable crop every year. *Nopal* means prickly pear cactus in Spanish, and *Nopales* is the term for the cactus pads. The term *Nopalitos* refers to the pads once they are cut up and prepared for eating. The vegetable has a delicious tangy flavor and a texture a bit like green beans and is often served with eggs, in salsas, chile, or tomato-based sauces, or grilled. It is packed with vitamins and minerals, has a high fiber content, and is said to regulate blood sugar levels.

The cactus pads are usually harvested in spring when the cacti are producing an abundance of tender, bright green pads. The spineless variety of prickly pear cactus, *opuntia ficus-indica*, that is domesticated and used as a food crop, still has prickly glochids which must be removed before eating. You can use rubberized gardening gloves when handling, or use a newspaper or parchment paper as a barrier between your hand and the cactus to avoid contact with the irritating glochids. To prepare the nopales, lay it flat on a cutting board and trim around the base and the perimeter of the pad. Remove the tiny leaflets and glochids by running a vegetable peeler or a small paring knife over each face of the pad. Don't go so deep as to actually peel the pad, you just want to pop off the raised 'eyes'. Wash the pads well with cool water and peel or trim off any blemished or discolored areas. Slice the pads in long pieces, dice, or leave whole depending on the dish you will prepare.

Nopales, like okra, ooze a slimy substance that can be removed by boiling and rinsing before using in a recipe. As with okra, if cooked right the gooey substance can help thicken sauces and stews without coming across as slimy. Cutting down on the amount of moisture that contacts the pads can also cut down on the sliminess. Pat the pads dry and keep them whole to prepare dishes like grilled nopales or cactus jerky.

For nopales recipes and serving suggestions, visit the Recipes section of tucsoncsa.org.



SAVE THE DATE

MAY 1

Sweet, Savory,
Sustainable Workshops

Free virtual cooking
demonstrations to
help create a healthy,
homemade, and
sustainable future.

SweetSavorySustainable.
weebly.com

MAY 22

Food Justice
Book Club Meeting

UNPROCESSED

MY CITY-DWELLING YEAR OF
RECLAIMING REAL FOOD



BOOK REVIEW

UNPROCESSED, WRITTEN BY MEGAN KIMBLE

by Regina Gee

In an increasingly disconnected world, Megan Kimble's *Unprocessed* brings us back to our food, to each other, and to Tucson with all the alacrity of a 26-year-old and the vibrancy of this desert town's food culture. This book is an account of her year of eating only "unprocessed" foods, a term she takes great care in defining for each element of her diet. Her compelling storytelling and research combine to give us a monograph full of actionable hope.

Kimble chronicles her experiences grinding wheat berries, making homemade chocolate, and learning how to butcher a sheep, offering us an intimate understanding of the significance behind her journey. She also extends recipe and grocery recommendations, helping her reader to follow in her footsteps. All of her adventures are set within the budget, time management, and experience level of young graduate student and

the humor and voice she brings to the telling are inspiring.

In addition to the pearls that come from watching Kimble piece together meaning in her local food system, she gifts the reader with expert research helping us to comprehend the many layers of food culture and politics. By connecting recipes, history, and lived experience, Kimble creates space for us to dwell in the questions surrounding the process of living – she shows us how farming, cooking, and eating are saturated in meaning and how we can reconnect. She also gives Tucson CSA a deserving moment of fame and you'll recognize some friendly faces in her words.

Kimble writes, "Without small gestures, without localness and precision of place, it is hard to ask and harder to answer: How do we begin?" This book is an absolute gem for anyone looking for a starting point to reclaim their relationship with their food, place, and community.

You can borrow Megan Kimble's "Unprocessed" and many other wonderful books from Tucson CSA's Food Literature Lending Library. To set up your free library account, send us an email at tucsoncsa@tucsoncsa.org.



CSA SEASONAL RECIPES

NOPALITOS IN RED SAUCE

Sara Jones, Tucson CSA

- 2 medium cactus pads, trimmed (see directions)
- About 1/3 small can tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon oil
- 1-2 tablespoons hot, medium, or mild chile powder, to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon each of onion and garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon oregano
- 1/2 cup broth or water, plus more as needed
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1-2 teaspoons vinegar

Dice nopales and add to a medium-size pot of boiling water. Simmer for about 10 minutes, then drain and rinse well. Heat oil in a skillet over medium-high. Add tomato paste and chile powder and, stirring constantly, cook about 30 seconds to lightly toast chile powder. Stir in about half a cup of the broth or water along with the rest of the ingredients. Whisk together until smooth, then add cooked and rinsed nopalitos. Bring to a simmer and then turn heat to medium-low. Cook another 5 minutes or so, thinning the sauce with water to your desired thickness. Taste for seasoning and add a bit more salt or vinegar if needed. Serve over corn tortillas or gorditas and top with finely shredded cabbage.

Find more recipes on the back



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT TUCSON CSA SPROUTS, RAW JERSEY CREAM, AND MORE

by Shelby Thompson

It's hard to believe that we've been operating in pandemic mode for over a year now! We're grateful for all of you, who have continued to support Tucson CSA by being members and following our safety protocols - you make it so much easier for us. Out of care for our volunteers, members, and the larger community, we will continue to require face masks during our pickups for the foreseeable future. We always have brand-new disposable masks for free, so please ask for one if you need it.

Despite the ongoing pandemic, exciting new things continue to happen at Tucson CSA! The farmers at Thrive and Grow Farms, who produce our sprouts, are settling on to their new land and plan to have their first crop ready in May. If you have a sprouts share, it will automatically resume when they're back. You can add a sprouts share by logging on to your online account. Golden Rule Dairy is now certified to produce raw Jersey cream and butter, both of which we carry in the CSA Shop. Lastly, Carlos from Maiz Tucson is continuing his quest to use as many different heirloom corn varieties as possible, all of which have made outstanding tortillas thus far. You can find them in the CSA Shop every other week. **Questions, comments, or suggestions? Send us an email at tucsoncsa@tucsoncsa.org.**



WE'RE READING

*Recipes for Respect:
African American
Meals and Meaning
Rafia Zafar*



WE'RE LISTENING TO

*Emma Zimmerman of
Hayden Flower Mills
The Sourdough Podcast
(Season 1, Episode 3)*



WE'RE WATCHING

*Brussels Sprouts: 3 Ways
Tucson CSA
YouTube Channel*



ON SOCIAL

*Fonz520
(@fonz_520)
Instagram*



INSECT MANAGEMENT

by Lorraine Glazar

One of the interesting things about getting truly organic produce from our farmers is understanding Integrated Pest Management. By understanding natural cycles and the interaction of insects that we consider as pests, farmers can harness a powerful tool for keeping their crops organic while also keeping their crops!

We all know that supermarket produce is selected to ship easily and is graded to be a certain marketable size. Most CSA members understand that vegetables can vary in size or shape and still taste delicious. They can also come with insects at certain times of the year. Here's a quick guide to understanding and dealing with these free riders.

Aphids seem to blossom about the same time my roses do. They provide a tasty snack for ladybug larvae, and there can be a time gap between the appearance of aphids and the maturity of the larvae. Soon nature will balance, but in the meantime, wash those aphids off!

Heading vegetables like cabbage or iceberg lettuce will most likely have aphids only in the outer leaves. Remove the outermost leaves and wash them separately.

I sometimes use a sponge to provide a little more traction to get them moving. Vegetables like Red Russian kale are hard to wash this way. Go ahead and separate them from their stems and plan two trips in the salad spinner or two dunks in the kitchen sink. It can be helpful to lift them out of the spinner or sink, leaving the water and pests behind. As Sara suggests, a little white vinegar in the water can speed the process. If you are washing them off of something firm, like an artichoke, or something with a skin, like a zucchini, you can use a tiny amount of a nontoxic dish soap and rinse well.

And always, always live like a desert dweller and repurpose the washing water!

GRILLED NOPALITOS TACOS

Sara Jones

- 1 bunch green onions, trimmed about 10" long
- 2-3 cactus pads, trimmed and patted dry (see directions)
- 1 tablespoon oil
- 1 tablespoon balsamic or red wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon ground oregano
- ½ teaspoon cumin
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 6 corn tortillas
- Goat cheese or other mild white cheese

Mix together oil, vinegar, cumin, oregano and salt and pepper. Rub mixture over onions and cactus and let marinate while grill heats. When grill is hot, place pads and green onions over an area with medium high heat. After three or four minutes roll onions over and flip cactus pads. Cook until beginning to brown and slightly charred around edges. Remove from grill and slice into long strips. Serve wrapped in tortillas with green onions and cheese.

BRUSSELS SPROUTS PASTA

Shelby Thompson

- 1 portion of Brussels sprouts, trimmed and shredded into thin ribbons
- 4 cloves of garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1/2-lb short pasta
- 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Bring a large pot of well-salted water to a boil. In the meantime, heat the butter and olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Once the fat is hot, add the garlic and pepper flakes and cook for about 30 seconds, just until they become fragrant. Add the shredded Brussels sprouts to the pan, salt accordingly, and sauté for about 5-10 minutes, until they're slightly wilted and tender. Cook the pasta according to package directions and drain. Add the cooked brussels sprouts, vinegar, Parmesan, salt, and pepper to the pasta and stir well to combine. Serve with extra Parmesan and a drizzle of olive oil.