



Tucson Community Supported Agriculture

Newsletter 456 ~ September 22, 2014 ~ Online at www.TucsonCSA.org

Fall 2014

Harvest list is online

THE BACK PAGE

Verdolagas (Purslane) and Walnut Pilaf
Melon and Serrano Ham
Calabacitas
Tzatziki with Verdolagas (Greek Yogurt Dip)
Honey Dijon Purslane and Red Potato Salad

Many more recipes on our website

BULK ROMA TOMATOES

Until approximately the middle of October we are taking orders for Crooked Sky Farms' Roma tomatoes in bulk.

Roma tomatoes are great for sauces, salsas, purées, canning, drying, freezing, etc.

Orders are pre-paid, at the front desk: \$25 for 15 pounds.

Purslane (verdolagas)

Purslane is native to the Americas where it once was one of the most important wild plant foods of Native Americans and is now valued by many cultures. Purslane is currently acclaimed for not one, but two starring attractions: the rediscovery of its cooking possibilities—its tinker-toy eye appeal, crisp texture and lightly tangy taste—and the scientific discovery of its healthful omega-3 fatty acids.

Purslane has succulent, fleshy leaves and stems with a delicate and tangy flavor. Both stems and leaves are eaten. Purslane is harvested when young, before the stems turn woody. It is used as an herb for seasoning, as a fresh green to be served in salads (sprigs of purslane are perfect for salads or tucked into sandwiches or tacos). It can be chopped and folded into mayonnaise-based salads such as egg, tuna, or potato. Cooked purslane is delicious too. It can be sautéed or cooked into soups.

THE CASE OF THE NEVERENDING VEGETABLE, OR HOW TO EVOLVE WITH YOUR SQUASH OR CUCUMBER

Certain vegetables can be harvested over a long period of time, such as eggplant, cucumbers, squash and tomatoes: the plants produce over a whole season, display vegetables at different stages of maturity, and you can harvest the ripe ones as they become ready. Other vegetables, such as greens, will produce new leaves after you cut them above ground, extending their production window for as long as the weather conditions remain favorable.

However, production has its peaks, and there will be times when a lot of one type of vegetable is ready in quantities larger than you can consume for breakfast, lunch and dinner, seven days a week. We have all heard of, or experienced, the sudden overabundance of zucchini that must be dropped off in large boxes on friends porches or donated to soup kitchens. If only world hunger was as easy to resolve...

There are different ways to handle these vegetable cornucopias. One way is by canning, freezing, drying or pickling your excess harvest. Another way is by tackling the abundance before it happens, through spreading the harvest over the different stages of maturity. Mathematically, it's a simple matter of flattening the harvest bell curve. Take your summer squash for example: squash has the advantage of being edible at many stages of its growth. Don't wait for your squash to reach their ideal size before eating them, or you will end up with wheelbarrows full of them. Instead start harvesting as soon as they appear. That's what Farmer Frank does and so that's what we get in our produce shares!

Now, the secret of doing this is to adapt your recipes as the squash grows. You don't eat or cook a tiny squash the same way as a two-pounder. Use different recipes that make the most of the different sizes. You can start harvesting your squash even before they become squash: squash blossoms are a delicacy. A little bit later, harvest the very small squash and eat them raw in salads or as dip sticks. When they grow a little bigger, chop them and stir-fry or use them in soups. But they will grow bigger still, and firmer, and their seeds will become too hard to eat. That's when the time comes to scoop out their seed cavity and make stuffed squash. Or shred them and make squash fritters. See! Some veggies have multiple incarnations and are really several veggies in one. All you have to do is adapt the recipes.

The same goes for cucumbers. As cucumbers get bigger, so do their seeds. A cucumber with hard inedible seeds is still perfectly good to eat if you remove the seeds. You just have to treat it as a different vegetable than your small soft-seeded cucumber. Make a gazpacho. Try juicing it: it will make refreshing Aqua Fresca de Pepino. Or cut it in half, scoop out of the seed cavity and stuff it with a summery tuna and corn salad. You can cook it too and turn it into delicious Braised Dijon Cucumbers, Roasted Stuffed Cucumber, or Steamed Fish on a Bed of Sliced Cucumbers. The possibilities are as many as they have seeds...



Verdolagas (Purslane) and Walnut Pilaf

Lorraine Glazar, Tucson CSA, Adapted from a recipe in Sunset Magazine (with permission)

1 small to medium onion, chopped
2 teaspoons oil
1 cup rice
2 cups water, stock or broth
1 share verdolagas, washed and chopped
1/2 cup toasted walnuts
Salt and pepper to taste

Sauté the chopped onion in the oil until golden. Toss the rice in the pan until it is coated with oil. Add the liquid of choice and bring to a boil. Cover the pan and cook until all liquid is absorbed, 20 minutes to an hour (brown rice will take longer and may require a little more liquid). When rice is tender, toss in verdolagas and walnuts, season to taste, and serve it forth!

Melon and Serrano Ham

Sara Jones, Tucson CSA

Serrano ham and melon is a classic Spanish combination. The salty richness of the ham is a great contrast for the cool, sweet melon. Use whatever salty cured pork you can find easily. Or use a firm, salty cheese, like manchego, in place of the ham. This dish could be as simple as chunks of melon served alongside thin slivers of ham or cheese. Make it fancier by pureeing the melon with olive oil and sherry vinegar to make a gazpacho, then garnish each bowl with strips of ham or cheese.

1 small, or 1/2 large melon, cut into pieces
1 tablespoon sherry vinegar
1 tablespoon olive oil
3-4 long slices of salty ham or cheese, cut into pieces

Toss melon with oil and vinegar. Serve on a plate beside the ham or cheese.

Calabacitas

1 tablespoon oil
1 onion, chopped
2 cloves garlic, crushed
1 large or a few small summer squash
1 bell pepper, chopped
2 tomatoes, chopped
2 chiles, diced
1/2 cup cilantro or Mexican oregano, chopped
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 pinch salt
1/2 cup cheddar cheese or queso fresco

In a skillet, sauté onions and cumin in oil until tender. Add garlic, squash, pepper and tomato; cook for another 5 minutes. Mix in chopped chilies. Cover and simmer for 10-15 minutes (or bake 20 minutes at 350°). Add cilantro and cheese before serving.

Tzatziki with Verdolagas (Greek Yogurt Dip)

Philippe, Tucson CSA

Tzatziki is an excellent way to use verdolagas. Their lemony tang is delicious in this dip. Add a squeeze of lemon, if you like, to highlight the flavor.

2 cups Greek yogurt
1 small cucumber (approx. 1/2 lb), peeled, seeded and grated (or finely cut)
1-2 cloves garlic, minced
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 tablespoon fresh dill or mint, finely chopped
1 cup verdolagas (chopped)
Salt and pepper to taste

Mix all ingredients together and refrigerate. Serve cool. Use as a dip with pita bread or as a side dish with grilled meats and vegetables.

Honey Dijon Purslane and Red Potato Salad

By Heidi DeCosmo

The perfect potato salad for the summer, the creamy honey Dijon dressing can definitely withstand the heat. Purslane adds a burst of vitamin C, A and iron.

1 pound Red La Soda potatoes cut into medium cubes
Olive oil
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 cup chopped Purslane
1/4 cup thinly sliced red onion
1/4 cup chopped red bell pepper
Dressing
1/4 cup grain Dijon mustard
1 tablespoon honey
1 tablespoon seasoned rice wine vinegar

Place the potatoes in a large pot of water and bring to boil. Cook about 15 minutes or until the potatoes have softened. Drain. In a large mixing bowl combine the potatoes, purslane, onion and peppers. In a small bowl combine the mustard, honey and vinegar. Add the dressing to the salad and mix well.