

Schreiber & Sons CSA

It's a Culinary Adventure

Schreiberandsons.com

July 14, 2009

Week XI

In this week's box, we expect to give you:

- Squash medley - a mix of different kinds of summer squash
- Cucumbers
- Cauliflower
- Cantaloupe
- Swiss Chard
- Lettuce
- Basil
- Onions, Walla Walla Sweets
- Potatoes
- Carrots
- Cabbage
- Fennel
- Farmer's Choice - This will odds and ends of what we have available in small lots; not enough to give everyone the same item. If you get something that is not on your box sheet, chances are this is what we are calling "Farmers Choice."

Assuming we have all of the above in all of the right amounts, you can expect a pretty full box this week. This is the kind of week that makes you forget about Weeks II and III and IV. One of the challenges we are having this very instant is figuring out how to get all of the produce in your box. There is a lot of produce coming your way. As look in my photosynthetic crystal ball, I see melons, lots of melons coming your way, closely followed by peppers and then tomatoes, lots and lots of tomatoes.

What's going on at the farm. The big news on the farm is the harvest season is going into full swing. The conventional melon harvested started last week, but moved into high gear today (Monday). We fire up the eggplant harvester on Tuesday. Later in the

week we start harvesting the organic eggplant, organic cantaloupe and organic Charantais melons. The conventional eggplant and cantaloupe will be going to grocery store chains and restaurants throughout the Pacific Northwest. The organic Japanese eggplant and organic Charantais melons are being grown for inclusion in CSAs and local produce delivery businesses based on the West Side. Due to their cooler growing conditions, the West Side has a much more difficult time raising "hot crops" such as tomatoes, peppers, melons and eggplant. I will probably be driving a truck full of eggplant and Charantais melons over to Tacoma this weekend after the farmer's market.

Add ons. We have six bottles of the white wine and one bottle of rose from Claar Cellers. We are pretty low on steaks-I will be ordering another animal this week. We have a few roasts available and lots and lots and lots of hamburger if anyone is interested. The eggs are in short supply and I suspect will be for the summer. There about 500 bags of flour still available.

Fennel. We are not fennel experts. We eat fennel, most commonly either grilled, in stir fry or roasted or baked. You can eat the fern or the bulb, although most commonly the bulb is eaten. I do not think that must fennel is eaten in the U.S., but rather is one of those European vegetables that we all hear a lot about but have little exposure or experience to. If you have a favorite fennel recipe(s), let us know and we will put it up on our website.

Swiss Chard (This is a write up from last year from Tanya)

Beta vulgaris cicla

Swiss chard is a versatile leafy green with great nutritional benefits. *Beta vulgaris* is the common beet, which becomes chard with the appending of *Cicla*, from *sicula*, referring to both Sicily and a beet variety grown there. It is a vegetable valedictorian with its exceptionally impressive list of health promoting nutrients. Swiss chard is an excellent source of vitamins A and C, and also contains potassium and fiber.

While talking with my Swiss "mom" last week, I mentioned that we are now harvesting Swiss chard at the farm. As I didn't know the German word, and she didn't know the English, we briefly discussed why it could have the name it does. Turns out neither the Swiss nor the chard have a direct logical explanation. (Tanya, my wife, spent a portion of her life living in Germany, France, Norway, Austria, Checkoslovakia and Switzerland and has relatives and some very close friends there.)

The Swiss part comes from one or several sources. Some claim that Swiss was used to distinguish chard from French charde or chardon by nineteenth century seed catalogue publishers and the name stuck. There is an extensive Swiss national collection of leaf

beet (and chard) genetic resources, which likely means the crop has some importance to the Swiss. As it turns out chard is the definite misnomer. Chard comes from the Latin and French words for thistle-which Swiss chard isn't, but cardoon is. Carde or chard came to mean the stalk or rib of some vegetables, such as chard or cardoon. And finally, the word Swiss Chard is popular among Mediterranean cooks but the first varieties have been traced back to Sicily. In the US the leaves are valued while European cooks value the stalks to the point of discarding the leaves or feeding them to animals. Swiss chard can also be found in northern Europe and South America. [Note from Alan: For me the most exotic plant we are experimenting this year is cardoon..it is an old, old, old Mediterranean crop that is a thistle (as is artichoke) and you the leaf petiole (like rhubarb). *We have a lot of cardoon growing this year-if you are a quite unusual person that would have a cardoon recipe, please send it in to us. I think we should have a cardoon cookoff or something. Send us your recipe for cardoon and we will try it and if you have the best cardoon recipe, we will come up with a prize!*

Swiss chard, along with kale, mustard greens and collard greens, is one of several leafy green vegetables often referred to as "greens". It is a tall leafy green vegetable with a thick, crunchy stalk that comes in white, red or yellow with wide fan-like green leaves. Chard belongs to the same family as beets and spinach and shares a similar taste profile: it has the bitterness of beet greens and the slightly salty flavor of spinach leaves. Both the leaves and stalk of chard are edible, although the stems vary in texture with the white ones being the most tender. Swiss chard is extremely versatile

Health Benefits

Swiss chard has concentrations of vitamin K (306.3% of the daily value in one cup, cooked), vitamin A, vitamin C, magnesium, manganese, potassium, iron, vitamin E, and dietary fiber. Swiss chard also emerges as a very good or good source of copper, calcium, vitamin B2, vitamin B6, protein, phosphorous, vitamin B1, zinc, folate, biotin, niacin and pantothenic acid.

Use

Swiss chard can be used interchangeably with spinach, raw or cooked. It is also my favorite when "greens" are called for in just about any recipe as I have never found bitterness in this vegetable (though the formal explanations claim it is detectable). Chard holds its shape better than spinach when cooked and takes a bit longer, so is excellent as a stand-alone or in stir fries because it really doesn't get mushy. I cook the leaves and stems together (cutting the stems into small chunks) but many recipes call for the leaves or stems exclusively. Chard stalks are good slow-cooked or baked with a cheese sauce.

(Note from Alan: My oldest son (13 years old) is not a fan of vegetables but seems to be unable to resist eating the stems of raw Swiss chard. When trying to get him to explain why he likes, his only explanation is that it tastes like watery, sour peanut butter. This is not the only communication break down that has left me wondering at the words that come out of his mouth.