

Schreiber & Sons CSA

It's a Culinary Adventure

Schreiberandsons.com

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Week VII

In this week's box,

- Cherries - you will get some cherries this week-the volume is limited for the first harvest
- Strawberries-for the organic members.
- Swiss chard -- (remember you cook this before you eat it.)
- Beets - this beets are Chioggia beets-read about them below-these are some of the coolest vegetables that we grow.
- Dill
- Carrots
- Squash or cucumbers
- Romaine lettuce
- For large share members - head of cabbage.

As the week progresses, we sometimes find that we run a little low or that something has become ready to pick, so sometimes we have to make substitutions and in some rare instances run completely out of things. Sometimes, we add something that is not on the update (like the strawberries.) So the above list is an approximate guide to what you can expect. We use to not do this and only go with a box sheet on the day of the pickup; however members asked for a head's up on what to expect for planning purposes. The above list should be considered a guide.

The Washington State Diet. We had a kick off meeting for the Washington State Diet last night. What almost seems incredible to me is that we have 10 individuals who have agreed to eat only food produced with in the borders of Washington State from July 1, 2009 until June 30, 2010. Ten people. Pretty incredible. Here is the plan.

1. For one year, eat food produced only from Washington.
2. Provide regular reports on their progress; keep some records of what they eat; record where they breakdown and eat out-of-state foods.
3. If you are traveling out of states, attending family or special events or eating at restaurants you try to eat local, bring your own food or do the best you can to eat local. If possible when traveling out of state, eat local for that region.
4. Essentials Exemption: until we can get a local source, one can source salt, cooking oils and tropical/subtropical spices that cannot be grown in Washington.

5. Compassion Exemption: a dieter can choose up to three (or less) exemptions of their choosing, coffee and chocolate are two of the more commonly chosen exemptions. Others had some medical reasons such as lactose intolerance (so they choose soymilk) or were allergic to some food item so they needed some key food item.
6. The group will host regular meetings to learn how to freeze, dry, pickle, can and other wise preserve foods--two of the WSDieters are WSU Master Preservers.
7. Set up an electronic bulletin board to share information, particularly on where to source foods, especially hard to find foods, in Washington.

In general, this group has a pretty high food IQ and many of them seemed already well on their way to being on the WSD. If you are interested in participating, we are going to have another meeting to focus on preserving foods and source food ingredients that are local. Even if you do not want to go hard core but are just interested in eating local, feel free to attend.

Strawberries. My apologies for the strawberries. Let me trot out my excuses. This is the first time I have ever grown/harvested strawberries. I did not realize that we would get this many so soon after planting them, that they would be so ripe this early and they would have such a short shelf life. (I like think I know a lot about crops and farming, but the world teaches me how little I really know on a regular basis.) The other challenge was when I realized that we had enough strawberries to actually distribute them, I could not find clamshells on such notice-I know, poor planning on my part. So many of you got some soft or even mashed berries. Again, my apologies. It is hard to know how to do everything right, particularly the first time you do something. For what it is worth, I found some clamshells and as it turns out, right here in Pasco. They are too big for our strawberries, but they will be better than a plastic bags and we can use them for cherries as well.

Carrot. The variety of carrot that you have is called Dragon. It is famous for its purple colored exterior with its yellow core. To tell you the truth, I really do not like this variety very much and after growing it for two years, I have decided not to grow it again (unless there is a popular up swell of support for it.) There are two reasons that I dislike this carrot. First, compared to the carrots you will be getting in the next few weeks, I think this is the least flavorful. Second, the carrot bolts very easily, perhaps because of the sudden hot weather we had, but last year it bolted easily as well. I picked this variety because of its striking color so I bought the seed. Last year it did not impress me, but I still had seed and it is a beautiful and unusual colored carrot. Seeing it bolt so quickly this year, again, and tasting it again has made me decide to pull the plug on it.

Beets. Having just groused about the Dragon carrots, let me opine about beets. The beets you are receiving today is what makes me what to grow vegetables. I absolutely love the Chioggia beets. First, note the foliage, if you know beet leaves, they are unusual for their lack of color. Look at the exterior color of the root. A pale red, pink or rose' color. Interesting, different, but not that striking. Now, cut the beet open so you can see a cross section. Most of the beets, not all of them, will have a color pattern (if you have not seen this variety of beet before) that just defines believe. You simply cannot believe what you are seeing. What is even more striking to me is that when you cook the beet, there is a complete and 100% change in the color of the beet flesh. It changes colors that were not present when it was raw. Then you taste it... it is very mild, for a beet, and very sweet, for a beet. Also, this beet will not bleed or cause beet stains. The only criticism of this variety is for people who are seeking a strong beet flavor--you will not find it here. Wait until next week, then you will get the regular red beet, with the strong beet flavor, the strong red color and the bleeding and the staining. I think the Chioggia beet has to be one of my favorite and coolest vegetables; if you knew the story behind it, where it came from, it is even more interesting.

Add ons. We are just about out of the wine. Okay, so we went through ten cases in two weeks. Now I have to decide what to do next. We have plenty of flour. We are limited to 30 dozen eggs per week; we are working on getting more, but for now that is all we have. We have lots of hamburger and some roasts and steaks. Also, I am meeting with a person who has raw milk. While I have yet to decide if I want to

get involved with raw milk, if you are interested in sourcing raw cow's milk, let me know and if nothing else, I can put you in touch with this individual.

What's coming. While cherry supplies this week is limited because only a few trees have a few cherries that are ripe enough to pick, you can expect a larger portion next week. I am hoping by next week we will have cabbages and head lettuce. Probably kohlrabi. I think by next week the zucchini spigot will be turned on and you will be on the road to summer squash heaven, which is closely followed by squash hell!

What Going on at the Farm. In a sentence.... watering and weeding. We put out fertilizer at the beginning of the season and then mid season, which is coming up, we start putting on foliar fertilizers. So that season has started. What is particularly challenging for us is putting fertilizers on the organic crops. What we put on the organic crop is what is politely called "liquid fish." It is undeniably the worst smelling substance that we come into contact with. It smells so bad that if you smelled it on your crop you would not be able to eat it. We are picking our organic crops Monday through Friday morning, so we apply it Friday afternoons and Saturday and then we irrigate everything through Monday to get the smell off of it. Just because it smells bad does not mean it is bad, it just has a strong decomposing fish smell (but it is not decomposing.) It is perfectly safe, it just is, shall we say, a little pungent. I bring it up, just so you know some of things that we do and go through to bring the food to you. We are starting the planting of the large pumpkins, gourds and some winter squash this week. Next week we start with the smaller pumpkins, gourds and squashes that have shorter growing seasons.

Your Farmer

Alan Schreiber

BEETS *beta vulgaris*

The status of beets has been elevated over time. Formerly considered lowly peasant food, a useful winter vegetable, the root now graces the most elegant tables. Famously, the main ingredient in the traditional eastern European soup, borscht, beets are delicious eaten raw, but are more typically cooked or pickled. With its rise in status, new uses, cooking techniques and cultivars have emerged. Although typically a reddish-purple hue, beets also come in varieties that are white, golden-yellow rainbow colored, or the Chioggia (candy-striped) that you will receive today.

The Chioggia beet comes from the Italian region of that name. It has dramatically two-toned, concentric circles of ruby and white when raw. When cooked, these rings turn to orange and rose, or to uniform warm rose (there is no predicting which). Like golden beets, they do not bleed and are therefore useful in dishes where contained color is desirable.

Both beets and chard are different varieties within the same plant family—*beta vulgaris*—and their edible leaves share a resemblance in both taste and texture. Beet greens are part of all good beets, but they behave like another vegetable entirely. Earliest of cooking leaves, beet greens have an intense, mineral flavor that compliments the sweetness of the root and are thus taste delicious when the two are cooked together.

Attached to the beet's green leaves is a round or oblong root, the part conjured up in most people's minds by the word "beet." The sweet taste of beets reflects their high sugar content making them an important raw material for the production of refined sugar; they have the highest sugar content of all vegetables, yet are very low in calories. It is difficult to believe how the hardy, crunchy often rough looking exterior of raw beets can be transformed into something wonderfully soft and buttery once they are cooked.

History

The wild beet, ancestor of the beet with which we are familiar today, is thought to have originated in prehistoric times in North Africa and grew wild along Asian and European seashores. In these earlier times, people ate the beet greens and not the roots. The ancient Romans were one of the first civilizations to cultivate beets to use their roots as food. The tribes that invaded Rome were responsible for spreading beets throughout northern Europe where they were first used for animal fodder and later for human consumption becoming more popular in the 16th century.

Beets' value grew in the 19th century when it was discovered that they were a concentrated source of sugar, and the first sugar factory was built in Poland. When access to sugar cane was restricted by the British, Napoleon decreed that the beet be used as the primary source of sugar, catalyzing its popularity. Around this time, beets were also first brought to the United States, where they now flourish. Today the leading commercial producers of beets include the United States, the Russian Federation, France, Poland, France and Germany.

How to Store

If possible (or desirable) use the beet greens as soon as you can. We sautéed some the other night and were surprised how mild their flavor can be. If you haven't tried beet greens yet—don't just discard them without giving them a chance.

Store beets unwashed in the refrigerator crisper where they will keep for two to four weeks. Cut the majority of the greens and their stems from the roots, so they do not pull away moisture away from the root. Leave about two inches of the stem attached to prevent the roots from "bleeding." Store the unwashed greens in a separate plastic bag where they will keep fresh for about four days. Raw beets do not freeze well since they tend to become soft upon thawing. Freezing cooked beets is fine; they'll retain their flavor and texture.

Tips for Preparing Beets

Despite their appearance, beetroots aren't as hardy as they look; the smallest bruise or puncture will cause their red-purple pigments, which contain beneficial flavonoids called anthocyanins, to bleed, especially during cooking. Cook beets lightly. Studies show beets' anti-cancer activity is diminished by heat. Don't peel beets until after cooking. When bruised or pierced, beets bleed, losing some of their vibrant color and turning a duller brownish red. To minimize bleeding, wash beets gently under cool running water, taking care not to tear the skin--this tough outer layer helps keep most of beets' pigments inside the vegetable. To prevent bleeding when boiling beets, leave them whole with their root ends and one inch of stem attached.

Beets' color can be modified during cooking. Adding an acidic ingredient such as lemon juice or vinegar will brighten the color while an alkaline substance such as baking soda will often cause them to turn a deeper purple. Salt will blunt beets' color, so add only at the end of cooking if needed.

Since beet juice can stain your skin, wearing kitchen gloves is a good idea when handling beets. If your hands become stained during the cleaning and cooking process, simply rubbing some lemon juice on them will remove the stain.

A Few Quick Serving Ideas

- Grate peeled, raw beets for a delicious and colorful addition to salads, salsa or decorative garnish for soups.
- For composed salads, cook beets only until they lose their rawness (not their crunch). Chill in cold water, peel, then cube before combining with smoked meat or fish, grains, fruit or nuts.
- Bake beets for maximum flavor, sweetness and ease of peeling.
- Add chunks of beet when roasting vegetables in the oven.

Health Benefits

Beets, frequently consumed either pickled or in borscht, the traditional Russian soup, may be one reason behind their long and healthy lives. (Remember all those legendary Russian centenarians?) These

colorful root vegetables contain powerful nutrient compounds that help protect against heart disease, birth defects and certain cancers, especially colon cancer.

Beets are an excellent source of potassium and vitamin A, and a good source of vitamin C, magnesium and riboflavin; they also contain iron, copper, calcium, thiamine, vitamin B6, folic acid, zinc and niacin.

Beet greens are an excellent source of potassium, a good source of folic acid and magnesium and contain vitamin C and iron.

Beets are said to stimulate the appetite and are easily digested. They are also used to relieve headaches and are believed to combat colds and anemia.

BORSCH

(From *Traditional Ukrainian Cookery*)

Borsch is the national soup of Ukraine. During Lent the borsch is meatless. The true old country style borsch has a good chunk of meat, usually pork, cooking in it together with the vegetables. Ukrainians have several varieties of borsch, depending on regional and personal preferences and on the season of the year. Central Ukrainians enjoy a good portion of cabbage in it, while those of the western regions prefer a predominance of beets. The spring borsch, made of tender young vegetables, is favored by all.

SPRING BEET BORSCH

Mrs. A Todoriv, Gronlid, Saskatchewan

Young tender beets with green tops make an especially delicious borsch. A few slices of side bacon may be added to enhance the flavor.

8 small beets with tops
1 medium onion, chopped fine
1 small carrot, cut in thin strips
1 medium potato, diced
½ cup diced string beans
1 small stalk celery, diced, if desired
2 cups shredded cabbage
6 cups soup stock
5 cups water
½ cup or more tomato juice
Beet kvas or lemon juice
1 tablespoon flour, if desired
½ cup or more sour cream
1 tablespoon chopped dill
Salt and pepper

Wash the beets; cut off the tops and wash them thoroughly. Do not pare the beets. Cut the tops into small pieces and the beets into thin strips. Place these in a kettle along with all the other vegetables. Cover with the soup stock and water. Cook until the vegetables are tender. Pour into the tomato juice. Add enough beet kvas or lemon juice to give the desired tartness. Blend the flour with the sour cream and stir into borsch. Bring to a boil. Add the dill. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

BEET KVAS

(I added this primarily as an interesting sideline—please let me know if you try this! Tjw)

Beet kvas is a liquid of fermented beets popularly used in borsch for tartness. It imparts a pleasant mellow flavor to borsch unattainable with any other acid. Ukrainian homemakers of the younger generation seldom make it, but this old-fashioned recipe is worth preserving.

Wash and pare 10-12 medium beets, then cut into eighths. Put into a stone crock or any earthenware container and cover with boiled water, cooled to lukewarm. To hasten fermentation, place a slice of sour rye bread among the beets. Cover and keep at room temperature for a few days. When the liquid is sour, pour it off the beets into the sealers; cover and keep in the refrigerator. The kvas is added to borsch in the

final stage of cooking. Pour a small quantity of kvas into the borsch and bring to a boil. Over boiling fades the color of kvas.

Cool AS A CUCUMBER
Cucumber

Botanical name: *Cucumis sativus*

With the weather we have been enjoying, the cucumber may win favored status in your produce box this week. It's high water content gives the cucumber a moist and cooling taste AND its ascorbic acid and caffeic acid, which prevent water retention, explain why cucumbers applied topically are often helpful for burns (swollen eyes and dermatitis). Cucumbers belong to the same family as pumpkin, zucchini, watermelon and other types of squash. The flesh of cucumbers is primarily composed of water and its hard skin is rich in fiber and contains a variety of beneficial minerals including silica, potassium and magnesium.

Cucumbers were thought to originate over 10,000 years ago in southern Asia. Early explorers and travelers introduced this vegetable to India and other parts of Asia. It was popular in the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Greece and Rome, whose people used it not only as a food but also for its beneficial skin healing properties. Greenhouse cultivation of cucumbers was originally invented during the time of Louis XIV, who greatly appreciated this delightful vegetable. The early colonists introduced cucumbers to the United States.

While it is unknown when the pickling process was developed, researchers speculate that the gherkin variety of cucumber was developed from a plant native to Africa. During ancient times, Spain was one of the countries pickling cucumbers since Roman emperors were said to have imported them from this Mediterranean country.

How to Select and Store: Cucumbers should be solid from stem to stem, with no soft spots or shriveling. Avoid any that are turning yellow. You should be able to eat the skins.

A Few Quick Serving Ideas:

- Use half-inch thick cucumber slices as small serving "dishes" for chopped vegetable salads.
- Mix diced cucumbers with sugar snap peas and mint leaves and toss with rice wine vinaigrette.
- For cold gazpacho soup that takes five minutes or less to make, simply purée cucumbers, tomatoes, green peppers and onions, then add salt and pepper to taste.
- Add diced cucumber to tuna fish or chicken salad recipes.

The silica in cucumber is an essential component of healthy connective tissue, which includes intracellular cement, muscles, tendons, ligaments, cartilage, and bone. Cucumber juice is often recommended as a source of silicon to improve the complexion and health of the skin, plus cucumber's high water content makes it naturally hydrating--a must for glowing skin. Cucumbers are also used topically for various types of skin problems, including swelling under the eyes and sunburn. Two compounds in cucumbers, ascorbic acid and caffeic acid, prevent water retention, which may explain why cucumbers applied topically are often helpful for swollen eyes, burns and dermatitis.