

# Schreiber & Sons

*It's a Culinary Adventure*

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## Week X - Week of July 7

- 1 Carrots
- 2 Basil - The variety is called Large Leaf Italian
- 3 Cilantro or dill
- 4 Onions - Walla Walla Sweet Onions or Red Onions
- 5 Red/Green Leaf Lettuce
- 6 Kale
- 7 Cucumber
- 8 Head or Romaine lettuce
- 9 Potatoes
- 10 Peas - snow peas
- 11 Savoy cabbage or Chinese cabbage
- 12 Spinach salad - Spinach, red leaf lettuce, green leaf lettuce, mizuna, cress and baby leaf kales
- 13 Peppers - either green bells or sweet bananas (both kinds are sweet peppers)
- 14 Summer squash
- 15 Fennel

As with most weeks, the organic and conventional shares have the same items. I am happy to say that we have been doing a fairly good job at keeping the organic and conventional shares either the same or similar for most weeks. This week the conventional shares get cilantro and Savoy cabbage, the organic shares get dill and Chinese cabbage. The conventional shares are getting a variety of potatoes called Bintje. This is an European variety that has brown skin and yellow flesh. The organic shares are getting the All Red variety.

**Cucumbers and Summer Squash.** We are in the midst of a huge run on cucumbers and summer squash. Again the problem is my inability to coordinate plantings with the weather. The first plantings of both crops were delayed by cool weather and these second plantings were advanced by the recent hot weather, so both plantings are coming off at the same time. Accordingly, you are getting significant portions of both kinds of crops. We have five different kinds of cucumbers; we have Cobra which is a slicing variety, Sassy which is a pickler, Lemon which is a yellow, round lemon flavored variety, Summertop which is an English style cucumber and is very long and we have a middle eastern variety. It is possible that you could get any or a mix of these varieties. The Cobra is a dark green, smooth and is usually between 6 and 9 inches, the Sassy is bumpy, lighter green and is usually less than 6 inches and smaller in diameter. We have to trellis the Summertop in order to get these very long cukes to grow straight. You will see from the curves on some of them and the scarring that we do not yet have

outtrellising techniques perfected. These cucumbers are between 12 and 18 inches long. The Lemon cukes, which we are growing for the first time are lemonyellow, round like a baseball. The Middle Eastern cukes are a pale green, larger in circumference, have a large seed cavity and are soft. This last characteristic makes this a difficult cucumber to handle. This is the first time we have tried this variety and due to the softness it has a lack of shelflife. We are receiving some complaints about the inability of this cucumber to stay firm so we will drop this variety after this season.

The summer squashes are reproducing like, well, zucchinis. We have yellow and green zucchinis, patty pan or scallop (these are the round ones), crookneck and an Italian heirloom variety called zucchetto rampicante tromboncino. I am not sure what that name means but the last word is Italian for trombone and if you get one of these squashes in your box, you will understand why. The end of the squash swells up and has a passing similarity to a trombone. It is a long, light green, speckled squash that has raised ridges. We also have a Mexican style squash that is elongate oval and has light green speckles. I think all of these varieties taste very similar. Unfortunately, we are not organized enough to make sure that every person gets every variety over the season, but it is our hope that the random assignment of the squashes and the cucumbers means that you will end up trying most of the varieties. Some such as the Lemon cucumbers and the Italian heirloom squash are in limited quantities, so some of you may miss out—sorry.

**Trade Box.** From time to time, members of the CSA tell us that they do not like a particular item or items they receive in their box. This is always a tough situation for us. The spirit of the CSA is you take what is seasonally available and we try to maximize variety you receive but on the other hand you end up getting different and strange produce and you just cannot be expected to like everything you get. Our answer to that is each week leave out a box of produce in a plastic lug. We call this the Trade Box. You can take an item from your box that you do not prefer and switch it for one item in the Trade Box. The Trade Box operates on the honor system, so be honorable.

## Chili Peppers

### *Capsicum annum* Solanaceae

Peppers are just coming on at the Farm, and although you will not receive all varieties today, *Schreiber & Sons* grows jalapeno, habenero, Anaheim, Poblano/Ancho, Superchili, cayenne and several other varieties—so get ready!

Peppers, in their many forms, make nearly an everyday appearance in our diet (think of Italian, Mexican and Asian cuisine, soups, salad bars or relish plates without the pepper). They are so famous, USDA is featuring an exhibit in Washington, DC featuring—the pepper (see following article). Health attributes of hot peppers are also being constantly debated and explored. (See article from the *Los Angeles Times*).

The chili pepper was one of the first plants to be cultivated in South America over 7,000 years ago. The fruit (not vegetable) is a member of the nightshade family, which includes the eggplant, potato, tamarillo and tomato. It is a fleshy berry containing numerous seeds in its inner cavity. The plant on which it grows can attain a height of close to 5 feet.

Chili peppers are smaller and more pointed than sweet peppers. There are about ten different species of hot peppers that vary considerably in size, shape, color and flavor. *Annum* and *frutescens* peppers are of particular culinary importance. Both have a very sharp, almost fiery, flavor. They are usually between ¾ and 6 inches long and ½ to 2 inches in diameter. While some chili peppers are green (jalapeno, Serrano, poblano), others are yellow-brown, purple, or red (ancho, Cascabel, or cherry pepper, cayenne pepper, japone, Hontaka, pasilla), or yellow (carribe, guero).

Chili peppers were originally grown for decorative purposes and have been used throughout history for their therapeutic qualities. With time the fruit became a condiment, and was used as a vegetable. Before Columbus' voyages to the New World in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, the chili pepper was unknown in Europe. This highly adaptable plant migrated quickly, thanks largely to the Portuguese navigator Ferdinand Magellan, who introduced the pepper into Africa and Asia. Today chili peppers are cultivated on all continents, growing as a perennial in tropical regions and as an annual in temperate zones. Chili peppers grow more abundantly in warm countries. Mexico, where at least 15 varieties have been identified, and the West Indies, produce the greatest number of varieties.

As to the word itself, I've found various spellings so if you are searching on the internet—I suggest you try a few variations—including *hot peppers*. According to one source (*Vegetables from Amaranth to Zucchini*), *chilli* is the most common spelling used by most English-speaking people outside the United States (and many within). Jean Andrews, author of one of the most extensive pepper resources ever published, *Peppers: The Domesticated Capsicums*, suggests some distinction in her publication *The Pepper Lady's Pocket Pepper Primer*: "Not because one name is right and another is wrong, but for the sake of consistency and clarity it would help if . . . *chilli* [were used] for the pungent types; *chili* for the spicy meat dish . . . *Chile* in italics should refer to the native Mexican cultivars . . ."

### **Nutrition**

Hot peppers are a good source of vitamin C, folate and vitamin A. The proportion of nutrients present in chili peppers varies greatly from one variety to another, with red chili peppers usually containing more vitamins A and C than green. The hot taste of the chili peppers comes from its capsaicin, an alkaloid that is so powerful that it is possible to detect as little as 1 gram diluted in 2,500 gallons of water. This substance stimulates salivation and causes gastric juices to flow, thus aiding digestion.

### **Preparation and Cooking Tips**

It is important to avoid touching your face—especially the lips and eyes—when cutting fresh or dried hot peppers. The powerful irritant they contain is called capsaicin, and merely touching your face after handling hot peppers is enough to make the skin burn. Be sure to wash your hands, the knife and the cutting board with soap and hot water to eliminate all traces of the irritant.

These seeds are NOT the hottest part of peppers. It is at the point where the seed is attached to the white membrane inside the pepper that the highest concentration of capsaicin. To moderate sharpness, avoid consuming the seeds and the whitish inner ribs, or soak the pepper in cold water with a little vinegar for about 1 hour before eating them.

The best way to soothe the burning sensation in the mouth is to eat a little yogurt, bread, cooked rice, sugar or sweets. These foods are more effective than water, since capsaicin is soluble in oil but not in water. The frutescens varieties of chilies contain up to 20 times more capsaicin than sweet peppers.

**Cooking intensifies the hotness** of the peppers, so exercise caution when adding hot peppers to a dish; start with small doses. One safe way to flavor a dish with chili peppers is to sauté a hot pepper in oil and to then use the oil for cooking.

### **Storage**

Store fresh hot pepper in the refrigerator without washing them. Wrapped in a paper bag in the vegetable compartment, they will keep for about one week. Hot peppers freeze well, but it is best to broil or blanch them for 3 minutes and then peel them prior to freezing. They can also be marinated or dried. They dry well and will keep for 6-8 months in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Powder obtained by grinding hot peppers should be stored in an airtight container in a dark, dry, cool place.

### ***Pepperson parade at USDA exhibit***

Peppers don't have to be just green and bell shaped and relegated to the supermarket shelf or home garden plot. This genus of plants has the genetic potential to provide a wide array of possibilities for the kitchen and the ornamental garden and sometimes both at once.

Research on peppers from the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) is being featured from June to November in an exhibit called "A Pepper for Every Pot" at the U.S. Botanic Gardens in Washington, D.C. This exhibit explores the diversity of peppers, including recently introduced varieties, and celebrates peppers' beauty, flavors and nutritional benefits.

Among new pepper varieties that ARS has already developed are Tangerine Dream and Black Pearl. Tangerine Dream is a sweet, edible ornamental pepper that produces small orange banana-shaped fruit on a prostrate plant. Black Pearl, an All America Selections award winner, offers gardeners a new dark choice: black leaves and shiny black fruit that ripen to bright scarlet. Both varieties are commercially available. The pretty Black Pearl pepper can also serve as a hot pepper for the kitchen, making it a dual purpose pepper for today's smaller urban gardens.

The pod-type pepper genus—*Capsicum*—is native to the Western hemisphere and figured strongly in the Aztec, Mayan and Incan cultures, second only in importance to maize. Today, peppers are just as likely to show off in flower gardens as in vegetable gardens. Ornamental peppers have become a profitable crop for commercial growers and retailers. The ornamental plant market is worth nearly \$5 billion in the United States each year and specialty peppers could capture a larger portion of those dollars.

ARS plant geneticists John Stommel and Robert Griesbach were drawn to the idea of developing new colorful ornamentals for the garden and the kitchen because considerable diversity exists in the *Capsicum* genus for fruit and leaf shape, size and color as well as plant habit.

***In New Mexico, where the chile is king, experts bring spice to daily life***

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI Los Angeles Times Staff Writer

LAS CRUCES, N.M. - Jit Baral, a researcher at New Mexico State University, stepped into the lab and pulled a plastic gas mask over his face. He and two students strapped on heavy rubber gloves and lab smocks. They activated an exhaust fan to cycle air quickly from the room. Then Baral gingerly lifted the object that triggered all the precautions - a small, wrinkled red chile. This was no ordinary pepper. Baral was about to prove that the bhut jolokia, originally from northeastern India, is the hottest chile in the world.

He plopped it into an electric grinder, and caustic fumes filled the room. Next, Baral ran the powder through a machine to measure its spiciness, which registered as 100 times that of a typical jalapeno. The research landed the pepper in the Guinness World Records and was another coup for a school with an unusual academic flavor.

Some universities are known for their particle accelerators, others for their basketball teams. NMSU is renowned as a hotbed of chile innovation. Its agronomists create new strains of the pepper - more than two dozen in the last 20 years. Engineers design equipment to harvest and process it. Geneticists try to modify the fiery fruit to resist diseases, and the university library is starting an archive for all things chile.

"Because of its enormous connection to the basic culture here, it's more than just a crop," said NMSU President Michael Martin. "It has a great deal to do with how people see themselves." The school houses a Chile Pepper Institute to educate the public about the plant. Agriculture professor Paul Bosland founded the Institute in 1992 after he and other professors were deluged with e-mails from people worldwide with hot pepper inquiries. The most common question: How does one get rid of the sting on the skin after chopping chiles? The answer: Douse your hands in milk.

Bosland is NMSU's chile breeder and hot pepper point man. A gregarious Hal Holbrook look-alike, Bosland favors bolo ties and drives a magenta pickup with a "Chileman" license plate. He breeds disease-resistant chiles for local planters. But Bosland also has time for more fanciful pursuits, such as creating a black-and-orange chile for Halloween and a pink-and-white one for Valentine's Day.

Bosland won Harvard's "Ig Nobel Prize" for dubious achievement in science after developing a heatless habanero, which is used to thicken salsa. "I got emails accusing me of selling my soul to the devil after that one," Bosland recalled.

This is a state, after all, that made its official question "red or green?" (As in, which flavor chile sauce do you want on your enchiladas?) Where decorative strings of dried chile husks called ristras hang from nearly every door, and whose residents often have a separate freezer full of roasted chiles from the summer harvest to get them through the winter.

Early last century, a Mexican-born NMSU agriculture professor, Fabian Garcia, virtually created the state's chile industry by breeding a milder pepper that would appeal to Anglo palates. One strain was taken by a farmer to Southern California, where, to the chagrin of New Mexicans, it became known as the Anaheim chile. The other strains were planted in the lush fields that follow the Rio Grande as it winds past Las Cruces.

On the surface, Las Cruces (pop. 90,000) looks like any other Sun Belt town that's seeing an influx of coastal retirees, with new homes and chain restaurants springing up on desertland. Just past the strip malls, however, subdivisions abruptly give way to chile farms. Processing and canning plants line the interstate. New Mexico's chile industry contributes about \$400 million to the economy and employs 5,000 people.

But since the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement in 1994, the state's chile crop has lunged almost 50% as cheaper foreign imports from Mexico, Peru and China pushed local growers out of the market. Chile farmers are selling to developers who replace fields with subdivisions. "This is an industry we can't afford to lose," said Gene Baca, president of the New Mexico Chile Assn., a trade group. "Losing the chile industry in New Mexico is the equivalent to Napa Valley losing grape growing and wine production."

The industry has turned to NMSU - a land grant institution charged with supporting the state's agricultural industry. Private chile interests have financed much of the university's hot pepper studies, but this year the state Legislature gave the school \$860,000 to figure a way to make chile growing more cost-effective.

What led the first human to bite into a chile is a mystery. It could have been for medicinal purposes - chiles contain cancer-fighting compounds, and Aztecs used the fruit to treat toothaches. Or it might have been for the pleasurable endorphin rush the body generates to counter the agonizing heat of a spicy pepper. "In Neolithic times, a good high was hard to come by," said Robb Walsh, a Texas-based food writer and author of "Are You Really Going to Eat That?"

Capsaicinoid, the chemical in chile peppers that generate spiciness, is also the active ingredient in pepper spray. *[Editors note: This statement is in error. "Capsaicinoids" is the family of chemicals that produce the spiciness of the chili of which capsaicin is a principal member. This statement should read, "Capsaicin, the chemical in chile peppers that generate spiciness, is also the active ingredient in pepper spray."]*

The Indian military drew NMSU's attention to the bhut jolokia. Without explaining why it had been investigating the fruit, the Indian military announced that it believed the pepper was the world's hottest. A friend of a Chile Pepper Institute member traveled to India and bought the seeds at a local market. Bosland and researcher Baral grew the peppers and tested them late last year. Plenty of aficionados want the pepper for bragging rights. "The reason you'd want to grow the hottest chile in the world is the same reason you'd want to grow a black orchid," said David DeWitt, an adjunct professor at NMSU and Chile Pepper Institute board member. Both are passions that defy reason.

Some may argue that DeWitt, an author of more than 30 food books, has taken chile worship to an unreasonable level. He founded Chile Pepper magazine. Then he sold that magazine and founded another one, Fiery Foods & BBQ. DeWitt even feels a personal connection with the perennial chile peppers in his home garden. "They're like vegetable pets," he said. Then he quickly caught himself: "Just to prove I'm not completely obsessed, my garden mainly has tomatoes."

DeWitt has collected more than 1,000 chile recipe books and thousands of newspaper clippings about the plant and is donating this trove to NMSU's library. That act made him the toast of the Institute's annual conference at a hotel here earlier this year attended by more than 100 chile dignitaries - including cowboy-hatted farmers and representatives from Frito-Lay and other, international food concerns. The halls of the hotel were full of stands advertising the latest hot sauce mix.

Much of the day was devoted to description of technical research, such as the absorption of nitrogen in chiles, or updates on NMSU's efforts to create an automated chile de-stemmer with the help of the federal Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, best known for designing missile systems.

Bosland spent the day shaking hands and dispensing tips to other chile researchers. The next day he rhapsodized about the subtleties of chile research. Working on chiles, he said, can be as much of an art as a science. His son once described his work as "painting with genes." "Collecting data's wonderful," Bosland said, "but we still need the person who can look at the plant's arch and color and say, 'That's the right one.'"

## **Sweet(Bell)Peppers** *Capsicumannuum, Solanaceae*

There are dozens of varieties of the sweet pepper varying in size, shape, color and flavor. You will be receiving a wide array, though we can't predict the exact colors. We planted several varieties. The colors on some of these are dependent on ripeness. Green peppers are harvested before they are fullyripe; left on the plant, the green pepper will turn yellow and then red as it matures. Inversely, purple, brown, and black peppers will become green if left to ripen on the plant. Peppers ripened on the plant are sweeter and more fragrant, with red and orange peppers being the sweetest. Green and purple peppers have a slightly bitter flavor. Pimento and paprika are both prepared from red bell peppers.

The history of sweet, or bell peppers is similar to that of hot peppers. They originated in Latin America, were one of the first plants to be cultivated in South America and were carried throughout the world by the Spanish and Portuguese explorers. Peppers are members of the nightshade family that include eggplant, tomatoes, the potato and the tamarillo. The main producers of sweet peppers today are China, Turkey, Nigeria, Spain, Mexico and Romania.

The sweet pepper is a fleshy walled berry containing numerous whitish seeds in its inner cavity. The plant that produces it can grow to a height of 3 feet. The pepper itself usually ranges in size from 2 ½ to 6 inches in length and from 2-4½ inches in diameter. The most popular variety in North America is the bell pepper. This pepper has four lobes and is somewhat square in shape. Certain varieties have three lobes, while others are more tapered in shape and have no lobes at all.

### **Storing**

Sweet peppers can be stored unwashed in a perforated plastic bag or in the vegetable compartment of the refrigerator, where they will keep for about a week. They freeze well without being blanched, but it is better to wash them first. For maximum flavor and nutritional value, store them whole. Sweet peppers lend themselves well to drying and keep at least 1 year when dried. They are also good marinated.

### **Nutritional Value**

The proportion of the different nutritional elements varies greatly from one variety to another. For example, red peppers contain much more vitamin A and vitamin C than green peppers. Red and green peppers are an excellent source of vitamin C and vitamin A, two very powerful antioxidants, and a good source of potassium. They also contain vitamin B6 and folic acid. The nutritional value is almost the same for raw peppers as for cooked peppers. Green, sweet bell pepper have 2 times as much vitamin C as oranges; red and yellow bell peppers have 4 times as much.

Sweet peppers have a number of medicinal properties: they are held to be a good stomachic, diuretic, stimulant, digestive and antiseptic. Red peppers are one of the few foods that contain lycopene, a carotenoid whose consumption has been inversely correlated with prostate cancer and cancers of the cervix, bladder and pancreas. Bell peppers also appear to have a protective effect against cataracts, possibly due to their vitamin C and beta-carotene content.

*CoolAS ACUCUMBER*

### **Cucumber**

**Botanicalname:** *Cucumissativus*

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.

#### **Cucumbers in Sour Cream**

Mizerjaze Smietana  
*From Tastes of Liberty*

This is a great, refreshing salad (I used non-fat sour cream and that worked just fine)

2 large cucumbers (about 1 ½ lbs), pared and thinly sliced  
1 cup dairy sour cream  
2 tablespoons white vinegar  
1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill  
2 teaspoons sugar  
1/8 teaspoon freshly ground white pepper

Layer cucumber slices, salting each layer lightly, in medium-sized glass bowls. Cover with heavy plate. Let stand 2 hours.

Drain cucumbers, squeezing out as much liquid as possible. Pat dry with paper towels. Place cucumbers in glass bowl. Combine sour cream, vinegar, dill sugar and pepper and stir into cucumbers. Refrigerate at least 1 hour before serving.