

Schreiber & Sons

It's a Culinary Adventure

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Week XI - Week of July 7

1. Carrots
2. Basil
3. Cilantro
4. Onions, bulb
5. Onions, green
6. Kohlrabi
7. Beets
8. Head lettuce or Romaine lettuce
9. Cauliflower or broccoli
10. cucumbers
11. summer squashes
12. Asian salad
13. Eggplant
14. Potatoes
15. Collards

The organic shares are all organic except for the cilantro and eggplant, which are conventionally produced. It is our goal to provide you what we called a medley of squash and cucumbers. You will get a mix of 4 or 5 different kinds of cucumbers and about 5 different kinds of squash. You can do a taste testing and see how big of a difference there is. The English cucumbers and the lemon cucumbers were test plantings this year so we do not have enough for everyone of those varieties. We have 15 items by count above, but if you count by varieties, you will have well over 20 items in your box this week. Remember variety is the spice of life.

Things on the farm are coming along rather well. I keep thinking the tomatoes are going to be ready to pick but they just have not yet started turning color except for a few stressed plants. But get ready when they come, you are going to be eating tomatoes until you turn red, or in some cases yellow, or green, or orange or pick or white. Despite having three different plantings and having varieties with differing maturity dates, they are going to ripen at the same time and when they do start coming off....Katy bar the door... you will have tomatoes every week until it frosts.

You will note that we have eggplant.....that is similar tomatoes, we will have lots and lots of tomatoes. For some of you this will be salvation, for others, damnation. When do our annual end of the season survey, there is nothing that created more responses than eggplant. We ask a question about what do you want less and one of the top 5 was eggplant. We ask what do you want more of, and eggplant was in the top five. I think the people who want less are like me, not sure what to do with it and not particularly enamored by this somewhat flavorless vegetable. I think the people who want more are the folks who have these remembrances from their upbringing and think about this ethnic (to me) dishes with exotic names and in the Tri-Cities they do not get eggplant. I think there are two major types of eggplant eaters,

folks of Asian decent and those that are near the Mediterranean Ocean or the Middle east. I sell eggplants commercially, the one crop that I really sell a lot of-and these two groups definitely but a disproportionate amount of eggplant. I am sure there are other groups that do as well. And talk about picky.....we most grow what people traditionally think of as eggplant, tear drop shaped and purple. I have folks who will only take them if they are purple, long, parallel sided and six inches long. Some Russians I know come out towards the end of the season when I am overwhelmed by the volume and fill up, literally, a half a dozen trunks and the back seats of cars with probably a ton of eggplant. They take the cosmetically blemished ones because they are going to pickle them or put them in oil. Others want the round kind, others want the white kind, the striped kind, it goes on and on and I love it. Growing something that people really appreciate or get excited about is just a great reward.

Your Farmer,

Alan Schreiber

Eggplant Solanum melongena

Eggplant is a semitropical/tropical plant originating in China and India that exists in an astonishing array of shapes and sizes. More than 100 eggplant varieties are available in the United States. Eggplant is a member of the Solanaceae (tomato) family and is related to tomato, pepper, and Irish potato. Traders from the East brought seed westward to Europe about 1,500 years ago. The name eggplant likely originated from an early form of eggplant that produced white, egg-shaped fruits. Before it gained in culinary popularity, eggplant was also termed *mala insana*, which translates to *mad apple*, owing to the belief that eating eggplant would lead to madness.

While there are over a thousand varieties of eggplant, only a handful are familiar to most Americans. Most are familiar with the deep, dark purple oblong or pear-shaped fruit. Eggplant can also be red, white, pink, green, orange, striped and speckled in appearance. The fruit can weigh over 2 pounds or be smaller than a marble in size. It can also take a wide variety of forms including long and slender, globe-shaped, cylindric, oblong, C-shaped and elongate globular. The covering at the top of the fruit, called the calyx, can be either green or purple.

Choosing the Perfect Eggplant

Look for eggplants that are shiny, plump, firm, and unwrinkled, definitive signs of freshness. The fruit should feel heavy for its size, indicating good moisture content. Another indicator of freshness is the appearance of the stem or calyx. Make sure it is green and bright in color. Press gently with the thumb on the skin of the eggplant. If it is fresh, the skin will spring back quickly.

Older eggplants tend to have a bitter, acidic taste. Eggplants that appear soft, dull in color, and wrinkled are past their prime. If they have scars or bruises on the surface, the flesh may be bruised and discolored inside. To avoid an overly seedy eggplant, select small (1 lb) and medium (1.5 lb) fruits rather than the giant-size (2 lb).

Storage Tips

Eggplant has a shelf life of less than 14 days. Ideally, it should be stored at 46-50°F in 90-95% humidity (in a plastic bag). Do not store eggplant with tomatoes, bananas or watermelon. Do not use ice or chilled water to cool or preserve eggplant as it will cause chill injury, greatly decreasing shelf life.

SIMPLE GRILLED EGGPLANT

Ingredients:

2 1/2 lb Eggplant
1/3 cup Olive oil; virgin
1/4 cup Italian parsley; chopped
Salt to taste
Parsley; finely chopped
Freshly ground black pepper

Preparation:

If using large eggplant, remove the stems, then slice the eggplants horizontally 1/2-inch thick. Small eggplants should be sliced vertically 1/2-inch thick. Place the eggplant slices in a large, heavy plastic bag such as a freezer bag. Add the olive oil, salt and pepper to the bag, close the top and toss the eggplant with the seasonings until the slices are evenly coated. Preheat a grill. Grill the eggplant slices over medium-high heat until tender and attractively browned.

Marinated Baby Eggplant Pizza

Ingredients:

6 baby eggplants (about 8 ounces)
salt
2-4 tablespoons olive oil
4 individual prebaked pizza crusts
1/2 cup grated Pecorino Romano cheese

Marinade:

3/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1/3 cup red wine vinegar
2 cloves garlic, crushed
large pinch crushed red pepper
salt and pepper to taste

Preparation:

- In a medium bowl, mix together all marinade ingredients. Set aside.
- Thinly slice eggplant lengthwise. Sprinkle both cut sides of eggplant with salt. Allow eggplant to sit on a paper towel for 15 minutes, until paper towel is saturated. If desired, brush eggplant to remove excess salt.
- In a cast-iron skillet, heat 2 tablespoons olive oil over medium-high heat. Cover bottom of pan with eggplant (do not stack) and fry until golden brown, 2-3 minutes per side. Set aside and fry any remaining eggplant. Add more olive oil if needed.
- Add eggplant to marinade. Let it sit for at least 30 minutes.
- Preheat oven to 400. Brush pizza crusts with marinade. Layer eggplant on each crust. Brush with more marinade and top with cheese. Bake for 10 minutes until eggplant is hot and cheese is melted.