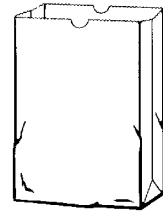


**IN THE BAG**  
**Potomac Vegetable Farms**  
**June 29 - July 1, 2004**



What a blessing are these high summer days, seemingly from childhood—low humidity, plenty of sun, perhaps an afternoon shower, long evenings. We can pick or otherwise work in the fields later into the morning without oppressive heat, savor the evening air tying up blackberry vines, still pull weeds easily from the soil softened by the rains.

If you are keeping track of the season, the tomato plants at the Vienna farm have begun to set fruit (most of our many thousand tomato plants are in Loudoun). The second planting of zucchini has come in, while the first planting, surprisingly, has not yet begun to show the usual signs of stress. We hope you enjoyed the sugar snap peas. They were delicious while they lasted, but this week we will pick them for the last time, and probably a small harvest at that.

Remember, not all of these items will be in your bag. You will get seven or eight of them, and if there's a bounty you will receive more than if some of the harvest is in short supply. Most of what's in the bag you will have seen before.

**Garlic** Dug within the last few days, this fresh garlic is particularly juicy. During the next week or so we will dig all the garlic we planted, cure it on racks in the greenhouse, and then sell and distribute it as the garlic with which you are familiar. We grow only hard necked garlic, which is easier for us to grow successfully than the soft necked garlic you typically find in grocery stores. Use like you would use any garlic—simmered with oil for stir fry, pressed for dressings, etc. The cloves are just forming so you may want to cut the garlic like a small onion rather than try to peel the cloves.

**Escarole** A broad-leaved green with a slight bitter taste, highly valued for soups, and for braising with garlic and olive oil.

**Kale** This “green,” in the same family as broccoli and cabbage, may

**be sautéed in a covered pan with oil and garlic, or steamed and served warm with a salad dressing. Strip the leaves from the leaf “ribs.”**

***Beets* Steam until fork-tender, adding the greens just at the end. After steaming, run the beets under cold water to peel off a thin outer layer, or wait until they cool to do so. Serve warm with a vinaigrette dressing, or cold with....**

***Sweet Onions* These Walla Walla style sweet onions are mild enough to eat raw in salads, such as a beet and onion salad. We also like the Walla Walla onions in tuna salad, or in Hannah’s summer salad: with sour cream, salt and pepper added to taste, combine small fresh tomato chunks, sweet onions, radishes and plenty of.....**

***Cucumbers* Also try a wilted cucumber salad. Slice the cukes into a bowl layering them very mildly with salt. Sweet onions would also go well here. Chill before serving for a refreshing summer treat.**

***Zucchini, yellow squash, patty pan squash, sunburst summer squash* This week try zucchini or squash with cheese. Sautee slices in a pan with olive oil until they begin to look translucent. Place in a baking dish and add grated cheese. Repeat the process, adding grated cheese each time. Serve immediately or keep warm in an oven. To speed preparation, have two pans going. An alternative we heard about: add two whipped eggs and bake for a frittata-like dish. Another preparation: saute squash and onions in oil and garlic, serve warm with crumbled herbed feta cheese.**

***Cabbage:* A little fresh cabbage goes a long way in any salad; use it in soups or stir fry. Cabbage is a basic vegetable. It stores very well. In these times of affluence it might be good to remember that in days gone by and still around the world, when there is almost nothing left to eat, there may be cabbage.**

***Also: sugar snap peas, leaf lettuce, parsley, basil, kohlrabi (see last week’s “In the Bag”).***

***Sugar Snap Peas*** -- snap off the stem end and eat the whole thing, raw or cooked. Sugar snaps are a combination of snow peas and English peas. They are a delicacy with a very short season. Absolutely delicious sautéed in a little olive oil with a little salt.

***Baby Beets with delicious greens*** -- the greens taste a lot like spinach (beets are in the spinach family) and should be eaten early in the week, before they get all wilted. The stems are tender enough to eat too. Beets can be boiled or roasted. The skins are tender at this time of year – no need to peel. Even if you have never met a beet that you liked, you should really give these a try. It is a completely different food from a supermarket salad bar beet or (heaven forbid) a beet from a can. Sweetness fades as the days go by. These are DELICIOUS.

***Swiss Chard*** -- another member of the spinach family. Unlike all other greens, chard thrives in the heat of the summer. Eat the whole thing, there is nothing to throw away. Chop into 1" pieces, sauté the stems in olive oil with garlic and onion first and then add the chopped leaves for just a minute or so.

***Kohlrabi*** -- see last week's notes. It's the weird looking bulb with the leaves sprouting out of it. From the cabbage family.

***Fennel*** -- Fresh, ferny leaves with a white bulb on the bottom. Do not wash or remove tops. Keep dry in a porous bag in the fridge for up to 4 or 5 days. Use leaves quickly.

“...one of the easiest vegetables: it slices beautifully into crescent shapes. It is lovely sautéed, baked, braised, or steamed, and delicious sliced thinly into salads or dipped in hummus...it goes with light flavours, like peas, as well as stronger ones...like the onion, it turns sweet when cooked. Fennel suits potatoes, pasta, and white fish like sea bass.” -- Nina Planck, [The Farmers' Market Cookbook](#)

***Fresh garlic*** -- Before garlic is fully mature, with separate cloves in the bulb, it is wet on the inside, like a fresh onion. Needs refrigeration. Eat it like an onion. Never burn garlic because it gets bitter – what a waste.

Garlic is either stiff-necked or soft-necked. We grow the stiff-necked variety. Nina Planck: “Soft-necked varieties are more common commercially: they are easier to grow, yield more, and store well. Garlic gourmards prefer stiff-necked varieties, which have more distinctive flavors and cloves of equal size.” There you go.

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## Swiss Chard (or Beet Green) and Rice Soup

SERVES 4

This is Nina's version of an Egyptian soup from Martha Rose Shulman's Mediterranean Light.

1 onion, peeled and chopped  
4 cloves garlic, finely chopped  
½ tsp. cumin seeds  
2 T. olive oil  
1 bunch Swiss chard, chopped

1 can chick peas  
¼ cup rice  
4 cups water  
1 cup plain yogurt  
juice of ½ lemon  
½ tsp. salt

- Sauté the onion, 2 cloves of garlic, and cumin seeds in the olive oil. When soft, add the chard and fry for about 5 minutes.
- Add the chick peas with their juice, the rice, and water. Stir well and simmer until rice is cooked, about 15 minutes.
- Meanwhile, mix remaining garlic with yogurt and lemon juice.
- Take soup off heat and stir in yogurt. Season to taste.