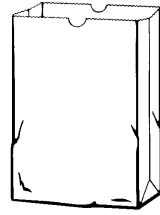


IN THE BAG  
Potomac Vegetable Farms  
August 6, 2008



**Mini:** onions, sweet corn, pole beans, tomatoes, swiss chard, basil, Malabar spinach, eggplant  
**Regular:** garlic, sweet corn, potatoes, peppers, tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, parsley, summer squash, Malabar spinach, eggplant  
**Robust:** garlic, onions, sweet corn, potatoes, peppers, tomatoes, swiss chard, cherry tomatoes, summer squash, parsley, Malabar spinach, eggplant

Pole beans can be cooked just like green beans (and they're the same exact species of plant), but you'll notice a lot of differences. Pole beans are usually broader and longer than the beans you've been getting. They grow on vines, unlike bush beans, and produce lots more beans as they live much longer. And most importantly, they're very flavorful. A lot of pole bean recipes are "traditional" or "Southern" which by and large means that they revel in bacon and are boiled for a really long time – often 40 minutes to an hour. Sounds a bit gray to us – but that is the traditional way to make them. Keep that in mind as you're trying out pole bean recipes – that old-fashioned flavor is one way to eat them, but pole beans can be eaten green and crisp and without animal fat, and they're delicious either way.

All of you are getting Malabar spinach from the organic farm Next Step Produce in Southern Maryland, run by our good friend Heinz Thomet. Malabar spinach is a green native to India, and unlike many other greens – like regular old spinach – Malabar spinach thrives throughout the summer. It's actually only distantly related to spinach, but Malabar spinach is called that because when cooked, it tastes almost exactly like spinach. The texture is a bit different – you may find it spongier and slower to wilt than spinach, and you probably don't want to eat it raw, as it is slightly sticky when cut. But if you like cooking with spinach, this is a great substitute. Malabar spinach is most often used in Indian or Chinese cuisine, and we found an Indian-inspired recipe below.

Weeks ago we told you that sweet onions have a season, and though our harvest seemed interminable, that season is ending. We're coming into our storage onions now – which, unlike sweet onions, produce a natural preservative called allicin so they don't rot. This is the same chemical that makes them tangy like you'd expect onions to be. If you thought the sweet onions were spicy, you're in for a real kicker with these onions.

### **Pungent Green Beans and Tomatoes**

(adapted from *Farmer John's Cookbook*)

*This recipe could easily be used with pole beans.*

*We find recipes with very specific time measurements a little bit ridiculous, but if you've never cooked with Indian spices before, it could be handy to remember to count to 25 before the next step. (It is a little silly, though.) Also, the first step can be skipped entirely – your local Indian grocery store will carry the ginger-garlic paste in a jar if you don't have the time or energy to make your own.*

10 cloves **garlic**, smashed  
1 piece ginger (about 1 in. long), peeled, chopped  
1 ½ cups chicken or vegetable stock, divided  
1 tsp ground cumin  
1/3 cup mild-flavored vegetable oil  
2 tsp whole cumin seeds

1 whole dried red chile pepper (optional)  
2-4 fresh **tomatoes**, stems removed, peeled and chopped  
2 tsp ground coriander  
1 ½ pounds **green beans**, cut in half  
3 tbsp lemon juice (about 1 lemon)  
Salt and pepper to taste

Put the garlic, ginger, and the ½ cup of the stock in a blender or a food processor; process until a smooth paste forms. Place a large wok (or large pot) over medium heat. When the wok is hot, add the ground cumin and toast it until it is fragrant. (This will take only a few seconds – be very careful not to overtoast it, as it can burn quickly).

Immediately scrape the cumin onto a small dish and set aside. Quickly wipe the wok with a damp cloth or paper towel to remove any remaining spice. Return the wok to the heat; add the oil, let it heat up for about 10 seconds and then add the whole cumin seeds. After five more seconds, add the dry chile pepper. After another 25 seconds, add the ginger-garlic paste. Cook and stir the ingredients for 2 minutes. Stir in the tomatoes and coriander. Cook, stirring, for 3 minutes.

Add the green beans, salt, and the remaining stock. Stir the ingredients until they come to a gentle boil. Reduce the heat to low and cover. Simmer, stirring once or twice, until the beans are tender, 5-6 minutes. Remove the cover from the wok. Stir in the lemon juice and the toasted ground cumin. Increase the heat and bring the mixture to a boil. Boil, stirring occasionally, until all the liquid has been cooked off. Remove the wok from the heat. Before serving, remove the chile pepper. Season with plenty of pepper to taste.

### **Bengali-Style Malabar Spinach**

(adapted from Barbara Fisher)

1 pound **Malabar spinach**  
1 tablespoon butter or ghee  
1 medium **onion**, sliced thinly  
2 chile peppers, sliced thinly  
1/2 teaspoon salt

1 large **garlic** clove, minced  
1/2 teaspoon cumin seeds  
1/2 teaspoon mustard seeds  
1 tablespoon mustard oil  
Salt to taste

Wash and dry the Malabar spinach and remove the thick stems and veins. Stack them up together in piles about 1/2" thick, and cut crosswise into 1/2" thick ribbons. Set aside. Heat butter in a sauté pan, and add onions and chiles, sprinkling well with salt. Cook, stirring, until the onions darken to a medium golden brown.

Add garlic, and keep cooking until the garlic becomes golden and the onions are reddish. Add cumin and mustard seeds, and stir until mustard seeds start to pop. Add mustard oil, and the Malabar spinach, and cook, stirring, and shaking pan, until the leaves brighten in color and wilt.

Sprinkle with a bit of water if the onions take on too much color or begin to scorch, and keep cooking until the onions are dark reddish brown, the cumin is deep colored and fragrant, and the greens are well-wilted and darkened somewhat.