

IN THE BAG

Potomac Vegetable Farms

June 30, 2009

Mini shares: sweet onions, summer squash, cucumber, lettuce, basil, garlic curls, cabbage,

Regular: sweet onions, cabbage, summer squash, escarole, redleaf lettuce, basil, cucumber, beets

Robust: sweet onions, cabbage, summer squash, escarole, redleaf lettuce, basil, cucumber, beets, fennel

Sweet Onions – these are very fresh, juicy and mild. This variety is called Candy, and is similar to a Vidalia or WallaWalla onion. Some folks eat them raw, I prefer them cooked. They can be stored on the counter at room temperature, or in the frig. Use the green tops just like scallions.

Summer Squash – we grow various types of summer squash: zucchini, yellow straightneck, Zephyr (long yellow with greenish base), patty pan (star shaped fruit). They are all basically similar in flavor, differing only in their texture. They can be used interchangeably and all mixed up. We enjoy the mild flavor of squash just steamed or boiled with butter and salt. We also love them grilled. We'll give you more squash recipes as the season wears on. Keep in the frig.

Cabbage – nothing fancy, just plain old crispy cabbage. Great in slaws and salads. Good addition to stir fries as well. Keep in the frig.

Escarole: is a variety of endive whose leaves are broader, paler and less bitter than other members of the endive family. In taste -- but not color -- it is almost indistinguishable from radicchio.

Like radicchio, kale and chard, escarole is a hearty green that thrives in cooler weather. The heart of an escarole head is less bitter because the leaves haven't gotten as much sunlight. High in folic acid, fiber, and vitamins A and K, escarole can be eaten raw or gently cooked. Try tossing a few escarole leaves into a mild salad, serving some quickly wilted with lemon juice, or stir chopped escarole into soup. A medium head of escarole usually yields about seven cups of torn leaves.

Beets – we love this vegetable in spite of its bad rap in the world. Simple earthy sweetness and such a beautiful color. They take a long time to cook – boiled whole, then slip the skins under cold water when they are tender. Or you can bake/roast them with herbs and olive oil until tender. Or you can grate them raw right into your salad. Remember that the color does make it through your whole digestive tract, so don't be surprised the next morning by that PINK color. The tops are like chard/spinach and can be eaten steamed. If you don't want to use them, discard and store the beet root in the frig.

Fennel: white bulbous stem with feathery green fronds on top. Fennel bulb is delicious eaten raw (sliced VERY thin or even shaved), dressed with a vinaigrette or as part of a mixed salad. In southern Italy, raw fennel is served with cheese as a dessert instead of fruit – an excellent aid to digesting a meal. When cooked the aniseed flavor becomes more subtle and the texture resembles cooked celery. Braised fennel is particularly good with white fish. Fennel can be cooked in all the same ways as celery. The feather green fronds can be used as an herb or garnish.

Basil – We begin the summer with our most favorite and oft used herb. We hope you love it too. You'll be seeing it pretty much every week of the summer. It is best stored in the plastic bag and left on the kitchen counter. The frig is TOO COLD and will make the basil turn black. When you have more basil than you can immediately use, you can preserve it by combining it with oil and freezing it. There is no degradation of flavor as there is when you dry basil. Add one or two of these basil ice cubes to a pot of soup when it is still hot from the range or stir a cube into pasta salads, cooked vegetables, sauces and vinaigrettes.

Basil Ice Cubes

Fresh basil

Olive oil or canola oil

Wash and dry basil. Pluck off the leaves and pack them into the container of a food processor.

Process while slowly adding oil until the mixture becomes a spoonable slurry.

Spoon into an ice cube tray. When frozen, remove the cubes and pack them in a plastic freezer bag. Keep in the freezer. Pasta and Pesto with Potatoes and Green Beans

Pasta and Pesto with Potatoes and Green Beans

Essentials for Classic Italian Cooking, Marcella Hazan

3 small new potatoes

½ lb. young green beans

1 ½ lb. pasta

Pesto (2 cups basil leaves, ½ cup olive oil, 3 T. pine nuts or walnuts, 2 garlic cloves, salt,

½ cup grated parmesan blended in food processor or blender)

Boil potatoes with skins on, slice thin.

Snap both ends from beans, cook in boiling salted water until tender, drain.

Cook spaghetti or fettucini for 6. When draining, hold back 2 T of pasta water to thin pesto.

Toss the cooked drained pasta with the potatoes, green beans, and pesto. Serve immediately.

• Terrific Asian Slaw

- 6 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 6 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 5 tablespoons creamy peanut butter
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce
- 3 tablespoons (packed) golden brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons minced peeled fresh ginger
- 1 1/2 tablespoons minced garlic
- 1/4 teaspoon chili paste (or to taste)

- 6 cups thinly sliced red or green cabbage
- 2 large red or yellow bell peppers, cut into matchstick-size strips
- 2 medium carrots, peeled, cut into matchstick-size strips
- 8 large green onions, cut into matchstick-size strips
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro

Whisk first 7 ingredients in small bowl to blend. (Dressing can be made 1 day ahead. Cover and chill. Let stand at room temperature 30 minutes before continuing.)

Combine remaining ingredients in large bowl. Add dressing and toss to coat. Season with salt and pepper and serve

Italian Escarole Soup with Cannellini

- 1 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 cup chopped onion
- 1 large carrot, cut into small dice
- 5 large garlic cloves, peeled, flattened
- 3 cups (packed) 1-inch pieces escarole (about 1/2 large head)
- 4 cups (or more) canned vegetable broth or low-salt chicken broth
- 2 15-ounce cans cannellini (white kidney beans), rinsed, drained
- 1 14 1/2- to 16-ounce can diced tomatoes, drained

- 2 tablespoons freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Heat oil in heavy large Dutch oven over medium-low heat. Add onion, carrot and garlic and sauté until onion is golden and tender, about 7 minutes. Discard garlic. Add escarole; stir 3 minutes. Add 4 cups broth, beans and tomatoes and bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium-low. Cover and simmer until escarole is tender and flavors blend, about 20 minutes. Thin with more broth, if desired. Season soup to taste with salt and pepper. (Can be prepared 1 day ahead. Cover and refrigerate. Bring to simmer before continuing.)

Ladle soup into bowls. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and serve.

