

This week's share:

Potatoes, carrots, onions, garlic, squash, parsnip, beets, kohlrabi or Chinese cabbage, kale, cayenne peppers



Next week's guess...

Potatoes, carrots, onions, garlic, squash, rutabaga, cabbage, kale



The Cedar Post

Cedar Down Farm's Weekly Newsletter

Winter CSA, Week 6, January 10/11, 2012

Parsnip Soup with Toasted Pecans and Feta

(serves 8)

4 tablespoons butter
1 large onion or 2 leeks, white part only, sliced
2 pounds parsnips, peeled, cut into 1 inch cubes
1 pound potatoes, peeled cut into 1 inch cubes
3 cups chicken or vegetable stock
3 cups water
2/3 cup half and half cream
6 tablespoons pecans, toasted, chopped
Extra virgin olive oil, to drizzle
5 ounces feta cheese, crumbled
Chopped flat-leaf parsley, for garnish

Melt butter in a large saucepan over low heat. Add the onion or leek, stirring for eight minutes or until softened. Stir in the potato and parsnips and cook for ten minutes, stirring every few minutes so that the vegetables don't color. Add the stock and water plus 1 tablespoon salt. Increase heat to high and bring to a boil. As soon as it's boiling, reduce the heat to low, cover and simmer for 40 minutes or until potato and parsnip are tender. Remove from the heat. Cool slightly, then blend with a stick blender (or in batches with a regular blender) until smooth. Stir in the cream and then taste. Add more salt if necessary. Reheat gently over low heat – don't allow to boil or your cream will separate.

Just before serving, mix pecans with a small drizzle of oil to give them a nice gloss. Ladle soup into bowls and top with feta. Sprinkle over the pecans, add a grinding of black pepper, drizzle with olive oil and garnish with parsley.



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On the farm...

The beginning of January always feels like we've rounded a corner here on the farm and are now in the turn around towards spring. I know it's really too early to be saying that and come March when it's still wintry and cold I'll be eating my words. But the days have started getting longer and in terms of work, January really feels like a new year on the farm. Starting now we start looking more seriously towards the coming growing season.

To begin with, I must really get down to work now on the crop planning so that we can place our seed orders by the end of the month. We also are going to have to buckle down and start looking for people to work with us next season, plan purchases for the coming year (another greenhouse perhaps?) and, of course, start taking registrations for CSA shares.

In terms of the winter CSA, the new year starts to see minor changes in your share content. While we still have kale going strong in the greenhouse, the spinach is not growing right now so we may not be able to pick it again (though perhaps in March for the last share). This is why we want to build another greenhouse - more greens for the winter next year! Squash should keep showing up in the shares for at least 2 or 3 more pickups but towards the end of the winter, squash's storability declines. So, that means more of the hardy root crops like rutabaga, parsnip and celeriac and of course the stand-bys - carrots, onions and potatoes. These crops are certainly admirable in their ability to store for so long. Harvested in early November, we can be eating root vegetables into April and even May.

While eating these wonderful roots, we will be thinking about some bigger purchases that we may make this year on the farm. Besides the aforementioned second greenhouse, there are a few things that we are thinking of investing in that will help us to improve our systems on the farm.

One of these is two more hoppers for our seeder. Currently, we use a walk-behind, one row seeder to seed all of our crops that go straight into the ground (not from transplants). This means that each row of our (primarily) three-row beds takes one pass of the seeder. By getting two more hoppers, we will be able to seed three rows at a time and also possibly mount the seeder on the tractor, increasing our speed even more.

On the same note, we are also considering investing in a new (used) tractor. Our current tractor, which was actually given to us, appears that it might be on its last legs. We need a medium-sized tractor to do field work and other work around the farm so we're considering buying a new one this season - quite a big investment for us.

So, this is some of what we are thinking about now on the farm. More thoughts to come!

Cayenne Peppers



Red, hot and beautiful, the cayenne peppers you will find in your share this week were harvested from the garden in the late summer and hung to dry. They are flavourful and pretty spicy (though less so if you don't use the seeds). I mince or grind these peppers and add them to all sorts of dishes from scrambled eggs to macaroni

and cheese to minestrone soup. They are easy to use and store well. Keep them in a paper bag or jar in your kitchen and either cut a piece as needed or throw a whole one into a simmering soup or stew for flavour and spice! You can also make a simple hot sauce by grinding a pepper or two adding some apple cider vinegar, pureed canned tomato and a dash of sugar for a great on-hand condiment!

It's not easy being....orange?!

No indeed it wasn't easy being orange last summer. With two months of super dry weather in the peak growing time, our carrots were less than ideal this past season. Our winter carrots failed to germinate time and again and when we finally harvested in the fall, the yield was sparse and the carrots were, well, kinda weird! Thick but tapering into pointy skinny ends (we think as a result of the uneven amount of moisture they got) our winter carrots won't win any beauty contests. You may have noticed that they are less than beautiful in appearance but hopefully you've also noticed that they more than make up for it in taste!

Easy Winter Minestrone Soup

- 1 medium red onion, diced
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 2 small parsnips, diced
- 1/2 celeriac, peeled and diced
- 2 medium carrots, diced
- 2 small potatoes, diced
- 1/4 green cabbage, or 1/4 kohlrabi chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup cooked kidney beans (or any other bean and/or chickpea)
- 1/2 cup frozen peas
- 1/2 cup frozen corn
- 1 large jar diced or whole tomatoes
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp each dried basil, oregano, thyme
- salt and pepper



Heat olive oil in a large pot. Add onion, garlic, parsnip, celeriac, carrot, potato, cabbage and herbs and sauté briefly. Add enough water or stock to cover by several inches and the jar of tomatoes. Add salt and fresh ground pepper to taste. Simmer for 1 hour or more until vegetables are tender and soup is thickened. Add peas, corn and beans and cook for 10 minutes more. Taste and adjust seasoning as desired.

If desired, cook 1 cup dry pasta and add.

Serve with grated parmesan cheese and a squeeze of lemon!

Spicy Squash Quesadillas

Makes 4 large quesadillas

a 3/4-pound seedless piece butternut squash, peeled and cut into 3/4-inch dice (about 5 cups)

1 medium onion, unpeeled, cut into eighths

1 large garlic clove, unpeeled

1 cayenne pepper, minced, seeds removed

1 tablespoon vegetable oil

eight 5- to 6-inch flour tortillas

1 cup cooked black beans

1 cup coarsely grated cheddar or swiss cheese

1/2 stick (1/4 cup) unsalted butter, softened



Preheat oven to 400°F.

In a shallow baking pan arrange squash, onion, and garlic in one layer and drizzle with oil, tossing to coat. Roast mixture in middle of oven 15 minutes, or until garlic is tender and transfer garlic to a work surface. Roast squash and onion until tender, about 15 minutes more. Discard peels from squash, onion, and garlic.

In a food processor purée squash, onion and garlic with cayenne, salt and pepper to taste until smooth. Squash purée may be made 2 days ahead and chilled, covered.

Spread about one fourth squash purée on each of 4 tortillas and sprinkle each with about one fourth of the black beans and about one fourth cheese. Top each quesadilla with a plain tortilla, pressing gently together. Spread each side of quesadillas with 1/2 tablespoon butter.

Heat a griddle or 7-inch non-stick skillet over moderately high heat until hot and cook quesadillas, 1 at a time, until golden, about 3 minutes on each side, transferring to a cutting board.

Cut each quesadilla into 6 to 8 wedges and serve warm with sour cream and salsa!

Spicy Roasted Beets

Serves 4

4 medium beets, peeled and cubed

2 Tbsp olive oil

Spices:

1/2 teaspoon cumin

1/2 teaspoon paprika

1/2 cayenne pepper, minced or ground

1/4 teaspoon sea salt

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Toss beets with oil and lay flat on sheet pan. Toss with spice mixture. Roast for 30 minutes, or until tender. Sprinkle with some additional salt and pepper, if desired. Serve warm.