Local Roots Community Supported Agriculture

Box Contents for September 4th & 5th

Savoy cabbage
1 bunch curly green kale
1 bunch arugula
2# All-Blue potatoes
2 ears sweet corn
2 or 3 sweet peppers
1 bunch carrots
1# tomatoes
basil
1 big zucchini
~ 1# cucumbers

Large box additions

1# broccoli
Romaine lettuce
2 extra ears corn

Next week's produce (we think): more tomatoes – broccoli (maybe) – beets – onions – more kale

Local Roots Farm News

A recent study comparing the nutrient content of organic and conventional foods has been getting a lot of press in the last couple days. My educational background in statistics and social science makes me tempted to critique the methodology of the study, but I think it would be more interesting for most of you to hear more about how farmers' growing practices may impact the nutritional value of the foods we eat.

In this study, the researchers compared the nutrient content in two categories of food: organic and conventional. It found no statistically significant difference between the two categories in terms of most vitamins, although there were some exceptions (higher Omega-3 content in organic milk, for example). However, this simple binary classification of either "organic" or conventional fails to account for an infinite number of other conditions that can lead to foods being more ore less nutrient dense. At the end of one of the articles I read about this study, the writer mentioned that "ripeness" has been found to result in higher vitamin content. I would say so. Not only ripeness, or maturity, at the time of picking, but also length of time in transit/storage, underlying soil mineral content, amount of water used in growing, exposure to pests or other stressors – all these factors combined are what determines the nutritional value of the food we eat. Certified organic produce for the national wholesale market is typically grown in a system that mimics conventional farming, and won't necessarily result in an end product that is distinct from a conventionally grown variety in nutrition (or flavor). Varieties are chosen for appearance and ship-ability, treated with organic versions of pesticides to prevent insect damage, and likely spend days or weeks en route from the farm to your fridge.

By contrast, the food that you get from us has been chosen for flavor and for how well the varieties perform in our specific location and soil conditions. We pick our produce when it's ready to eat, and bring it to you within a day or two of harvest. Due to a limited supply of water, we use a minimal amount of irrigation, resulting in plants that are heartier and less watery than supermarket vegetables. We also, as you probably have noticed from time to time, do minimal intervention to prevent pest damage. The result is not to be confused with mass-market "organic". Of course, there are many other, and very legitimate, reasons to choose organic foods over conventionally ones: less toxin exposure for both consumers and farm workers, absence (for now) of genetic modification, and reduced fossil fuel-based fertilizer inputs.

Want more vitamins in your diet? Eat more organic, locally-grown veggies!

Ideas and info for this week's produce

I used up so much space talking about the merits of eating local produce that I'll have to put all this weeks recipes in the email. You're getting tons of summery goodness this week, most of which requires only minimal preparation to enjoy it fully. Grill up some corn and zucchini, make a cabbage and carrot slaw, and combine arugula tomatoes, cucumbers, and feta cheese for a main-dish salad.

Sweet Peppers – Did you know that green peppers are just less than fully ripe red, yellow, or orange peppers? We're growing an assortment of sweet peppers, both "bells" and "frying" types. Today we're giving mostly ones that have ripened to their full color, but some are partially or fully green. Either way, they are sweet, delicious, and great for stuffing, baking, frying for fajitas, or just eating fresh. I'll include our all time favorite stuffed pepper recipe, which also includes sweet corn, in today's email.

Cucumber – We grow just two varieties of cucumbers, after several years of trying many different types in a search for the best. The light skinned, small variety is called Miniature White. It's similar to the heirloom "Lemon" cucumber, but with a thinner skin and smaller seeds. The green skinned variety is "Diva" an early, prolific "slicing" cuke. Both these varieties are mild, sweet, and have thin skins that don't require peeling. You can use them for quick or canned pickles, although they aren't technically "pickling" cucumbers, or just eat them fresh.

Basil – I'm hoping we'll get one last hurrah of basil later this month, but for this week we're giving you a medium-size bunch. Once the days begin to get shorter, basil has a strong tendency to form flowers, which, if allowed to fully open, will result in pale, less flavorful leaves. In order to prevent this flowering, we are aggressively cutting back the plants, hoping that they will produce new shoots that are sizable enough to pick and bunch for you. I'll include our basic pesto recipe in today's email. If you want to bulk out a pesto recipe and add a little kick, you could combine the arugula with the basil.