Local Roots Community Supported Agriculture

Box Contents for September 11th & 12th

1 big head broccoli
1 head Samantha red leaf lettuce
1 bunch Lacinato kale
2/3# pound tomatoes
~1/2 green beans
handful of shallots
2# cucumbers!
1 bunch beets (mixed varieties)
little bunch of flowers

Large box additions

1 bunch turnips
¼# arugula

Next week's produce (we think): more tomatoes – carrots – corn returns! – salad greens - Yellow Finn potatoes – Red Kuri winter squash!

Local Roots Farm News

We have a guest newsletter writer today: Rawley Johnson, leader of the apprentice pack and master tractor driver. Here's Rawley:

Sunday night I was awakened with a start by heavy rain and torrential winds. While the storm didn't amount to much—maybe a quarter inch of rain fell on the farm—it marked the end of a 48 day dry spell stretching back to July 22nd. That's the second longest stretch in Seattle history. And while Siri may lament about all the effort we've had to expend moving irrigation around to keep our vegetables happy throughout this dry summer, I'm writing today to put things in perspective.

You see, I moved up here in February to work at Local Roots Farm from the hot, dry desert of Central California. Where I used to farm, in the Capay Valley about 2 hours northeast of San Francisco, summer dry spells would routinely stretch on for 5 or 6 months at a time and temperatures would reach into the hundred-teens. We would have months where you wouldn't even see a single cloud in the sky. My farm had a crew of 6 guys who spent every day of the dry season doing nothing but moving irrigation pipes around. And when the rain finally did fall like tears from the sky sometime in early October, I remember just falling to the ground in gratitude and soaking it in.

Hardened Seattlites might scoff, but the truth is that I was drawn to farm up here in the Northwest by the promise of the rain. And I have not been disappointed. On the first day I arrived here in February, the Snoqualmie River that runs alongside the property breached its banks and flooded the driveway and some of our low fields. Jason and I were flooded in for 3 days. Then, after a pleasant month of May, when dreams of melons and early tomatoes danced in my head, June arrived and blessed us with a grand total of one, just one, sunny day! Our first planting of cucumbers died that month, no match for the soggy chill of what I soon learned people here refer to as "Juneuary."

But looking back now as the rain returns I have to say that it has been a spectacular summer. I can't tell you how much more pleasant it is to work in the fields all day when the daytime high is 70 degrees as opposed to 107. Even on our hottest days, a valley fog keeps us cool for the morning harvest until it burns off around 10am. And when we're hot and tired at the end of the work day, a refreshing swim in the river has been a regular after work ritual. As for those poor cucumbers, our second and third plantings have been bountiful, and you'll see that bounty in your boxes this week. Amazingly, we haven't irrigated the cucumbers all summer, yet they are refreshingly cool, crisp, and full of watery goodness. Even in the driest of dry Seattle summers, our water table stays high enough that cucumbers can find all the water they need without any of our help.

After Sunday's surprise rain, it looks like more dry weather as far as the forecast can predict. So we'll keep moving irrigation around to the plants that do need it, and we'll keep delivering you the incredible bounty of our fertile floodplain fields.

Ideas and info for this week's produce

Beets —It wasn't until I started farming and eating beets regularly that I really came to enjoy them. They were the final frontier of vegetables for me. I admit that they are an acquired taste, but once you learn to prepare them well there is really nothing more satisfying. We grow three different varieties of beets on the farm, and your box may contain either one. Red beets have the classic dark red color and the most earthy, distinctive flavor. Chiogga beets are a lighter, brighter red with a surprising candy striped color on the inside, and a slightly sweeter flavor. Golden beets are bright orange and have the sweetest taste. I'll give you two recipe ideas to suit your fancy.

1) Nothing brings out the flavor of beets like roasting. My favorite way to roast them is to cut off all but the last inch of the greens, then put the whole beets in a bowl (half them if they are really large), drizzle them with olive oil, salt, and maybe some chopped rosemary, then cover the bowl and shake them up to make sure the beets are evenly coated. Then lay them out on a baking sheet, cover with foil, and roast at 400 until tender when forked. Depending on the size of the beets, this will take 30 minutes to an hour. Once roasted, the skins will slip off easily with your fingers after you let them cool, or if you can't wait, peel them off right away with a paper towel. Or just eat 'em with the skins on like I do. A little farm dirt is good for you.

2) If you really don't like the flavor of beets or want to try something totally different, make this beet puree that I like from the Moosewood Cookbook. It's incredibly sweet and can be used as a topping for crepes or pancakes or a dipping sauce for other vegetables, like the cucumbers in this week's box. Boil the whole beets until tender, maybe 20 or 30 minutes, and then peel off the skins when cool. Place the beets in a food processor or blender with a half cup of apple juice, 3 tbs. of lemon juice and 3 tbs. of apple cider vinegar. Puree until smooth. Transfer to a small bowl and stir in a pinch of salt and 3 tbs. of honey. Add more juice to get the desired consistency if needed and serve.

And finally, don't throw away the beet greens, cook them! Beets are almost genetically identical to Swiss Chard and I think the greens taste better. They also are by far one of the most nutritious things you can put into your body.