

Prairieland Community Supported Agriculture
Week 21 – Sept 19, 2007

Important News From the Farm: CSA Season Will Be Shortened in October

As you can tell from your yards, rain has not been plentiful in Central Illinois this summer. Occasional heavy rains have not been enough to sustain the water table. In Decatur, this has meant that the city is now asking residents to voluntarily conserve water. Across the state in Macomb, it has meant that the CSA serving that community had to shut down two weeks ago without shareholders receiving their full value.

In Watseka, lack of rain has the Iroquois River running ankle deep at best. This means no water for irrigation. Realizing that good weather might be in short supply this season, the Moores “heavied up” our shares for the last two months fearing a late summer drought and early frost. Our shares have been almost double their usual value during this time. Today’s share is actually worth \$27. By next week, our shares will have reached their full value and the Moores could technically call it a season. However, they are committed to PCSA and will continue to deliver through mid-October with what remains in the fields and greenhouses. We will keep you posted on the date for the last pickup.

2008 Shares Moving Quickly

Thanks to those of you who have already renewed your shares for next year. This is a bright spot for the Moores and for PCSA’s administrative volunteers who remain ever hopeful for a few months off during the winter. As of today, 101 of the 135 shares for next year have been reserved online! If you have not yet reserved yours, please do so ASAP before they are gone. As always, you need not pay the full amount at this time, a partial payment will hold share for 2008. The remainder can be paid anytime before January 15, 2008.

If you know you will not be returning for whatever reason and have not already done so, please let us know by emailing info@prairielandcsa.org or calling 355-6279. If you will be moving, you can find a CSA where you’re headed at www.localharvest.org

In Your Share

Two of the fall crops that actually made it are in today’s share: acorn squash and broccoli. They are accompanied by cucumbers, green beans, potatoes, onions, eggplant, sweet peppers, hot peppers, and Roma beans.

Recipes and Storage Tips:

Correction: Last week’s yummy squash recipes were from Sue Schreiber.

Acorn Squash

The vegetable curry recipe on the PCSA website from former PCSA treasurer Tamra Stallings is an excellent way to use your squash, potatoes, beans, and hot peppers. You’ll find it and other squash recipes on the PCSA website here:

http://www.prairienet.org/pcsa/recipes/winter_squash.htm

Sweet Peppers

This week's sweet peppers are some of the prettiest to come through the CSA. They are excellent stuffed with whole grains like brown rice listed on page 164 of Recipes from America's Small Farms, but you can also use bulgur, quinoa, or legumes like lentils. Add chopped additional vegetables like tomatoes or chopped green beans, and/or onion.

Or simply roast them, peel and seed. Cut into strips and drizzle with olive oil and thinly sliced garlic for an easy bruschetta.

Hot Peppers

If your hot peppers have been piling up, now is the time to start stringing them to dry them so that you can use them to add some kick to your fall and winter meals. Store them away from direct sun.

Alternatively, seed and finely dice your hot peppers. Blanch them for 2 minutes to remove even more of the sting and add them to sweet pickle relish to add some spark and color to fall cookouts.

Broccoli

The hot weather this week is taking its toll on the broccoli, so enjoy it while it is here. Try it in Fresh Broccoli Soup on page 71 or in one of the salads on page 77. It is always good as part of frittatas, quiche, or rice pilaf on pages 24, 20, and 35 respectively.

Cucumber

Use cucumbers instead of crackers or pita for hummus. Or use our late season cucumber bounty to make Gazpacho with the recipe on page 158, or your own favorite recipe.

Quick Eggplant Dip

Wrap eggplant in packet made of two layers of foil, sealing edges well. Grill or broil until eggplant gives easily. Remove from heat. Allow to cool. Scrape eggplant from peel and mash with salt and pepper. Add a dash of sesame oil and chopped fresh chile to taste (seed and/or blanch or sauté to remove some of the sting).

Green Beans, Roma Beans

Make great bases for salads. Mediterranean Beans and Tomatoes on page 131 is an excellent example. Toss in some pasta for a one-bowl meal.

Or make a salad of steamed beans and chopped or sliced tomatoes and dress with blue cheese, tomato, or vinaigrette dressings from pages 54-55.

Beans are always great in stir-fries like the one on page 34.

Tomatoes

These are from the field and at their peak. Penne al Pomodoro from the July 18 newsletter is a great quick dinner: <http://www.prairielandcsa.org/pdf/newsletters/2007/july18.pdf>

Roasted Peppers are great with Tomatoes, especially in soup:

<http://allrecipes.com/Recipe/Roasted-Red-Pepper-and-Tomato-Soup/Detail.aspx>

Pizza Margherita is a classic with pesto and sliced tomatoes. Here is a reprint of the very easy whole wheat pizza crust from earlier in the season:

Pizza Crust

You can store unused pizza dough in plastic bags in your fridge for several days. Make some on the weekend and use the leftover dough for quick dinners during the week. This recipe uses only whole white wheat flour, but you can easily adapt your favorite using half whole white wheat and possibly a little extra water for a lighter textured crust.

2 1/4 cups whole white wheat flour

scant 1 t salt

1/2 t instant yeast

2 T olive oil

1 c cold water

In a large bowl, mix flour, salt, and yeast. Stir in oil and water with a wooden spoon.

Gather dough into a ball as you stir. Turn out onto counter and knead until springy, elastic, and sticky not just tacky. See kneading instructions here:

http://www.ehow.com/how_13898_knead-bread-dough.html If your dough isn't behaving, you may just need to walk away for 5 or 10 minutes and allow the gluten to relax a bit. The dough will be easier to work with when you return.

When the dough is kneaded, cut it into 3 equal pieces and roll/mold each into a ball. Rub each ball with olive oil and slip into plastic sandwich bags. Refrigerator overnight.

When you are ready to make pizza (anytime in the next few days), remove the desired number of dough balls from the refrigerator at least 1 hour before making the pizza. Keep them covered so they don't dry out.

Preheat the oven to 450 degrees. Working one at a time, gently press a dough round into a disk wide enough that you can bring it up onto your knuckles to thin out - you should be able to pull each round out to 12-inches or so. If the dough is being fussy and keeps springing back, let it rest for another 15-20 minutes. Place the pulled-out dough on the an oiled sheet pan. Add your toppings (less is more for a crisp crust). Bake until the crust is crisp and nicely colored, around 15 minutes. Remove from the oven.

If you've got a recipe or a favorite website, we'd love to have it. Email info@prairielandcsa.org or call 355-6279 and I'll type while you read it.