



From Far Afield

A newsletter of the Tolstoy Farms CSA - July 1 & 4, 2015

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THE FIRST CARROTS OF the season in your box this week. We do five plantings of carrots each season to keep them in regular supply. We plant the carrots a tad thick to try to avoid gaps, and then thin them down to the preferred spacing once they germinate. Thinning the carrots takes a lot of time, but we are on top of it this year. We have a few rows left in the fifth planting and then we are done for the year. Then its just weeding, watering, harvesting, washing bunching and packing for them. We do the first plantings in April and last year we harvested and washed the last carrots and mulched the overwintering ones in November, so there are only four calendar months in the year that we do not deal with carrots in the field.

These carrots are smaller than most of what we harvest through the season. The Carrot originated some 5000 years ago in Middle Asia around Afghanistan, and

slowly spread into the Mediterranean area. The first carrots were white, purple, red, yellow, green and black - not orange. Its roots were thin and turnip coloured. Temple drawings from Egypt in 2000 B.C. show a plant which some Egyptologists believe to represent a large carrot. Though carrots contain beta-carotene, which is good for macular regeneration, the myth that carrots help you see at night is mostly due to British propaganda during WW2. Hoping to keep Germany from figuring out the British Air Force had a new type of radar which was helping them detect and shoot down German planes at night, the British government spread a story that their success came from an elite regiment which consumed enormous amounts of carrots and had greatly increased their night vision. The Germans bought it for a time, and the British public believed it so much that they began consuming many more carrots to try and see during the German raid blackouts. Regardless of how carrots will or won't effect your vision, these carrots are sweet and delicious in everything from salads to soups to sautés to grilled.

You have a few fava beans today. **Fava beans** were the bean in Europe pre- 1492, as common beans such as pinto, black turtle, & green snaps are native to the Americas. They are still popular in Europe, Northern Africa, Middle Eastern, Greek, and Asian cuisines. To prepare fava beans for cooking, you first have to open the pods and extract the beans. The beans themselves are also clothed in their own seed coats or skins. The fava beans you have this week do not need their inner hull removed. When the beans are more mature (bigger than your thumbnail when shelled, approxi-

mately) you may choose to do so. If you ever need to do this, blanch the beans for one minute in boiling water, drain, and pinch off skin with your fingers. Two pounds of pods yield 2-2.5 cups of beans. If you are not in too much of a hurry, refrigerate the beans in a plastic container for a few hours before peeling. This way the beans inside get a bit firmer and there are fewer breakages while peeling. The beans can be folded into hot butter or oil, either alone or with other vegetables, or add to spring vegetable stews and pasta dishes. They go well with olive oil, yogurt, dill, basil, parsley, thyme, mint, savory, sage, or rosemary. Fresh fava beans taste a bit like fresh lima beans. Favas are a natural in pasta or rice dishes. Cook large heavy beans longer; then crush to make a purée, adding olive oil, garlic & a little lemon juice.

You have two red onions this week of a type called Rossa di Tropea "Red of Tropea", or torpedo onions as we call them on the farm. You have an **onion** this week. This is an Italian fresh market salad onion. It has a sharp yet very sweet flavor. It was developed in a small area of Calabria in southern Italy named "Capo Vaticano" near the city of Tropea, a beachfront resort city. In Europe an onion has to be grown in this specific region to be legally designated Rossa di Tropea, much like Walla Walla onions here. As mentioned it is an excellent fresh salad onion, or is great for sautéing or sauces as well.

You have **garlic** in your boxes for the first time this season. This is a

In Your Box

- 1 bunch carrots
- 1 bunch beets
- 1 fresh red onion
- 1 head fresh garlic
- 2 lettuce
- 3/4 lb fava beans
- 1 Chinese cabbage
- 1 bunch turnips
- 1 bunch Swiss chard
- 1 bunch rosemary

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variety we call Tashkant or Uzbek. This is a very early variety of garlic which I got several years ago (about 18) from a farm in Montana which had gotten it from a friend who had picked it up in a market in Tashkant, Uzbekistan on a visit there twenty years prior. You are receiving this variety fresh harvested; most of the garlic you get is cured, that is hanged and allowed to dry. Fresh garlic has thicker peels and a milder, sweeter flavor than its cured counterparts. It is considered a real delicacy by those who like to eat raw garlic.

If you ever have questions, comments, or complaints please talk to Joe or I at the stand or call or email the number and address listed in the masthead. Enjoy your produce.

Beet & Beet Green Risotto with Horseradish

- 1 small onion
- 1 pound red beets with greens (about 3 medium)
- 4 cups water
- 1/2 stick (1/4 cup) unsalted butter
- 1 cup Arborio or long-grain rice
- 1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan (about 1 1/2 ounces)

1 tablespoon bottled horseradish

Finely chop onion and trim stems close to tops of beets. Cut greens into 1/4-inch-wide slices and chop stems. Peel beets and cut into fine dice. In a small saucepan bring water to a simmer and keep at a bare simmer.

In a 3-quart heavy saucepan cook onion in butter over moderate heat until softened. Add beets and stems and cook, stirring occasionally, 5 minutes. Stir in rice and cook, stirring constantly, 1 minute. Stir in 1 cup simmering water and cook, stirring constantly and keeping at a strong simmer, until absorbed. Continue cooking at a strong simmer and adding water, about 1/2 cup at a time, stirring constantly and letting each addition be absorbed before adding next. After 10 minutes, stir in greens and continue cooking and adding water, about 1/2 cup at a time, in same manner until rice is tender and creamy-looking but still al dente, about 8 minutes more. (There may be water left over.) Remove pan from heat and stir in Parmesan.

Serve risotto topped with horseradish.



Rosemary Herb of the Week

Rosemary is excellent with oven roasted potatoes. Rosemary is good with all meats and fish. It enhances the flavors of cheese, eggs, peas, spinach, squash, and tomatoes. In the combo sung of in the medieval era song (parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme) it is great in lentil soup. It has a robust flavor which enhances subtle soups such as potato. Along with the above herbs, rosemary combines well with bay, chives, onions and garlic. Cream sauces, salad dressings, and marinades all benefit from the presence of rosemary. Rosemary can be added to bread dough at 1 tablespoon per loaf, and, unexpectedly, is excellent with fruit. Rosemary added to fruit salads enhances the sweetness and flavor of the fruit, and I make a peach rosemary jam which is absolutely divine. You can also blend rosemary with olive oil in a blender until smooth and then add this fragrant and delicious oil to sauces, soups, sautés, or grilled foods. Kept in the fridge it keeps for a long time. Rosemary is also an easy herb to dry... it almost wants to dry itself. Hang it out of direct sunlight, then store when dry in an airtight container.

Fava and Pecorino salad

- 3/4 fresh, young favas
- 3 oz. Tuscan pecorino
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- Salt and fresh ground pepper

Shell favas into a medium bowl. Break pecorino into small chunks into bowl with favas. Drizzle olive oil over favas and cheese and season to taste with salt and pepper. Gently toss salad, then divide among plates.