



From Far Afield

A newsletter of the Tolstoy Farms CSA - June 24 & 27, 2015

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A REMINDER TO BEGIN: we reuse boxes. Please bring back for reuse. Also if you have plastic grocery bags which are clean and not torn, we can reuse those, too. Bring them by the stand.

You have a Chinese cabbage (a.k.a.: Napa cabbage, celery cabbage, sui choy, or wong bok). Chinese cabbage is actually the same species as turnip, *Brassica rapa*. The Brassica family, which is also known as the cabbage or cole crop family, has a lot of diversity within its various cultivated species, a combination of genetic disposition toward varied expression with millennia of worldwide human cultivation. So if grown to seed in the same area, a Chinese cabbage could cross with a turnip. What the offspring would look like, I cannot say for certain, though I would guess something not as palatable as either of the parents in the first generation.

Chinese Cabbage has a crisp, crunchy texture and is lighter colored

and more mild flavored than other cabbages. It is great in Asian slaws and stir-fries. The leaves may be used for stuffing (Chinese Cabbage rolls) or thinly sliced for use in spring rolls. Chinese cabbage is also used to make the wonderfully pungent condiment kimchi. This Korean pickle, made with green onions, garlic, hot peppers, ginger, and generally diakon radish, is akin to a spicy Asian version of sauerkraut. Traditional kimchi can take several days to make. However, for a quick at-home version, combine a few cups of chopped Chinese cabbage, a tablespoon of sambal olek (an Eastern hot sauce), 3 tablespoons of rice wine vinegar, 4 sliced cloves of garlic, a small amount of finely grated ginger, and a healthy pinch of salt. Stir well, chill overnight and then eat right out of the bowl! You can also use Chinese cabbage in soups... it is especially good in lighter Asian soups. Chinese cabbage keeps for quite awhile. Store the unused portion in a plastic bag in the vegetable crisper and trim off a thin slice of the exposed side if it has discolored before you use it. If you are looking at this on your computer, check out this link to a picture of the [Jadeite Cabbage](#) sculpture at the Taiwan National Palace Museum.

Kale is used much like chard, but has a more broccoli/cabbage kind of flavor. These greens will be excellent in a stir-fry or soup, or steamed and served as a side dish with a splash of balsamic vinegar. Lately, kale chips have become popular. To make these chips, take your bunch of kale, 1 tablespoon olive oil, and 1 teaspoon sea salt (or flavored salt.) Preheat an oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Line a non insulated cookie sheet with parchment paper. With a knife or kitchen shears carefully remove the leaves from the thick stems and tear into bite size pieces. Wash and thoroughly dry kale with a salad spinner. Drizzle kale with olive oil and sprinkle with seasoning salt. Bake until

the edges brown but are not burnt, 10 to 15 minutes. You can also use a small amount of cayenne pepper or chili powder to season. Lots of people also like putting kale in green smoothies, a blended drink combining greens, fruit, and yogurt.

Greens in general can be easily and tastily incorporated into almost any dish: soups, stews, casseroles, sandwiches; even with breakfast: greens steamed with a rice or other savory grain porridge, or spinach cooked with eggs are sure to start your day right. And besides being delicious and adaptable, leafy greens are nutritional powerhouses, with very high levels of fiber, calcium, iron, vitamins A and C, and many other vitamins and minerals.

You have **beets** for the first time this season. This is a standard heirloom beet variety, Early Wonder Tall Top. We grow a couple other types of heirloom beets which you will receive in future weeks. Beets are good roasted, steamed, stewed, pickled, or grated raw on salads. Because beet roots are high in sugar, roasting in a hot oven is an especially good way to cook them, as it concentrates the natural sweetness of the beets. Beets of different colors and sizes roast at different rates. Roasted beets are done when fork-tender and the skins rub off with relative ease. Season or dress beets while still warm, as this aids in the penetration of flavors into the beet flesh. You can use any of various acidic ingredients (orange juice, stone ground mustard, or good vinegar, for example) mixed two to one with olive oil to toss the beets with. If boiled, cut greens to within an inch of the roots, trim root to within an inch, then boil until fork-tender and until skin slips easily. If you grate the beets and sauté in olive oil or butter with a bit of salt, pepper, and vinegar, they take much less cooking time than if cooked whole.

(Continued on page 2)

In Your Box

- 2 head spinach (~1 1/2 lb.)
- 2 lettuce
- 2 pints strawberries
- 1 bunch beets
- 3/4 lb snap peas
- 1 Chinese cabbage
- 1 bunch turnips
- 1 bunch kale
- 1 bunch mustard greens
- 1 bunch garlic scapes
- 1 bunch cilantro

(Continued from page 1)

Raw beets are delicious and convenient in the summer heat when you don't want to deal with oven or boiling water heat. Grate or slice raw beets very thinly then dress. As with turnips, beet greens are edible and delicious. Prepare and use beet greens as you would spinach or chard.

We managed to pick enough **strawberries** to give full shares two this week, and that will be the last of those for the season. Your **peas** are mostly snap peas with a few snow peas. Snow peas are a flatter edible-pod pea used just like snap peas.

Cilantro is your herb. A description follows. Enjoy your produce.

Spinach Mac and Cheese

- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
 - 1/2 cup minced yellow onion
 - 1/3 cup all-purpose flour
 - 4 cups whole milk, room temperature
 - Coarse salt and ground pepper
 - About 1 3/4 pounds spinach, trimmed, washed, and cut cross-wise into 1/2-inch-thick strips
 - 5 ounces Gruyere cheese, grated (2 cups)
 - 3/4 pound elbow macaroni, cooked according to package instructions
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1. In a large saucepan, melt butter over medium. Add onion and cook until translucent, 6 minutes. Whisk in flour and cook, stirring frequently, until mixture is pale golden and has a slightly nutty aroma, about 2 minutes. Whisking constantly, add 2 cups milk. Add remaining 2 cups milk, raise heat to medium-high, and whisk until smooth; season with salt and pepper. Cook, whisking constantly, until sauce comes to a boil, 8 to 10 minutes. Reduce heat to low and simmer gently, stirring occasionally, until sauce thickens, 13 to 15 minutes.
 2. Add spinach and cook, stirring constantly, until wilted, about 3 minutes. Add cheese and stir until melted, about 2 minutes. Add cooked macaroni and stir to combine. Serve immediately.

Our CSA Promise

We promise to work hard and use our knowledge and skills to try and always provide you with a good mix of produce grown using healthy and long term sustainable methods. We will always attempt to treat you as a respected and integral part of our farming operation, and will consider your needs as primary in our farms production. We will attempt to address any problems or issues which may arise in a fashion geared toward your satisfaction. In producing food for your table we will try, to the best of our ability, to always treat our land, resources, and fellow workers with respect. We value you and appreciate your decision to support our farm.

Cilantro Herb of the Week

Cilantro is also known as Chinese parsley or coriander. In the US, "coriander" generally refers to the seeds while "cilantro" refers to the leaves. Cilantro has been cultivated for more than 3000 years, and coriander seeds have been found in ancient Egyptian tombs. Cilantro is used in Southeast Asian, Chinese, Mexican, East Indian, South American, Spanish, Central African, and Central American cuisines. The root is popular in Thai cooking. Cilantro is great in bean dishes, especially in chili and Mexican bean dishes. Use in fresh salsas and add a small amount to salad dressings. Mince & sprinkle on tacos, burritos, or as a garnish for chili.

Smoked Salmon Breakfast Salad

- 2 beets or radishes, thinly sliced
- 6 cups chopped lettuce
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon chopped capers
- Kosher salt, freshly ground pepper
- 3 ounces smoked salmon or gravlax
- 3/4 cup Neufchâtel or cream cheese
- 4 Wasa crispbread or toasted pumpernickel slices
- 1 lemon, cut into wedges

Toss beets, lettuce, lemon juice, oil, and capers in a large bowl; season with salt and pepper. Add salmon and gently toss to combine. Mound salad alongside crispbread spread with Neufchâtel and serve with lemon wedges for squeezing over.