



WINTER SQUASH, FALL
STORAGE TIPS, RECIPES

Hilltop Community Farm

FALL 2011



An abundant pie pumpkin harvest.

Photo by Erin Schneider -

Celebrating Squash - The fruit that keeps on giving, and stores well too!

A time honored and true producer and innovator (backup baseball bat or croquet mallet - i.e. the oversized zucchini, or billiard balls - the 8 ball summer squash). Despite the lament and locked doors in lieu of 'not another zucchini', or grumble the vines evoke when I found myself having to lop them as they grew and grew and grew...overtaking our tomatillos and all other vegetation in its path, I wanted to to pay tribute to this exceptional plant family. Squash was originally cultivated for its seeds, not the colorful flesh, which for millenia was bitter and unpalatable (the decorative gourd its contemporary). Today we know that the seeds are a very good source of magnesium, phosphorus, and manganese and the flesh a fantastic source of vitamin A and potassium. Squash serve as a basic staple for soups, pies, breads, side dishes, muffins, cakes, and casseroles. Squashes, both summer and winter, are wonderful companion plants to beans and corn - and will help keep animals such as deer at bay. Squash are great indicator plants for the grower working new soil as they are especially sensitive to pesticide and fertilizer residues (this may be where the term 'sacrificial squash' originated).

Winter squash varieties we grow are all, open-pollinated heirlooms and include the following varieties: **Butternut** - shelf life 3 - 4 months, a great all purpose baker. **Acorn** - shelf life 2 - 3 months, a great, mild baking variety.

Carnival - shelf life same as acorn, festive dark green, orange, cream colored skin, great mashed potato substitute. **Sweet Reba** - similar to acorn squash only sweeter. I love these baked and stuffed with wild rice. **Sugar Dumpling** - another new varietal planted this year, in the hopes of finding a more tasteful substitute to carnival squash, yet still match the bright celebrated coloration of carnival. **Pie pumpkin** (varieties - long pie pumpkin, NE Pie) - shelf-life and use similar to butternut squash, only a slightly richer 'pumpkin' flavor.

Delicata - shelf life 2 months. Heirloom with thin yellow and green striped skin. One of the sweetest varieties, great baked or steamed.

Enjoy the unique flavor and textures of squash and before you toss in the compost think of that corkscrew, candleholder or piece of contemporary art you always wanted or wanted to make - your squash just might make the perfect substitute. As always, if you have a favorite variety you'd like us to grow for you, please let us know, we enjoy trying new varieties.- ES -

Storage Tips for your Fall Produce

Prolong the shelf life of your fall produce by following these storage tips:

Horseradish Root - Store your horseradish root in a ventilated plastic bag for up to 3 months in your refrigerator. You may also notice that horseradish root might start to sprout as well, feel free to plant out in your garden, be aware that the root can take over an area - once it's planted, it's in there.

Potatoes - store best at 55 degrees away from light. Keep in a mesh bag or brown paper bag. Basements, root cellars, and back porches are great places, provided it doesn't freeze. Do not store in refrigerator as that speeds up ethylene production, which will make your potatoes sweeter, but will also speed up the decay process.

Onion - see photo reference on p 3 for tips.

Popcorn - Store on the cob and use as needed, or separate seeds from cob and store in a glass jar or plastic zip lock baggie.

Winter Squash - Another amiable squash feature is it's impressive storage capacity (some winter squashes can be stored for up to six months in cool, dry conditions - most varieties will store for at least two months in a cool, dry space away from direct light. Squash on your kitchen counter will store for at least 1 month.



We grow big squash here! A special thanks to Farmer Erin's mother, Diane Mikonowicz, for providing winter squash overflow space at her farm nearby. Photo by DM



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Celebrating the 2011 Herb of the Year: Horseradish Root!



-photo of horseradish root growing on our farm, photo by MS -

Native to the Southern part of Russia, this hardy member of the brassica family, plays an important role on the landscape as a dynamic accumulator. Horseradish's deep taproot has the ability to aerate the soil as well as 'mine' the subsoil for important soil micronutrients such as magnesium, calcium, and manganese and make it available to surface plants after the leaves die back. While you can harvest horseradish root year round, we wait until the after the first frost (or at the very least when the weather cools come October) for peak flavor. Enjoy horseradish root chopped up into your favorite vegetable soup, or enjoy the root on its own in:

Horseradish Sauce:

Ingredients include:
Fresh Horseradish root
Vinegar
Salt

Peel and grate horseradish root (be sure to have good air flow as horseradish root is strong; due to volatile oils). The proportions will vary depending on the amount you want to make. I would recommend about a 1:4 ratio of vinegar to horse radish root, salt to taste. Mix above ingredients in blender/food processor. Spoon into heat sterilized 4 oz. jars and seal with heat sterilized lids. Stores in the refrigerator for 6 - 8 months. The sauce is white to creamy-beige in color. It will keep for months refrigerated but eventually will start to darken, indicating it is losing flavor and

should be replaced. Horseradish is high in vitamin C and calcium.

From Rob McClure, Co-owner, Organic Farmer, Hilltop Community Farm, LLC

Stuffed and Baked Onions

4 green bell peppers (sub green chiles for a mildly spicy flavor)
4 medium sized onions
12 plum, cherry, or small roma-type tomatoes, chopped
2 TBSP chopped basil, fresh or dried
2 TBSP chopped thyme, fresh or dried
3/4 C balsamic vinegar
1 tsp salt
1 tsp freshly ground pepper
Fresh thyme, savory, or marjoram sprigs for garnish

Preheat oven to 400 F. When oven is ready, place the bell peppers on an aluminum foil lined baking sheet, and with the oven door partially open, broil them 5 inches from the heat source for 5 minutes, or until their skins blister. Remove the peppers and let them cool slightly. Place them in a bag, close it, and let them stand 10 minutes to loosen their skins. Peel, seed, and chop them. Set aside. Cut a thin slice from the bottom of each onion, forming a base for the onions to stand on. Remove the onion centers, leaving 1/2 inch thick shells. Reserve the centers for other uses. Stir together the bell peppers, tomatoes, capers, basil, thyme, vinegar, salt, and pepper; spoon the mixture into the onion shells. Place the onions in a baking dish and bake, covered at 400 F for 50 minutes with fresh thyme sprigs.

Adapted from The Featherstone Farm Cookbook, Barbara Hunt, Featherstone Farm CSA member, Rushford MN.



Pumpkin Soup

1 pie pumpkin or butternut squash, baked.
1 medium to large tomato
1/2 C chopped onion
2 TBSP honey
2 TBSP butter
1/2 C milk (optional)
cayenne pepper, chopped (optional)
Salt and Pepper to taste



Cut and de-seed pumpkin or squash (wash seeds and set seeds aside to bake for later, or just compost). Place pumpkin on a 9 x 13 baking sheet with a thin layer of water at the bottom, so squash doesn't dry. Bake squash at 375 F for ~40 minutes. Remove from oven and let cool. Peel skin and puree in blender adding honey, tomato and milk. In a deep saucepan or skillet, melt butter over medium heat, saute onion for 3 - 5 minutes. Add pumpkin puree and simmer for ~10 - 15 minutes. Sprinkle with chopped cayenne pepper for an extra kick, or simply enjoy. Serves 4 - 6.

From the kitchen of Treena Hoffman, Farmer Erin's sister. Treena first made this soup creation during her tenure as owner of Electric Earth Cafe in Madison.

Above photo, Rob sorting through the winter squash harvest. Photo by ES



WINTER STORAGE, RECIPES

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Like its cousin Garlic, a gastronomic life without onions is nearly unimaginable. Few vegetables have such varied personalities and are equally good sauteed, baked, braised, stuffed, steamed, grilled, pickled, deep fried, or eaten fresh. Precisely where humans ate their first onions remains a matter of dispute. Several wild species exist (such as chives and ramps that we harvest for you in the spring), and were likely foraged long before humans entered their agrarian phase. The first known record of onion cultivation is in Mesopotamia, and it seems probable that onions originated in Asia or the Middle East. Ancient Egyptians valued onions not only as food, but also as currency, the pyramid builders were paid in part in onion, garlic and pepper. Onions quickly spread throughout the rest of Europe and cultivated varieties made their way to the United States in the mid-1600's, despite North America having several native species of alliums. As

with other members of the allium family, onions contain vitamins C and B6, and offer a good source of chromium and sulphurous compounds, which may have beneficial effects against heart disease, diabetes, and high blood cholesterol.

Onions come in various forms and tastes. Some are sweet and juicy, like Ales of Craig a summer variety we grew for you are best used raw or in summer stir fry and salsas. While others are spicy, leafy, and slender scallion types. Others like the large red Bulls Blood, and compact yellows, and Copra onions, are better suited for storage and cooking. Cippolini onions combine the best of both - they store well, and are remarkable sweet- the perfect roasting onion. - ES -

"Onion skins very thin, mild winter coming in. Onion skins very tough, coming winter very rough" - Old English Rhyme'



All of the fall onions in your CSA shares have been cured (field dried), washed, and can be kept in a wire hanging basket or a perforated container with a raised base so air can circulate freely underneath. They keep best in an area like a basement, root cellar, or other place with a temperature ~55 degrees F. Avoid storing onions next to potatoes. Photo by - Rob McClure -

POTATO LEEK SOUP

2 C diced potatoes
1 C diced celery root
1 C diced carrots and/or parsnips
1 C diced rutabaga (optional)
1 chopped green pepper
1 chopped cayenne pepper (optional)
1 - 2 C chopped leeks
1/2 C chopped onion
1/2 tsp fresh thyme
1 bay leaf

Chopped garlic salt & pepper to taste.

Cover above ingredients with water, bring to a boil. Simmer for 1 - 2

hours, or place in a slow cooker/crock pot.
~ 10 - 15 minutes before serving soup, melt 1 - 2 TBSP butter and 1/4 C chopped onion, saute. Add 1 tsp flour, 1 C milk, melt 1/2 C - 1 C grated cheese. Cook until thick, add to soup.
Serves 4 - 6.

From the kitchen of Diane Mikonowicz, Farmer Erin's mother. A special thanks to Ma Mikonowicz for her support, canning wisdom, and her help with providing space for our squash overflow, flowers, and tool sharing.



Top photo, Tadorna Leek closeup. Photo by - ES -

Baked, pumpkin and/or Squash Seeds

While Lady Godiva and Snack Jack pumpkins are varieties we grow specifically for seeds (the seeds are hull - less and easier to roast), all winter squash and pumpkin seeds are edible. The following is a simple way to roast squash or pumpkin seeds:
Wash and rinse seeds in colander to remove pulp. Pat dry with a towel and spread in a single layer on a cookie sheet. Let stand for 2 - 3 days (optional, but helpful to prevent molding). Sprinkle lightly with oil and flavor with your favorite herbs, such as garlic powder, dried cayenne or chile pepper, thyme, soy or Worcestershire sauce. Bake in oven for 10 - 60 minutes at 250 - 350 degrees F, stirring every 10 - 15 minutes. The hotter the oven temp, the shorter the cooking time. When lightly brown and crispy remove from oven. You can also use a small skillet to cook seeds over low heat with some butter. They'll pop when they're done.

Toss on a salad, enjoy as a nutritious snack (seeds are high in fiber as well as vitamins B & E), or add to your soups and stir fries.