



Sogn Valley Farm

CSA Newsletter July 26-27, 2016

www.sognvalleyfarm.com

Greetings,

As we reach the height of the season, everything is growing like crazy. If I walk away from a field for a few days, I return to find the plants larger and fruit riper than I would have imagined.

But nowhere is the prolific growth more apparent than in the high tunnel. This unheated greenhouse is a fairly simple structure—a metal frame and 2 x 4" wooden end walls covered in two layers of plastic sheeting. There's also a little fan that blows air in between the layers of plastic to keep it taut (and thus not as rapidly weathered by high winds). The air gap that is created also has some insulative properties, retaining some heat during cold weather and buffering heat during hot weather.

I am consistently amazed at the growth of the tomatoes planted in the high tunnel. The cherry tomatoes plants, which are pruned intensively to maintain a single stem, are growing about 18" per week. They are loaded with ripe, ripening, and green fruit, and show no signs of letting up. So, too, are the slicing tomatoes laden with fruit, and the vast majority relatively free of visual defects. I'd like to say this is "business as usual," and that we always grow high-yielding, visually appealing, and flavorful crops, but I won't kid myself. Growing vegetables is a challenge, and crop don't always turn out as perfectly as I'd like. So until I learn to tame all the critters in the field that seek to make our vegetables their dinner and dictate when, and how intensively, the rains fall and the wind blows, I'll be leaving some outcomes up to chance.

But the high tunnel allows me to remove

What's in the box?

Tomatoes: The first of the slicing tomatoes. These ones came out of our high tunnel, which has been putting out an impressive number of beautiful and tasty tomatoes so far this season. While most of these are very ripe, a few are a slightly lighter shade of red and may benefit from another day on the counter to sweeten up even more. Use in this week's recipe.

Sun Gold cherry tomatoes: We've been told by market customers that these are like candy—delicious to snack on by themselves. They're also great on a salad or halved, sprinkled with salt, and roasted.

Globe eggplant: A different variety from the Asian eggplant you have received in prior boxes. This larger eggplant is traditionally used in eggplant parmesan. Try it in this week's recipe for Eggplant Caprese. Be careful of the little spines on the calyx (the green part around the stem of the eggplant).

Basil: Make another batch of pesto, pair with cucumber and tomato for a quick snack (which I've been eating for lunch over the past couple of weeks!), or use in this week's recipe.

Salad mix: The same blend of eight lettuce varieties that you received earlier in the season. Lettuce is a cool season crop and does well in spring and fall conditions, but we plant it all year, since isn't summer "salad season?!" However, due to the intense heat we have had over the last week, the lettuce has developed a slight bitterness, so would be best served with some salad dressing.

Dill: Put a few sprigs on your salad, or make a refreshing tzatziki sauce with this week's cucumbers.

Green onions: These are larger and more substantial than some of the earlier green onions, so they needn't be used only as a garnish.

Cucumbers: After reading last week's newsletter, a CSA member emailed me and gently scolded me for suggesting you might be sick of cucumbers. "If you sent 10 I would not be sick of them!" she wrote. Since I strive to please our members, here they are again! Pair with dill in a tzatziki sauce.

Red cherry tomatoes (full shares only): These are larger and a bit lower moisture than Sun Golds, making them a good choice for salads or other uses where lots of juice is not desired.

Strawberries: As promised, those who didn't receive strawberries last week are receiving them this week. And since we have an abundance of these, all members will receive a pint.

On Deck

Some of the items you'll likely see in your box over the next 1-2 weeks.

Jalapeño peppers — Rosemary — Tomatillos — Garlic — Sweet corn

Melons/watermelons—Heirloom tomatoes

some of those variables: the plants are protected from rain and wind; the temperature inside is high during cool ambient conditions in the spring and fall; pest insects, although not physically excluded, tend to be less problematic; a clean, dry straw mulch covers all soil, leading to much cleaner tomatoes than would be found in the field; and I can totally control the plants' water supply, allowing me to minimize the common problem of fruit splitting after a heavy rainfall.

This successful high tunnel experiment leads me to envision adding more protected growing structures, such as high tunnels, in the future. In addition to warm season crops like tomatoes and cucumbers, they also allow for fall and winter production of cool season crops like kale and spinach. Now if only we had more flat land on which to build these structures...

Until next week,

Dana

Eggplant Caprese With Grilled Tomato And Basil Vinaigrette

*Half share members: we have provided you with enough tomatoes to halve this recipe, although you have plenty of basil and eggplant.

Ingredients:

1 pound globe eggplant trimmed, cut crosswise into 1/2-inch-thick rounds
Olive oil for grilling
1 plum tomato (or slicing tomato with some juices drained)
1/3 cup chopped basil plus sprigs for garnish
1 tablespoon white wine vinegar
1/4 cup olive oil
2 7- to 8-ounce balls fresh or buffalo mozzarella cheese, drained, thinly sliced
2 pounds tomatoes

Preparation

1. Prepare barbecue (medium heat). Arrange eggplant slices on baking sheet. Brush both sides with oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Grill until slightly charred and tender, turning occasionally and moving to cook evenly, about 5 minutes. Transfer to foil-lined baking sheet. Grill plum tomato until skin is charred and split, turning often, about 5 minutes. Transfer to sheet with eggplant and cool.
2. Core plum tomato (and drain, if using slicing tomato); place in blender. Add chopped basil, vinegar, and 1/4 cup oil. Blend until smooth. Season with salt and pepper. Transfer to small bowl. DO AHEAD Eggplant and dressing can be made 2 hours ahead. Let stand at room temperature.
3. Overlap eggplant slices, cheese slices, and heirloom tomato slices on individual plates or large platter. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Drizzle salad with dressing and garnish with basil sprigs.

Recipe slightly modified from <http://www.bonappetit.com/recipe/eggplant-caprese-with-grilled-tomato-and-basil-vinaigrette>.