



Sogn Valley Farm

CSA Newsletter Sept. 20-21, 2016

www.sognvalleyfarm.com

Greetings,

I thought I would write a bit about sweet potatoes in this week's newsletter, as we'll be harvesting them this week and putting them, most likely, in next week's box.

Sweet potatoes are a staple in our household—they find their way into several meals a week throughout the fall and winter. They're also quite versatile, working well in sweet dishes (sweet potato pie) and savory meals. We usually opt for the latter, often roasting them with garlic, olive oil, and some spices. One of our favorites is curried roasted sweet potatoes—keep an eye out for that recipe in next week's newsletter.

But what you're probably less familiar with is the production of sweet potatoes. They are grown mainly in the southern U.S., where the growing season is much longer than we have here. As a result, sweet potatoes aren't a very common crop on vegetable farms in the Upper Midwest.

However, sweet potatoes can be grown successfully in this climate, albeit with lower yields than in the South. I was lucky enough to take part in some research being conducted in our lab while a graduate student at Iowa State University. We were testing different factors: plant spacing, the impact of plastic mulch, and variety choice. To greatly simplify the results, we found that the best in-row plant spacing for optimal yield of marketable tubers (i.e. neither jumbo nor too small) was 12 inches. Plastic mulch also had a very strong effect, increasing yield significantly over that of the bare ground treatment. This is probably due to the moisture conserving and heating effects of plastic mulch. Lastly, we compared varieties, and found that one of the strongest performers was 'Beauregard,' which is the industry standard. However, in recent years, another variety, 'Orleans,' which is very simi-

What's in the box?

Red potatoes: A versatile tuber that can be used in a plethora of ways. Our go-to is cutting them into cubes and roasting with garlic, olive oil, salt, and pepper until crispy. The skins are pretty thin and tender, so we rarely peel potatoes.

Carrots: As with the broccoli, we have noticed that our carrots are getting sweeter, perhaps not as sweet as the October-dug carrots that have endured several frosts, but certainly sweeter than the July and August carrots you received. The smaller diameter carrots tend to be sweeter than the very large carrots.

Broccoli: After a hiatus—we lost three consecutive plantings to the disease discussed in last week's newsletter—we're harvesting broccoli once again. I sampled it several times while harvesting, and even raw, it is becoming quite sweet, a trait I usually associate with fall broccoli.

Acorn or Sugar Dumpling winter squash: Acorn squash is typically prepared similarly to the Sugar Dumpling squash you received last week. **Note:** we were very disappointed in the performance of this acorn squash variety; well over half of the fruits were rotting at the time of harvest due to poor rind development. Some fruits have a soft rind where the squash lay on the ground (orange spot). It's still fine to eat, but I would recommend that you eat it soon rather than store it.

Yellow onions: If you're like us, you put onions in lots of dishes: soups, stir-fries, scrambled eggs, roasted veggies. If, however, you find yourself accumulating yellow onions, try caramelizing them. Just sauté at low-medium heat for a long time (10+ minutes) until they are light brown, very soft, and sweet!

Anaheim peppers: Several members of my extended family either grew up in, or lived in, New Mexico, where these chiles are commonplace in everyday cuisine. My aunt and uncle Becky and Dave have shared their enchilada recipe with us for this newsletter. These are also great to freeze after having been roasted as described in the recipe. To tone down the spice, roast some of the sweet Italian peppers ('Corno di Toro) and serve together. I can't remember a Thanksgiving without this dish, known in the family as, simply, "chiles."

Slicing tomatoes (full shares) or cherry tomatoes (half shares): Here are some tomatoes to use atop the enchiladas, as suggested in the recipe.

'Corno di Toro' sweet peppers: If you didn't try the "fried Italian peppers" discussed in a previous newsletter, you have another opportunity. We have included a mix of green and red, which complement each other nicely. To avoid confusion with the Anaheim peppers, which look similar, *we put these in a paper bag.*

Green beans: Our last planting of beans has been prolific—enjoy!

Garlic: We're giving you a new variety, 'Majestic.' Mild-flavored and large-cloved.

Red leaf lettuce (full shares only): We had a market customer tell us she used our red leaf lettuce to make wraps. Also, put some on your enchiladas.

On Deck

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

Sweet potatoes — Butternut squash — Celeriac — Leeks

lar to Beauregard and available in organically produced planting stock, has gained popularity. We decided to grow 'Orleans.'

Here's the basic production process: in mid-May, we laid plastic mulch to warm the soil up before planting. Sweet potatoes are heat loving crops and shouldn't be planted until June 1. Unlike most other vegetables we grow, sweet potatoes aren't established using seed (either sown into trays to produce transplants, or seeded directly into the field). Sweet potatoes are established using what are called slips. Slips are 8-12 inch-long stems that sprout from the "eyes" of sweet potatoes. Slips are typically mail ordered from nurseries, and planted immediately upon receipt. Slips are pushed through the plastic mulch film and into the ground, so there are at least two buds belowground and two aboveground. The buds in the soil grow roots and, eventually, the tubers we call sweet potatoes. The buds aboveground grow leaves. We harvest sweet potatoes in early fall, before the first frost, and then cure them at high temperature and high humidity for about a week. The curing process allows any scratches and abrasions acquired during harvest to heal, and also, quite importantly, forces the tubers to convert starches to sugars, giving them their sweet taste. Sweet potatoes are then stored (ideally) around 60 degrees with high humidity.

There you have it—Sweet Potato Production 101! We're planning to harvest today. Next week, you'll learn how things turned out!

-Dana

Becky and Dave's Chicken Enchiladas

Many thanks to my aunt Becky and uncle Dave for sharing this recipe! This is the first time they have actually written down the recipe, and they say that every measurement is "give or take," so feel free to tweak to your liking.

Ingredients

Sauce:

1 pound fresh green Anaheim chiles, roasted and peeled. (It's ok if the chiles have turned red.)
1 Tablespoon oil
1/2 - 1 onion
1 garlic clove
2 medium tomatoes, chopped, or 1 cup canned diced tomatoes (optional)
2 or more cups chicken broth
Salt
Oregano (optional)

Enchiladas

1 cup chopped or shredded precooked chicken
2 cups green enchilada sauce (see above)
1/3 cup diced onions
3/4 cup grated cheddar cheese
1 tomato or 6-8 cherry tomatoes, chopped
Lettuce
8 corn tortillas
Sour cream

Directions

Sauce

Roast the chiles in the broiler or on a grill so that the thin outside skin begins to blister and turn black in places. Put the chiles in a covered pan or inside wet paper towels, so that the skin will loosen easily from the flesh. After 10-15 minutes, peel the skin from the chiles. Also remove the tough tops, stems, seeds and membrane. Chop the chiles into small pieces. ***Be careful not to rub your eyes after handling chiles.

Heat oil in a skillet. Add onion and chiles and sauté until onions are transparent. Add garlic, tomatoes (optional) and chicken broth. Cook until sauce thickens somewhat. Add a pinch of salt and a pinch of oregano (optional).

Enchiladas (Individual plates)

Heat tortillas in frying pan or microwave (read directions on package)

Place 1 tortilla on microwavable plate, add a spoonful of chicken, a scoop of enchilada sauce, a few chopped onions and top with grated cheese. Repeat for second layer. Put in microwave for about 40 seconds or until cheese is melted and enchilada is heated through. Garnish with chopped tomatoes, lettuce and sour cream. Yum!