



Sogn Valley Farm

CSA Newsletter Aug. 15-16, 2017

www.sognvalleyfarm.com

Greetings,

Each week, on Monday and Tuesday, we harvest and wash produce for the 100+ households that are members of our CSA program. This process is diverse, as we're usually harvesting *relatively* small amounts of a wide variety of crops. The wash and pack stage is also complex: we change up our wash stations several times to accommodate all the different items going in the box; we often count individual items like cucumbers and eggplant to determine how many we are able to put in each box; certain items, like the beans and cilantro in this week's box, are individually bagged before packing CSA shares; and then we assemble each box, trying our best to get *every* item into *every* box. Because of the nuance and variety involved in this process, it is well suited to a smaller, full-time crew that is familiar with all aspects of the farm.

But as many of you know, we also sell some crops a farmers' markets and to wholesale customers (co-ops, restaurants, etc.). We grow a wide variety of chiles, mainly for two value-added producers in the Twin Cities: Double Take Salsa and Lucky's Sauces. I'm discovering more and more that this crop enterprise requires a different management strategy than is required for CSA and farmers' markets, particularly when it comes to labor, as the harvest is tedious (some peppers are quite small), large in volume (many deliveries are over 1000 lbs), and periodic (we typically harvest these only every two weeks).

Last Monday was a good illustration of this. We were scheduled to harvest and deliver Anaheim/Hatch chiles for Double Take Salsa. The last harvest was 1,400 lbs, and I suspected this one would be bigger. In order to get this done, on a day when our main crew was busy harvesting crops for CSA boxes, we brought in a contract labor crew that we had already hired several times this season. The crew is comprised of Hmong-Americans, mostly women, who have been farming their

What's in the box?

Assorted tomatoes: You're receiving some combination of red slicing, heirloom, and paste tomatoes. Store in a cool place in your kitchen, but ideally not in your fridge.

Green top carrots: At long last, we've got some carrots for you. Good for snacking or slivering on a salad. The greens are nutritious albeit a little bitter and can be put into a green smoothie.

Sweet corn: Last week's newsletter gave warning of the raccoon threat to our sweet corn crop. They took out over 50% of the ears and we were left with a very sweet but limited supply of corn—sorry we couldn't give you more. A portion of the ears have poor tip fill due to incomplete pollination, so kernels will be absent from the tip of these ears. The rest of it will be delicious, however.

Cilantro: This is a staple for most tomatillo recipes out there. As usual, store in a plastic bag in the fridge—it should keep pretty well for about a week.

Yellow wax beans: These mild-flavored, yellow beans can be used similarly to green beans. Steam and lightly dress for a simple side dish. To maximize shelf life, we don't wash beans, so you'll want to rinse these before use

Cherry tomatoes: You're receiving either red cherry or Sun Gold cherry tomatoes this week. Pretty sure you know what to do with these at this point ;-)

Tomatillos: Tomatillos are related to tomatoes but are more tart and well suited to making salsa, green enchilada sauce, and cooked Mexican dishes. Slide the papery husks off, rinse the slightly sticky residue off the tomatillo, and then dice and use to your liking.

Serrano peppers: While we try not to overwhelm you with hot peppers—last year's surveys indicated most CSA members do not eat hot peppers like I do—serranos are a nice addition to green salsa, this week's recipe. If this is more than you can use in 1-2 weeks, toss them in a ziplock bag and freeze for later use. You can substantially diminish the heat by removing seeds and membrane. Remember to wash your hands with soap right after handling these to remove the capsaicin.

Zucchini and Hurakan summer squash

Slicing cucumbers

Broccoli

On Deck

Each week, we'll give some hints about what new items may show up CSA shares in the next 1-2 weeks. Please note, this is not a guarantee, but our attempt to give you an idea of what's coming up.

Fennel — Melons — Colored bell peppers — Red potatoes

entire lives. We are one of several farms in the area that hire this group to help us catch up on weeding or large, time-consuming harvests. On Monday, eight of us picked Anaheim chiles for almost six hours, bringing in over 2,800 lbs of chiles — that's about 160 bushes! For a small farm like ours, this is quite a feat.

While I wouldn't want to pick chiles all day, every day (it's hard on the back!) there was something very fun and invigorating about the process. And we achieved a degree of efficiency that often lacks in the highly diverse harvests for CSA and farmers' markets. We picked box after box, continually training our eyes to see the ripe peppers, refining our technique for jostling the plants around to find the hidden fruits, never needing to stop for transitions. We had one full-time "runner" facilitating the whole process; this person schlepped full boxes out of the field, replenished each harvester with empty boxes, drove a truckload of peppers to the packing shed to be weighed and moved into the cooler, and then returned to the field to repeat the process.

While this wholesale model has its perks and will likely remain a part of our operation, our CSA program gives us a degree of stability, community connection, and diversity that is crucial to our farm's success. If a severe weather event or pest outbreak were to affect our pepper crop, and if peppers were our only enterprise, we'd be in trouble. However, a diverse crop mix ensures that, even if we lose some crops unexpectedly, others will likely be ok and we should be able to fill a CSA box. Thank you for your support, and enjoy this week's box, filled with produce harvested from bountiful fields!

Have a good week,

—Dana

Salsa Verde (Tomatillo Salsa)

(We received a lot of good feedback on this recipe last season, so we're re-running it this year.) Salsa verde is a classic component of Mexican cuisine. It's used in tacos, enchiladas, chilaquiles, and tamales. Also tasty as a dip for chips! If you have any onions leftover from last week's box, here's a great way to use some.

Ingredients

8 ounces (5 to 6 medium) tomatillos, husked and rinsed
2 serrano peppers, stemmed
5 or 6 sprigs fresh cilantro, rinsed and roughly chopped
Scant 1/4 cup finely chopped onion
Salt

Directions

Whether you choose the verdant, slushy, herby freshness of the all-raw tomatillo salsa or the oil-colored, voluptuous, sweet-sour richness of the roasted version, tomatillos are about brightening tang. The buzz of the fresh hot green chile adds thrill, all of which adds up to a condiment most of us simply don't want to live without.

For the raw version: Roughly chop the tomatillos and the chiles. In a blender or food processor, combine the tomatillos, chiles, cilantro and 1/4 cup water. Process to a coarse puree, then scrape into a serving dish. Rinse the onion under cold water, then shake to remove excess moisture. Stir into the salsa and season with salt, usually a generous 1/4 teaspoon.

For the Roasted version:

Preheat a broiler.

Roast the tomatillos and chiles on a baking sheet 4 inches below a very hot broiler until darkly roasted, even blackened in spots, about 5 minutes. Flip them over and roast the other side, 4 to 5 minutes more will give you splotchy-black and blistered tomatillos and chiles. In a blender or food processor, combine the tomatillos and chiles, including all the delicious juice that has run onto the baking sheet. Add the cilantro and 1/4 cup water, blend to a coarse puree, and scrape into a serving dish. Rinse the onion under cold water, then shake to remove the excess moisture. Stir into the salsa and season with salt, usually a generous 1/4 teaspoon.

Recipe source: <http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/salsa-verde-green-tomatillo-salsa-recipe>