



WEEK OF AUGUST 30, 2021, 2021 #35/52

Variety is the Spice of Life

Experiencing and learning about the differences in fruits and vegetables based on the variety we choose, or how we treat the plant, or what the season looks like, has become an exciting fascination for me. Much like wine, with its different grape varietals, or vineyard locations, and production methods, so many things can make a world of difference in the bottle. And that applies to fruits and vegetables too. I was thinking about this last week while talking to Stan Devoto, of Devoto Orchards and gardens, where our apples come from. He was telling me about the many varieties of apples he grows, explaining what makes them unique, and sharing their flavor profiles. It was pure



joy listening to him. Watching the passion light up his face reminded me so much of Nigel years ago talking about his tomatoes. Now I find myself getting excited to experience the differences in the varieties we are growing, and tasting and watching how

they change as they mature. Personally, I look for a tomato that isn't just sweet like candy. I prefer good acid balance, strong tomato flavor with a decent amount of sweet. But I know many people love the tomatoes that taste like "candy" and so as a "farmer" I need to make sure we don't only grow what I like. But no matter where your taste preference lies, when we eat fresh from the farm, we are eating tasty tomatoes and that is key. We all know the difference between store bought, mealy inside, flavorless tomatoes and ones that grow in good soil and ripen in the warmth of the sun. Good tomatoes are pure joy.

The average person takes most of the food they eat for granted. For us, and by us I am talking about all of us involved with a CSA, what we eat changes with the seasons, the flavors change *throughout* a season, and we have learned enough to taste all of that. Each year, I find there are new and different things I look for in what we grow. As an example, we grew two new varieties of cucumbers, the Diva (which has been showing up in your boxes) and a small amount of Unagi as an experiment. Both are described as thin skinned cucumbers, low seeds. Tasting them, while paying attention to those feature, I would say that is true, but most importantly, they have great flavor and good crunch. I am also looking to see how big they get, and how do they hold up.

A fine example of how we treat a plant, or as in this case, trees, having an effect came from our stone fruit. Because of the hard pruning we did last winter, we were rewarded with a great crop of decent looking fruit that also had

superior flavor. And that happened simply because of how we pruned the trees.

The past few years I have not been thrilled with some of the potato varieties we were growing, especially the fingerlings. Funny, because I normally love fingerlings. But they come in too late for us, and I believe our long hot summer is not the right situation for them. Too often they came out of the ground green, and soft and the sizing was all over the place. I found that to be true with our German Butterballs as well. So this year we grew all new varieties for us. Again, I have been watching them, looking at their sizing, how many are coming out of the ground really huge, how many really small. Are they firm, or soft, a little green? Honestly, they have been pretty fantastic! The only one that was a disappointment to me was the red potato, the Crimson King. Maybe that was more of a personal preference, I just didn't like them, and



I really missed our Desiree's which I couldn't get this year. But other than that one, all of the yellow potatoes have been amazing, fairly uniform in size, nice and firm, holding up well in the cooler and all of them delicious. I will definitely plant those three again next year!

There is so much great food in the world, when you know what and where to look for it. Being a part of CSA means you get to experience that on a regular basis, and after you belong to a CSA for several years, you will find your mouth watering in anticipation of that next season which is just around the corner! Sweet Potatoes and Butternuts, I'm looking forward to you!



Farm Fresh Kittens

Two weeks ago we found a couple of tiny kittens. We have bottle fed them, loved them, bathed and de-flea'd them. They are now starting to eat actual food, weaned from the bottle,

and so it is time to find a good home for them. Farm kittens make the best pets, I know, I have had several. Anyone looking to add a fur baby to their family? Please let us know.

RECIPES AND IDEAS FROM ELISE

I've been visiting some family in the Mid-West and Southern United States this past week (I'm writing this from Western Kentucky), and boy, have I been enjoying all the down-home cooking! There's truly something so nourishing about classic, simple recipes that've stayed almost the same for generations on end. My dad was one of twelve children, so this side of the family has a *lot* of good cooks. I thought I'd share a few recipes that are full of southern comfort this week.

And as the storms start rolling in from Hurricane Ida, I'm thinking of any of you who have family in Louisiana who might be affected.

Extra Crunchy Fried Tomatoes

Recipe adapted from Taste of the South

We've all heard of fried green tomatoes, but there's no harm in breading and frying a fresh red tomato too!

16 (1/2-inch-thick) slices **tomato**
2 teaspoons kosher salt, divided
1 cup all-purpose flour
1 cup whole buttermilk
1 teaspoon hot sauce
1 large egg
2 cups panko (*can use other breadcrumbs but these do make it extra crispy*)
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
Vegetable oil, for frying

Line a baking sheet with several layers of paper towels; top with a wire rack. Place tomato slices on prepared rack; sprinkle with 1 teaspoon salt. Let stand 30 minutes. Pat dry with a paper towel. In a shallow dish, place flour. In a medium bowl, whisk together buttermilk, hot sauce, and egg. In another shallow dish, stir together panko, remaining 1 teaspoon salt, and pepper. Dredge tomato slices in flour, shaking off excess. Dip each tomato slice in buttermilk mixture, allowing excess to drip off. Dredge in panko mixture, gently pressing mixture to tomatoes. Return tomatoes to prepared rack. In a large Dutch oven, add oil to halfway full. Heat over medium-high heat until a deep-fry thermometer reads 360°. Working in batches, carefully place tomatoes in hot oil, being careful not to overcrowd pan. Cook, turning occasionally, until golden brown, approximately 2 minutes. (Adjust heat as needed to maintain 360°.) Remove with a slotted spoon; let drain on prepared pan.

Potato Salad

Recipe adapted from Meiko and the Dish

5lb **potatoes** cleaned, peeled, cut into 1/2" cubes
32 ounces chicken stock
2 tbsp + 1 1/2 tsp salt divided
1 bay leaf
5 hard boiled eggs: 4 peeled, diced, and chilled; 1 sliced for garnish
2 celery stalks (*can actually sub this out for some diced cucumber for a similar crunch*)
1 cup sweet relish
1 1/2 cups mayonnaise (*the original recipe and many of my aunts will insist Miracle Whip is the way to go— you do you*)
1/3 cup mustard
2 tbsp hot sauce of choice, optional
3-4 cloves of **garlic**, finely diced
1/2 tsp celery seed

Black pepper to taste
Paprika to garnish
Parsley to garnish

Place potatoes and chicken stock in a medium pot. If the potatoes aren't fully submerged, add enough water to cover potatoes by an inch. Add 2 tbsp salt and the bay leaf, cover with a lid. Turn heat to high. Once boiling, remove the lid, reduce the heat to medium, and cook for 14-15 minutes or until the potatoes are just tender. To test for doneness, pierce a potato with a fork; there should be little resistance but it should retain its shape. When ready, transfer the potatoes to a colander and drain. Spread the potatoes out on a sheet pan to cool until they're at room temperature, then transfer to the fridge. In a bowl, combine celery, relish, mayo, mustard, hot sauce, garlic, celery seed, salt, and pepper and mix until combined. Chill this in the fridge. Once both potatoes and dressing are cool, remove from fridge. In a large bowl, add a third of the potatoes and dressing and mix until combined.

Use the back of a wooden spoon to slightly mash potatoes. Add another third of potatoes, half the chopping eggs, and dressing, and fold them in. Finally fold in all remaining potatoes, dressing, and eggs. Top with the sliced egg and torn parsley, and sprinkle with celery seed and lots of paprika. Cover and refrigerate until chilled or ready to serve.

Cardamom Plum Iced Tea

Recipe from the Spice House

I like this spin on sweet tea that will use up more of the stone fruit in your box!

For syrup:

1 cup sugar
1 1/4 cup water
3 **plums**

4-6 green cardamom pods

Optional: cinnamon stick

For tea:

5 cups water
4 black tea bags
3 cups ice cubes

To make syrup:

Slice plums in half, remove pits, and slice each plum into 6 wedges. Gently crush cardamom pods with the side of a chef's knife, mortar and pestle, or the bottom of a sauté pan. You want to lightly crush the inner seeds so they will release their flavor more easily. Add 1 1/4 cups of water and 1 cup of sugar to a small sauce pot. Turn heat on low and whisk until sugar is dissolved. Add spices and sliced plums to the pot. Gently simmer for 20-30 minutes. Remove from heat, and cool the syrup for a few minutes before straining through a fine mesh sieve. Store in a squeeze bottle or sealable container.

To make iced tea:

Bring 3 cups of water to a boil. (Keep 2 cups of cool water on the side.) In a large pitcher, steep tea bags in hot water for 3 minutes. Remove tea bags, add ice cubes and cool water. Store in refrigerator to keep cool and chill further.

This Week's Box List

Tomatoes
Garlic
Sage
Parsley
Peppers
*Potatoes
*Cherry Tomatoes
*Plums
*Basil
*Parsley
*Zucchini or Cucumber
*Grapes

* = Items in Box for 2

Additional Ideas:
Tex Mex Jalapeños
Sage Brown Butter Sauce
Southern Zucchini Hoecakes
Southern Tomato Gravy