



WEEK OF JULY 18TH 2016 #28/52



**Heirloom Tomatoes**  
 They really should be enjoyed as simply as possible. They are typically so juicy they make most dishes pretty wet. I love them best, sliced rather thick, laid out on a platter, drizzled with a little bit of really rich tasting olive oil, a good sprinkling of our Lavender Salt and some freshly ground Black Pepper. If you have some great tasting crusty bread and a hunk of good, sharp cheese, well you won't be wanting much more than that - except maybe a glass of wine. Some of the Heirloom Tomato varieties arriving in your boxes include Black and Red Brandywines, Costoluto Genovese, Copia, and Green Zebras.



### Don't Call It Dirt

In the 9+ years I have been involved with Nigel, I have seen many changes around our farm. Much of the acreage around us has been converted to walnut orchard. I see plot after plot (ok probably not the farmer term, but after all I am really just a City kid) get ripped. "Ripping" is when they take the deep cultivators through the fields to turn up the soil and really dig in deep (I have learned a few things). After that long process, rows are put in, and next the trees are planted. One section down the road, on the nearest corner from us, they ran a ripper day and night for months. Seriously, at least two months, I can't imagine what their diesel bill was like! The sad thing is, this older idea of deeply breaking up the soil before planting trees is so disruptive, disastrous actually, to all of the biology in that soil. In the soil class I took a year ago, I learned how important it is to disturb the soil as little as possible. In doing so, you kill the bacteria, fungi, protozoa, worms, nematodes, etc. and that my friends, is your soil biology. This intricate web of soil life is one of the most interesting things I have ever studied (not claiming to be an expert, still very much a novice here). It is an excellent example of the incredible intelligence of Mother Nature. To explain it really simply, in healthy soil you will find an incredible variety of bacteria and fungi living close to the roots of a plant. Some actually bore into the roots and live in a symbiotic state with the plant, the plants will send sugars down into the roots to feed the bacteria and fungi. In the meantime, they attract protozoa and nematodes etc, which like to feed on them, but the protozoa and nematodes release nitrogen in the forms the plants require. The protozoa and nematodes also form a protective wall around the root system effectively keeping pests away. This is truly a very simplistic explanation of all that goes on, but even still, it is fascinating. And all of this fantastic biology that goes on in the soil creates microscopic pockets for water to be stored, it creates glue to hold soil structure together - humus -humic acid. The balance is truly mind blowing and it is all absolutely necessary for healthy top soil. This is the true biology of life, the plant takes energy from the sun, sends energy to feed its friends down in the roots, the party goes playing around the roots system keep the bad guys out, sequester carbon, retain water, and feed the plant! So remember, when it is healthy, working the way nature intended, it isn't dirt, dirt is dead. It is beautiful living soil, and ultimately it is SOIL that Nigel and I are growing here on the farm - the produce we all enjoy every week, is the bonus reward.



### Cooking with the Kids

There is tremendous benefit to getting kids into the kitchen and they can start at a much younger age than most parents realize. With a bit of common sense, you can easily give them tasks to help out with meal preparation. Off the top of my head, during tomato season, I would suggest taking the little green tops off of the cherry tomatoes. That would be a great job for the really young. When they get a little older teach them good knife skills, because it is better to learn early and get years of practice with an adult to guide them. Nowadays, there are knives made specially for children that are a bit safer to use. I have learned that one of the best ways to get kids to eat foods they think they don't like, is to have them either make an entire dish, or help to make a dish using those not so loved ingredients. It amazes me how often a child will eat something they don't like, just because they helped make it. So much can be taught through cooking: math, reading, vocabulary, time management, process organization - what task comes first, what can you save for last etc. In the beginning it might take you a little more time showing them what and how to do things. In the long run, with just a little bit of help, meal preparation can go a lot quicker. Plus it is time spent together. All this in mind, Elianna from Bay Leaf Kitchen is working on some kid approved recipes (I have included some of the camp recipes the last couple of weeks), that I hope to feature as often as possible. I will try to remember to make a note that it is a kid friendly recipe. Lastly, let them be creative and work on their own recipes. I am always pleasantly surprised with what the kids create here on the farm during their two days of camp. The kids put together some really delicious, creative stuff. So invite the little ones into the kitchen and I doubt you will regret it.



WE WELCOME YOUR COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS!

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## Recipes and Menu Suggestions

Peach & Plum Caprese Salad; serve as a side dish with grilled fish

Uses: Peaches, Plum and Basil

Simple Roasted Potatoes, Sautéed Zucchini with Mint, Basil and Pine Nuts; serve as an accompaniment to a Lemon Roasted Chicken

Uses: Zucchini, Eggplant, Basil, Potatoes

Gratin of Tomatoes, Eggplant and Stir Fry Mix; serve mixed with smaller pasta for a more complete meal, or a side dish to a protein, lamb, pork chops, or grilled tofu

Uses: Red Tomatoes, Cherry Tomatoes, Eggplant, Stir Fry Mix, Onion

**All recipes can be found at: [www.eatwell.com](http://www.eatwell.com) under the "CSA Farm Box" tab. Just click "Recipes."**

## A Note From Lorraine

Full disclosure, I have a thing for cornflakes and peaches. I don't normally eat cereal, except well made granola. When I smell peaches ripening on the counter, I immediately crave cornflakes. Mind you I do buy the organic version, so at least there is that. I have always thought breakfast cereal is one of the food world's biggest ripoffs. They charge a crazy amount of money for some of the world's cheapest ingredients. And of course, the cereal aisle tends to be filled with pure junk, all marketed at little kids, pretty awful. But I always say, all things in moderation, so if you are like me, and you love cornflakes and peaches, let those beauties sit out on the counter for a couple of days, turn them every day so they don't bruise or mold and enjoy! I will.

## Peach & Plum Caprese Salad

Love and Lemons

I have to head into town later today, I think I will pick up some fresh Mozzarella and give this one a try.

Ripe Peaches

Ripe Plums

Fresh Mozzarella

Handful of Basil Leaves

Drizzle of Olive Oil

Sea Salt and freshly ground Black Pepper

Slice peaches, plums and mozzarella into bit sized pieces and assemble the salad with with basil leaves in between. Drizzle salad with olive oil and season with salt and pepper.

## Sautéed Zucchini with Mint, Basil, and Pine Nuts

Recipe from Vegetable Literacy by Deborah Madison; serves 2

In the book, Deborah Madison suggests adding spoonfuls of ricotta as an option to the eggplant. She also says this dish makes a great salad or side dish, or mix into small shape pasta.

1 lb Zucchini, any color or variety

1 small Eggplant, sliced

3 TB Olive Oil

3 small cloves Garlic

10 Mint leaves

5 Basil leaves

1 heaping TB Capers, rinsed

2 TB Pine Nuts or Walnuts, lightly toasted

1 or 2 tsp Red Wine Vinegar

Sea Salt and freshly ground Black Pepper

Additional Mint and Basil leaves, slivered or torn, to finish

Slice the zucchini into rounds a scant 1/2" thick. Heat the oil in a 10" skillet over medium high heat. When the oil is hot, add the zucchini and eggplant, and sauté flipping and turning every few minutes, until golden brown about 15 minutes. They won't necessarily cook evenly. Meanwhile, chop together the garlic, mint, basil and capers and toast pine nuts. When the zucchini is golden, add the herb-garlic mixture and the vinegar to taste and toss well. Taste for salt and season with pepper. Turn onto a plate. If you're not going to eat the zucchini right away, cover and let stand at room temperature or in the refrigerator, then finish with the pine nuts and the mint and basil just before serving.

## Simple Roasted Potatoes

Farm House Kitchen

Wash Potatoes, if they are bigger than bite size, cut them to be. Put them into a pot of cold water, add some salt and bring to a boil. Turn the heat down to a bare simmer and cook until tender. While the potatoes are cooking, heat the oven to 425 F. Drain the potatoes really well. While they are draining, heat an appropriately sized skillet on the stove top with a good lug of olive oil. Once the potatoes are drained, carefully toss them into the hot skillet, be careful not to splatter the oil on yourself! Salt potatoes to your liking. You can cook the potatoes on the stove top if you don't want to heat the oven, keep the heat medium high and don't turn until they have a good color on the bottom. Usually shaking the pan back and forth will let you know if the potatoes are ready to move. If you want to do them in the oven, pop the skillet into the preheated oven and roast. In about 10 minutes check them by shaking, remember the hot pads! Can't tell you how many times I have stupidly grabbed the handle of an oven hot skillet :( If they move readily try to toss them around either by shaking the pan back and forth or use a spatula. Roast another 10 minutes more or less, checking to see if they are as done as you like.

## Gratin of Tomatoes, Eggplant and Stir Fry Mix (Chard)

Recipe from Vegetable Literacy by Deborah Madison

So often it is the case - look for one recipe in a cookbook and find several. I realize this is the second recipe with eggplant, but it just works so well with everything in the box.

And maybe you didn't use all of your eggplant in the last dish, or you want another option.

1 1/2 lb Eggplant

Sea Salt

Sunflower or Olive Oil

2 TB Olive Oil

1 small finely diced Onion

10 to 12 cups coarsely chopped Stir Fry Mix (It calls for chard, but the stir fry mix will be a great substitute)

Freshly ground Black Pepper

Several large Basil Leaves, torn

1 or 2 large Tomatoes, sliced 1/4" thick

4 oz fresh Mozzarella, sliced

Handful of Cherry Tomatoes

1 cup fresh Bread Crumbs

Slice the eggplant into round a scant 1/2" thick. You should have 8 to 10 slices. Heat a ridged cast-iron pan over medium high heat. While the pan is heating, brush both sides of eggplant slices with the sunflower oil. When the pan is hot, add the slices and cook for 6 to 7 minutes, rotating them 45 degrees and then cooking for another 5 to 7 minutes. Turn the slices over and cook on the second side the same way. The second side may take less time because the pan will have amassed more heat OR you can brush the round and bake in a 375 F oven until nicely colored, 25 minutes or so. Heat 1 TB of the olive oil in a wide skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, for 3 minutes. Add the greens a few pinches of salt, cover and cook until the greens are wilted and tender. Put into a colander or sieve set over a bowl to drain, then press with the back of a spoon to remove some of the liquid. It needn't be bone-dry, as it will give moisture to the dish. Heat the oven to 350 F. Lightly oil a round or oval gratin dish large enough to hold 6 to 8 cups. Cover the gratin dish with half the eggplant slices and season with salt and pepper. Scatter the basil, then layer half of the tomato slices on top, followed by half of the mozzarella. Season again with salt and pepper. Strew the greens over the cheese layer and season lightly with salt and pepper. Layer the remaining eggplant round, followed by the remaining tomato slices, and cheese. Tuck any small whole tomatoes here and there among the vegetable. Toss the bread crumbs with the remaining olive oil to moisten and strew them over the surface. Bake until bubbly and the bread crumbs are browned, about 35 minutes. Let settle 10 minutes or so before serving.

### This Week's Box List

Cherry Tomatoes

Red Tomatoes

Heirloom Tomatoes

Eggplant

Summer Squash

Potatoes

Green Onions

Stir Fry Mix

Basil

Peaches

Plums

Strawberries

Bonus: Cucumbers