



Predictions

One of the jobs farmers juggle each week is trying to predict what and how much of their crops they will have ready to harvest and sell. They walk their fields and orchards, look, touch, taste, smell and make an educated guess. But there are a few factors that can turn it all upside down. If you have grown zucchini in your garden, you know what happens in a day or two of heat wave weather, you end up with monsters! But what happens if the late summer sunshine turns to unexpected cool temps and gray skies? Summer crops grow much more slowly. Case in point, Terra Firma's green beans last week, what they had scheduled to sell literally didn't grow, and they couldn't fill their orders.

Right now we have a lot of beautiful tomatoes and peppers and a lot still coming on. It is my hope to have tomatoes for the next many weeks. Since we are always one of the last farms to start our tomato season, it would be great to be one of the last to have them available at the end of the season. But again, it is hard to predict, and who knows what mother nature will bring us, will it be lovely mildly hot days? I hope so.

In October, we are collaborating with Sustainable Solano and a couple of local restaurants on a few dinner events. Chefs have to plan their menus for the dinners, which means they need to know what we will have available several weeks from now. Making those predictions is tricky, I will have to look into my crystal ball and hope I get it right. Ordering directly from farms can be tricky for a chef. When restaurants order from their wholesalers, they can feel pretty certain they will get most of what they order. Wholesalers can order from farms far and wide, so if our particular area gets hit by a freak storm, they can reach out to farms in other regions of the state. Ultimately, it takes a special chef to know how to roll with availability and taking advantage of peak season produce.

As for my attempt at predicting, I am going to say it is looking like we will have a beautiful September and October, and I think we will be able to enjoy this summer's bounty well into next month, with the bonus of a few fall crops thrown into the mix!

Keeping It Simple

Thanks to those of you who sent me emails with your favorite simple ways to use items from the box. I think we might be on to something with this, so please keep the recipes coming.

What makes a dish simple? For the purpose of us all enjoying and making the most of our CSA box, I would say there are a few factors. Not too much hands on fussing. Recipe

that don't need a lot of focussed attention also make recipes simple, in my book. Great CSA recipes use a few, if not several, items from the box, and ultimately, don't require a lot of skill or technical knowledge. They can also teach us how to substitute ingredients and take advantage of what is in season. As an example, this time of year we have tomatoes in the box every week. How do you use those instead of opening a can of sauce? You can always roast them first. Roasting San Marzanos or Early Girls is great because the skins are easily plucked right off as soon as they are cool enough to grab. You can roast cherry tomatoes too, and love them whole, just put them on a rimmed baking sheet, toss in a little olive oil, salt and pepper. If you want to get fancy, you could throw in some herbs like thyme, sage or rosemary, then slow roast at 225 until they are bursting, wrinkling and yummy! Granted, you only get 1 pint of cherry tomatoes in the box, it might not seem worth it, but it is a fairly hands off way of dealing with/using an item in the box. Did you know you can slow roast, then preserve them in olive oil? Here is a [link](#) to a recipe that tells you exactly how to do that. And if you want to do a big batch to preserve and have for the Winter months, you can order Cherry Tomatoes as extras.

For those of you getting the family box this week, you will have beets in your box. My favorite way of eating beets is cooked and tossed with Sherry or Champagne Vinegar, a little olive oil and one of our salts, Rosemary, Lavender or Thyme are my favorites on Beets. I cook them in the Insta-Pot, or in a lidded pot with steamer basket. Don't bother peeling or chopping, just cut the greens off (save those, they are delicious sautéed), give them a quick rinse and pop them into the steamer. You can check them after about 30 minutes to get a sense of how far they've come by inserting a dinner knife, if it goes in easily you are good, if there is resistance, let it cook longer. Once they are done, let cool, then cut the tail and tops off, and using your fingers scrub the peel right off. Enjoy those purple fingers! At this point I cut the beets and season as I mentioned earlier. Store them in an air tight bowl and enjoy all week long. Alternatively, you can wrap them in foil with a drizzle of olive oil and roast them in the oven, but for some reason I never enjoy that process. I think the simplicity of checking how far along they are when they are in the steamer pot, is just that little bit of ease that makes me go for the steaming method. Find what feels right and what works for you.

Cooking should be comfortable and hopefully a little enjoyable. For me, when I have a chance to focus on cooking and doing so with a purpose, (like cooking for Saturday's Summer Harvest dinner) I literally feel like I am in a state of bliss and peace. When I have big events to cook for, I like to get up really early and start my day just before the sun comes up. There is something special that early in the

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morning, not yet bombarded or distracted by the chaos of the day, I can slowly gather my thoughts, put my game plan into action and get to work.

I know many of you have little ones, so finding your moment of zen in the kitchen is pretty impossible. I get that, so embrace this phase of your life and theirs, and see if there is a way to have you child/children help a little. Most kids love being a part of meal making, even if it is as simple as setting them up by the sink with a bowl of water to "wash" something. Don't worry if it isn't perfect, you can fix it later.

And if they are little, consider getting a child safe knife for them to use. Kids really love having their own tools to work with, and if you take it seriously, they will too. Soaking and scrubbing cucumbers, summer squash or potatoes is a great job for our youngest chefs! When your kids are a little older and can handle a knife on their own, ask if they would cube up summer squash, toss a little olive oil, salt and pepper, and roast in the oven at 375 until they reach the tenderness you prefer. Check in 10 minutes, use a long spoon or spatula to toss them a bit. As for those potatoes you had someone wash for you, gently simmer, drain, smash with a fork and serve with salt and butter. You can also now toss them with some olive oil and pop into the oven and roast until they get a little crispy!

What To Do With Spaghetti Squash

If you have never cooked spaghetti squash, you are in for a delicious, low-carb surprise. Wash the squash, then cut it in half lengthwise, scoop out the seeds. Brush it with a little olive oil and a sprinkling of salt and pepper, put cut side down on a roasting sheet and pop into the oven, preheated to 400, roast for 30 to 40 minutes. Flip them over and let cool enough to hold. Using a fork, scrape the flesh lengthwise into strands that look like spaghetti. Now you can top it with pesto, tomato sauce, roasted vegetables or butter and cheese!

Spaghetti Squash Gratin

Recipe by Martha Rose Shulman NYT Cooking

1 Spaghetti Squash, about 3 lbs

1 TB Extra Virgin Olive Oil

1 medium Onion, finely chopped

2 Garlic cloves, minced

Salt & Freshly ground Pepper

3 large Eggs

½ cup Milk

2 TB chopped fresh Basil (¼ cup basil leaves)

2 oz Gruyère cheese, grated (½ cup)

2 TB freshly grated Parmesan or Pecorino Romano

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Pierce the squash in several places with a sharp knife. Cover a baking sheet with foil, and place the squash on top. Bake for one hour, turning the squash every 20 minutes until it is soft and easy to cut into with a knife. Remove from the heat, and allow the squash to cool until you can handle it. Cut in half lengthwise, and allow to cool further. Remove the seeds and discard. Scoop out

the flesh, and place in a bowl. Run a fork through the flesh to separate the spaghetti-like strands, then chop coarsely. Measure out 4 cups squash. (Use whatever remains for another dish, or freeze.) Oil a 2-quart gratin or baking dish. Heat the oil over medium heat in a large, heavy skillet, and add the onion. Cook, stirring, until tender, about five minutes. Add the garlic and a generous pinch of salt. Cook, stirring, for another 30 seconds to a minute until fragrant. Add the squash. Cook, stirring often, for five minutes until the strands of squash are a little more tender. Season to taste with salt and pepper, and remove from the heat. Beat the eggs in a large bowl. Add the milk, salt (about ½ teaspoon), pepper and basil. Stir in the squash mixture and the Gruyère, and combine well. Scrape into the baking dish. Sprinkle the Parmesan or pecorino over the top, and gently press down to moisten. Bake 40 to 45 minutes until nicely browned and sizzling. Remove from the heat, and allow to cool for 10 to 15 minutes before serving. Serve hot, warm or room temperature.

Green Salad With

Tomato-Basil Vinaigrette

Recipe by Melissa Clark from NYT Cooking

1 cup diced ripe Tomatoes (or quartered cherry or grape tomatoes)

5 Garlic cloves

¼cup chopped fresh Basil

1 TB Sherry Vinegar, White Wine Vinegar or Apple Cider Vinegar, more to taste

Fine Sea Salt

5 oz fresh Baguette, Ciabatta or crusty Sourdough bread, torn into bite-size pieces (about 2 cups)

½ cup plus 3 TB Extra-Virgin Olive Oil, more as needed
2 qts Salad Greens, such as mixed Baby Lettuces, escallun, Arugula or a combination

¼ cup Parmesan shavings (optional)

In a large bowl, toss together tomatoes, 1 grated or minced garlic clove, basil, sherry vinegar and a pinch of salt. Set aside to marinate for at least 20 minutes (and up to 4 hours). Meanwhile, heat the oven to 325 degrees. Spread bread out on a baking sheet and bake until pale golden, 8 to 12 minutes. Smash and peel remaining 4 garlic cloves. Put them in a pan along with ½ cup olive oil and place over medium-low heat. Cook, shaking the pan occasionally, until the garlic turns pale golden in spots and starts to soften, 5 to 7 minutes. (Lower the heat if the garlic starts to brown.) Add toasted bread and salt to the pan and fry until the bread is deeply golden and crunchy, 3 to 5 minutes. If the pan looks dry, add a little more oil. Transfer croutons to a paper towel-lined plate and sprinkle lightly with salt. Let cool. Just before serving, whisk 3 tablespoons olive oil into the tomato and basil mixture. Taste and add more salt, vinegar or oil, if needed; it should taste bright and balanced. Add the greens, Parmesan (if using) and croutons (along with the fried garlic, if you like) to the tomato mixture, tossing gently to combine. Serve immediately.

This Week's Box

*Spaghetti Squash

*Cherry Or Heirloom-

Tomatoes

*Potatoes

*Grapes

*San Marzanos

*Bell Peppers

*Basil

Summer Squash Or

Cucumbers

Beets

Chard

Eggplant

*Box for 2