



THIS WEEK

May 4th Deliveries

Iowa Fresh CSA

Choice of romaine or red
leaf lettuce

Rhubarb

Baby boc choy

Gai lan (Chinese broccoli)

Iowa Fresh Farm News

Does anyone know the most popular item in the produce department? (Hint: It's still the same item that was at the top of the list some 25 years ago.) How about the second most popular? In terms of the second most popular item, our tastes have remained the same although we have refined them and now enjoy a multitude of varieties. (Hint: You will be receiving some at distribution this week.) More on this at the end of my news piece.

Thank heavens the adage about Iowa's weather (if you don't like what you're getting today, stick around and it'll change before long) has held up once again. We were actually getting cracks in the soil of some of the lower ground and wanting rain but now just as happy after four days to get a bit of a reprieve from it as well. The top soil is now recharged and dry enough that the last couple days have been spent either disking unplanted ground to get at the flush of new weed growth or cultivating, roho'ing etc. the current plantings. Today about all that is left is to take the hand tiller down between the beds of onions, leeks, and garlic to get after those weeds and then we should be on track once again. I like to try to get around to everything planted after each rain especially in the spring when weed growth is most active--not only does this get at the weeds that might just be germinating but also provides a "break" in the soil tension and thus conserves the moisture within the soil from all being drawn back up to the surface and lost. While planting has still been occurring (we planted the first sweet corn as well as the second planting of shell, sugar and sno peas yesterday), the yard has suffered (or flourished depending upon your perspective I guess). In any case it's time to get out the mower.

OK. The answer to the most popular item is banana... based on sales it's just as popular today as it was 25 years ago. Second place goes to lettuce with a slight derivation..... 25 years ago an iceberg or head lettuce found it's way into a good number of shopping carts, whereas today healthier choices such as varietal lettuces or salad mixes now seem to have taken over a number of these purchases.

Iowa Fresh Produce News, cont.

What to expect at this week's distribution:

Choice of romaine or red leaf lettuce
Rhubarb
Baby boc choi
Gai lan

Both baby boc choi and gai lan are crucifers (cabbage family) but mild in flavor. Both may be enjoyed in stir fries (add towards the end to avoid overcooking them) or boc choi is sometimes steamed either whole or halved and served with a bit of herbed butter and salt. Gai lan or Chinese broccoli resembles broccoli raab but is far milder in flavor. To me it has a flavor somewhat like a cross between broccoli and asparagus. The whole plant is eaten including the leaves, stem, and small floret at the top. Stems will take approximately 2-3 minutes to cook so I like to separate out the leaves and add them when the stems are almost done. Here again they can also be steamed, braised, or roasted as a separate vegetable on the plate and served with a pat of herbed butter.

For "herb butters" I like to use unsalted butter at room temperature. To this add whatever herbs of your choosing to your desired tastes and perhaps adjust with a bit of salt. After mixing, it stores best if kept refrigerated. We'll try to have some volunteer spring garlic, chives, etc. if you would like to try this. It's always good to have on hand to add your touch to any cooked vegetables.

Rhubarb, also know as the "pie plant," is much more versatile than strictly a pie plant. It is readily adaptable to quick breads, sauces to top ice cream or toast, even added to cakes and bars. Its main requirement is to be accompanied with sugar, and plenty of it, which makes this a spring tonic plant that many anticipate each spring.

Hopefully you'll be able to duck the rain clouds this weekend.

Bruce

Bring Us Your SPF Egg Cartons

For those of you with Small Potatoes Farm egg shares, please remember to bring your empty egg cartons to the site so Rick and Stacy can reuse them.

To Contact Farm to Folk

If you have any questions, please contact:

Marilyn Andersen
Coordinator
Email:
marilyn@farmtofolk.com

www.farmtofolk.com

Phone: 515-388-5501
Cell: 515-460-7273

Tomoko's News

In addition to pursuing my interest in baking, Farm to Folk has also been providing me the opportunity to work on a project for Practical Farmers of Iowa (PFI) to investigate the possibility for Iowa grown cover crop grains to be used as food. So far, I've been using two different varieties of hard red winter wheat and buckwheat from Iowa farmers in my ciabatta bread.

Making ciabatta starts with preparing biga (pre-ferment), which consists of whole wheat flour from Iowa (I alternate between wheat from Steenblocks in Kanawha and Dahls in Rolfe); rye flour from Pauls' Grains; high gluten flour and all-purpose flour from Heartland Mill in Marienthal, Kansas; water; and active dry yeast. In addition, buckwheat ciabatta contains buckwheat flour (20%) from Hafners in Panora. Whole wheat ciabatta has 20% whole-wheat flour from the above-mentioned farms. I grind wheat berries every week, thanks to Helen Gunderson who has generously been lending me her household-sized mill.

There seems to be a growing interest in locally grown small grains. Grain CSAs are emerging in different parts of the country. These CSAs usually provide a share of small grains, flours, and beans. University of Maine Extension received a USDA grant to investigate local organic bread wheat production. While the argument for terroir of wine or cheese is widely mentioned, terroir of bread does not seem to get the spotlight too often. Sure, Iowa climate may not be suited to produce wheat that works best for mass production or for certain recipes which require very specific protein levels, moisture content, ash content, etc.). But Iowa grown grains may create bread that can only be tasted in Iowa.

There are many obstacles for Iowa-grown small grains, especially related to economic feasibility and lack of small-scale processors who can clean, store, and mill grains. However, I'm excited to continue exploring the possibilities for Iowa-grown cover crop small grains.

If you have any questions or comments about the cover crop small grain project or my products, please let me know. I'd love to talk with you!

References:

- Byczynski, L. "Growing grains for local markets" *Growing for Market*. Vol 18. No.8. September 2009. Lawrence, KS: Fairplain Publications, Inc.
- Kiley Mack, S. "Dollars target organic bread wheat in Maine." *Bangor Daily News*. November 2, 2009.
- Lewis, J. "Bringing Wheat Back to our Backyard." *Edible San Louis Obispo*, Winter 2009.

Food Around Town

Wheatsfield Grocery (413 Northwestern) is holding free one-hour cooking classes and demonstrations every Tuesday evening from 7 to 8 PM. Here is their schedule for May. RSVP to a cashier or customer service.

May 4

Local Spring Green: Part of our seasonal cooking series

Donna Prizgintas

Join Donna as she introduces us to the bounty of fresh wild greens outside our own backdoor. Learn about eating, cooking and harvesting stinging nettles and dandelion greens. As always Chef Donna will have the class taste and explore wonderful food possibilities with her down to earth recipes.

May 11

Black Gold: A Film about Coffee and Trade

Movie

In this eye-opening expose of the multi-billion dollar industry, Black Gold traces one man's, Tadesse Meskela, fight for a fair price. The enormous power of the multinational players that dominate the world's coffee trade is exposed as one of the many challenges encountered in the quest for a long term solution for these coffee farmers.

In coordination with World Fair Trade Day.
Free popcorn.

May 18

Rhubarb! Rhubarb! Rhubarb!: Part of our seasonal cooking series

Donna Prizgintas

Chef Donna Prizgintas will share some of her favorite rhubarb recipes. Whether you can't get enough of the stuff or are trying to appreciate bountiful local produce, you'll be sure to go home with plenty of inspiration and a few new recipes.

May 25

Acid Alkaline Imbalance

Wellness Staff

Over-acidity, which can become a dangerous condition that weakens all body systems, is very common today. It gives rise to an internal environment conducive to disease, as opposed to a pH balanced environment which allows normal body function necessary for the body to resist disease. Come learn how a healthy body maintains adequate alkaline reserves to meet emergency demands. Our Wellness Staff will explain how a pH balanced diet is a vital key to health maintenance.

Gai Lan with Crispy Garlic (from www.epicurious.com)

Chef's Tip: Gai lan is also known as "Chinese broccoli." If gai lan is not available, substitute bok choy, broccoli, or broccoli rabe. Editor's note: Use both your gai lan and your bok choy in this dish!

2 TBSP vegetable oil
3 Garlic cloves, thinly sliced
1/4 tsp red pepper flakes
1 1/2 pounds Gai lan, tough stem ends trimmed
3 TBSP Rice wine or dry white wine
2 TBSP Tamari (soy sauce)

Heat a large pan or wok over high heat. When hot, add oil and swirl to coat bottom.

When oil is hot but not smoking, add the garlic and red pepper flakes. Cook, stirring constantly, until the garlic is golden, about 3 minutes. Do not overcook the garlic.

Remove the garlic to paper towels to drain but keep the oil in pan.

Add the gai lan and 2 tablespoons of the wine and cook, tossing and stirring to prevent scorching, until tender, about 5 minutes.

Add the tamari and the remaining wine; cook 1 minute.

Transfer to warm serving platter and sprinkle with the reserved garlic.