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PRAIRIE SUN FARM

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The Food Issue

We've talked a lot about issues with our food supply in the weekly newsletter. We've tried to educate our customers about current food news, studies and where food comes from. But we still think more information is needed. So we were very excited when we saw the Minnesota Conservation Volunteer magazine actually devote an issue that centered on food. "The Food Issue" covered farm bill legislation, wild food, native cuisine, hunting and how it all affects what's on your table. Food and feeding people are complex topics. Take farm subsidies for instance. They keep farmers employed and provide abundant harvests but they also create a lack of diversity because they favor certain crops. They create cheap soda because of high fructose corn syrup but they do nothing for organic vegetables. Here's a good example from "The Food Issue". A Twinkie has 37 ingredients of which at least 14 are subsidized. Between 1995 and 2010, \$16.9 billion in federal tax dollars subsidized such products. In contrast, apples received \$262 million during that time. If those dollars were distributed to the nation's 144 million people each consumer would get \$7.36 to buy Twinkies and 11 cents for apples. Don't you think we should be spending our tax dollars on something other than subsidized crops which create some of the bad food out there? We could do a lot better spending our tax dollars on incentives for farmers which actually create healthy food alternatives. These incentives could also create wildlife habitats and healthier soils by encouraging conservation. With high corn prices and current incentives we are doing just the opposite. There is less diversity and more corn. It is a dangerous trend and ultimately becomes a food issue. It needs to change.

WEEK 15 BOX CONTENTS

- Potatoes:** Russet. If you get any with green spots just peel or cut off before cooking. The potato is fine to eat but the green part is not. Store away from light. No need to peel.
- Parsley:** Parsley brightens flavors and adds balance to any savory dish. It's also good for digestion.
- Broccoli:** Broccoli freezes well. Cut into florets and slice stems. Blanch for 3-4 minutes, rinse in cold water, let dry, and place in an airtight container before putting in the freezer.
- Brussels Sprouts:** To prepare for cooking, pare off the tough bottom part of the sprout stem and remove the outmost leaves.
- Winter Squash:** Dark green acorn variety. Save the seeds you scoop out. These seeds make a great snack. Wash and roast like you would pumpkin seeds.
- Tomatoes:** Mix of heirloom and round red. This would be a good week to freeze a few for a winter treat.
- Leeks:** Leeks are a part of the onion family and have a sweet delicate flavor when cooked. Clean them well as dirt can collect between the layers. Time for potato leek soup?
- Sweet Peppers:** Bell peppers or red 'Carmen' peppers.
- Spinach:** Spinach likes this cooler weather and gets a thicker leaf with a sweeter taste.
- Garlic:** Sauté just until translucent, it will burn quickly producing a bitter flavor. Garlic stores well in a cool, dry and well ventilated place for several months.

Farm News

There's a chance of frost tonight so we covered the peppers and tomatoes in the field to try and extend the harvest a little longer. We have a lot of good crops still on the plants. They are green and healthy. We know it's only a matter of time before we do get a hard frost but hopefully it's not for a week or two. We did get all the winter squash out of the field. And we still have tomatoes and peppers in the greenhouse too. So we'll have plenty of produce for the remaining 4 weeks. There is lettuce, spinach, beets and broccoli in the field too all of which handle the cold a little better. We finally got all of our fall cover crops planted. The tillage radish, oats and peas in next year's garden are filling in nicely. We got rye and vetch planted in other areas. And we planted 4 acres with an organic hay mix. Just in time for the ½ inch of rain we got. Our fields will just be turning green as all the corn and soybeans are harvested around us leaving bare ground for the winter. We like seeing the ground covered much better. It collects moisture, provides for habitat and sure looks nice in the spring. Grow plants grow! The cold is coming.

From the Kitchen

Vegetable Stock

This is a basic vegetable stock recipe from the Foodchannel.com there are many variations you can try. I use whatever leftover vegetables that I have on hand to make veg stock then I freeze it and use it later in soups and stews.

Ingredients:

2 large leeks, trimmed and carefully washed
2 large carrots, sliced
2 large celery stalks, sliced
2 large yellow onions, sliced
3 garlic cloves, unpeeled
3 fresh flat-leaf parsley sprigs
2 fresh thyme sprigs
1 bay leaf
8 cups water
1/2 teaspoon white peppercorns
Salt, to taste

Directions:

1. Slice the white portion of the leeks and place in a large stockpot; reserve the green tops. Add the carrots, celery, onions and garlic to the pot. Sandwich the parsley, thyme and bay leaf between the reserved leek tops and securely tie with kitchen string. Add to the pot along with the water.
2. Over low to medium heat, slowly bring the liquid to a simmer, regularly skimming off the scum that rises to the surface until no more forms. Add the white peppercorns, cover partially and continue simmering for 1 to 1 1/2 hours.
Line a strainer with a double layer of dampened cheesecloth and set it inside a large bowl.
3. Pour the contents of the pot into the strainer. Discard the solids. Season the stock with salt and let cool to room temperature. Cover tightly and refrigerate for up to several days, or freeze for up to 6 months. Makes about 6 cups.