



## A Place on Earth CSA Notes

August 12-15, 2020

### In your share this week:

Cantaloupe or Watermelon; Eggplant; Cilantro; Sweet Peppers; Garlic; Onions; Cucumber; Squash/Zucchini; Tomatoes; Cherry Tomatoes; Kale; Potatoes; Basil

**Cantaloupe:** If you have not cut it open, *Wait!* While I am not an expert in picking a perfect melon, a farmer friend told me that the best way to tell when a cantaloupe is ripe is that you should be able to smell a ripe cantaloupe all over the house. Pick it up and take a good sniff at the stem end, and if you have doubts, wait a day. Or two. It should be *very* fragrant! If it's hard as a rock, don't be afraid to wait. And when you do open it up, you may not want to put the seeds in your compost. If you do, you may have cantaloupe vines covering your property like "Little Shop of Horrors." *I learned about seeds in the compost many years ago when we arrived home from vacation to discover a pumpkin vine with 3 pumpkins on it—all over the back yard. Same for cantaloupe and cucumbers, but know that many seeds are often hybrid, so the variety that comes from the compost may/may not be something desirable.*

**Eggplant:** I've waited for eggplant so I could share a recipe I tried several weeks ago. It is so good that I made it a second time, and swooned both times; it was so good. You can make this recipe without the garlic chips but trust me: they are fabulous! The recipe is adapted from the New York Times food page, by Chef Sue Li.

### Sweet and Sour Eggplant with Garlic Chips

4 cloves garlic, very thinly sliced  
¼ cup sunflower oil or other neutral oil  
Kosher salt  
3 medium Japanese eggplants (about 1-pound total), quartered lengthwise then cut into 2-inch pieces  
3 tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce  
2 tablespoons light brown sugar  
1 tablespoon rice wine vinegar  
½ to 1 teaspoon red-pepper flakes  
½ cup fresh cilantro, roughly chopped

¼ cup fresh basil leaves, roughly chopped

Combine garlic and oil in a medium skillet and heat over medium-low. Cook garlic until light golden brown and crisp, turning when browned on one side, and the bubbles have subsided, 3 to 4 minutes, then quickly transfer the garlic chips to a paper towel-lined plate, season with kosher salt and set aside. Transfer the garlic oil back to the skillet. *Watch carefully; garlic burns easily and must be discarded.*

Heat the garlic oil over medium-high. Add the eggplant in batches, adding more as they shrink in size and space permits, and cook, stirring occasionally, until cut sides of eggplant are golden-brown and skins are slightly wrinkled, 6 to 8 minutes. \*

Add the soy sauce, sugar, vinegar, and red-pepper flakes and reduce the heat to medium-low. Simmer, tossing the eggplant to coat, until sauce thickens, 1 to 2 minutes. Serve topped with fresh herbs and garlic chips. Serves 2-3.

\*This dish was designed for the skinny Japanese eggplant with tender skins. If your eggplant is larger, I would recommend peeling it before frying.

**Meet Sam Vaughn**, CSA member, father of 3 young children. He and his wife Sandra both cook vegetarian, but he loves to cook from a CSA, since it reminds him of growing up with a garden. He has submitted several recipes/techniques, and I hope you will consider doing the same, so you share ideas with everyone. Sam says whenever he does not like a certain vegetable, he keeps trying it in different ways until he does like it. (Maybe you can help me love okra!) *And Sam, that is exactly why I write these notes. Many years ago, I noticed that some folks came to pick-up, yet only wanted vegetables they were familiar with beans, tomatoes, potatoes. Realizing that they were missing some wonderful foods—just because they did not know good ways to cook them—I started writing these notes. My experience as a professional home economist who had grown up on a farm with a big garden, I knew how to prepare many of the unusual veggies in appetizing ways. Keep teaching us! Here's Sam's most recent contribution:*

**Cucumber-Tomato Salad:** “Here’s a salad I (Sam) had for lunch today, you could be pretty flexible with this to use different veggies or herbs. Also, I don’t really measure stuff like this so just do what feels right!”

1 large serving:

1 cup each cucumber and tomatoes, chopped into small cubes

1 small onion, minced

1/2 cup or more minced fresh herbs like parsley, cilantro, basil, or arugula

Dress with a vinaigrette of 2 Tablespoons lemon juice, 1 Tablespoon olive oil, salt, pepper, minced garlic, honey, mustard, etc.

Would also be good with some cubed stale bread or some leftover cooked grains, maybe some pumpkin seeds. I topped mine with some cut up veggie “chicken” patties for protein.

**Roasting Vegetables:** My friend Susan Bridges told me that she and her husband often just slice and roast fresh veggies with olive oil and salt and pepper. “Simple and basic but sometimes after roasting we add them to turkey chile or soup.

“One way I particularly like these vegetables is after roasting butternut squash, onions, garlic, carrots, peppers, summer squashes - whatever is on hand- we puree them in the blender and add to pasta tomato sauce. It thickens the sauce and gives it wonderful flavor. Then eat over pasta.” Wow! What an idea! I roasted yellow and zucchini squash with onions last night, so think I’ll add it to marinara sauce and serve over pasta with some good cheese! Thanks, Susan!

**Lots of Cucumbers:** A couple of weeks ago I shared a recipe that featured cucumbers with watermelon and hoisin sauce, lime juice, and peanuts. Today’s recipe is even simpler, but good. It comes from Taste of Home website.

### **Cucumber and Melon Salad**

2 tablespoons canola oil  
1 tablespoon lemon juice  
1/2 teaspoon sugar  
Dash pepper  
1 small cucumber, peeled  
1 cup cubed melon of your choice

In a small bowl, combine the oil, lemon juice, sugar, and pepper. Slice cucumber, then cut into quarters.

In a serving bowl, combine cucumber and melon. Pour dressing over all; toss gently to coat. Serves 2, but easy to double ingredients to serve 4.

**Cooked Cucumbers?** I can hear you saying, “What do I do with a very large cucumber?” Here’s a solution in the form of a cucumber and potato soup, which can be eaten hot or cold.

### **Cucumber and Potato Soup.**

2 tablespoons butter or oil  
1 onion, or 3 green onions, chopped  
3-4 medium potatoes, diced or the equivalent small potatoes  
2 cups chicken or vegetable broth  
1 large cucumber, peeled, seeded, and cubed  
1 cup plain Greek yogurt (or substitute sour cream)  
1 teaspoon dill weed, chopped  
Salt and pepper to taste  
½ cup half and half, optional

Sauté onion in butter or oil until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add broth and cubed potatoes. Cook for about 10 minutes. Add cubed cucumber and cook 5 minutes more. Add dill weed, yogurt, salt, and pepper. Pour into a blender, food processor, or use an immersion blender.

Blend lightly, but don't over-blend, or the potatoes can develop an unpleasant texture. Taste, and add half and half, if a richer taste is desired. Serves 4 or 5; serve hot or cold.

Please offer your favorite recipe so everyone can share.

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