



A Place on Earth CSA Notes 100720

In your share this week:

Mixed Greens; Daikon Radish; Turnips; Head Lettuce or Bok Choy or Tatsoi; Sweet Potatoes; Sweet Corn; Butternut Squash; Green Beans; Potatoes; Eggplant; Garlic; Onions; Cherry Tomatoes; Chard; Dill

Beer Braised Potatoes: Last week's potato recipe brought a justified chiding from Molly Brewer since the recipe called for peeling the potatoes. As Molly said, the potatoes are too small to peel, and she is absolutely right. This recipe came from a CSA member quite a few years ago, and her directions were to peel the potatoes. But in truth, I rarely peel potatoes that are raised organically, so I hope you ignored the directions to peel the potatoes. Knowing Molly to possess more than her share of common sense, she ignored that part of the recipe, and hopefully, made the dish anyway, as it is delicious, easy, and quick. The flavor is so unique, with the beer and horseradish flavors, it's a winner! If you didn't save it, feel free to e-mail me for a replacement; you'll be glad you did!

Lots of Eggplant! Fall is prime time for eggplant, and I could easily eat breaded and fried eggplant every day—if I didn't mind increasing my waistline. My friend Connie Dorval—whose recipes I often share—has this recipe in her book **“Cooking in Season; Making the Most of Your Weekly CSA Basket”** and surprised me with the flavors in this faux eggplant parmesan. I used it when I was struggling to use my eggplant stash. It can be a side or main dish, and if you're a meat eater, you can add meat. Or not. You will likely go back to this recipe over and over.

Custardy Eggplant Parmesan

Olive oil spray

About 2 pounds or less eggplant, unpeeled, sliced in about ½” thick rounds

½ cup ricotta cheese

2 large eggs

½ cup evaporated milk or half & half

1 generous cup of grated Parmesan

Salt and pepper

1 cup spaghetti sauce, homemade or from a jar

Optional: 1 link of Italian style sausage, or a vegan equivalent.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. After slicing the eggplant, spray it lightly with olive oil spray and cook on a grill pan or hot griddle for a few minutes, until slices are cooked through. Be sure to flip them to brown both sides. You may need to do 2 batches.

In a small bowl, mix the ricotta, egg, milk, and half of the Parmesan, about ¼ teaspoon salt and a few grinds of pepper

Optional: If you are using the sausage, brown it in a separate skillet, breaking it into small pieces. Add to the spaghetti sauce.

In a greased casserole dish, layer half the eggplant slices, then sprinkle with a handful of Parmesan, salt and pepper, half of the spaghetti sauce, and half the ricotta mixture. Add the second layer of eggplant, another good sprinkle of Parmesan, salt and pepper, and the rest of the spaghetti sauce and ricotta mixture. Sprinkle a little more Parmesan on top and bake for 25-30 minutes or until the custard sets and the top is browned. Serves 4-5.

Another Eggplant Dish recipe appeared in my in-box, compliments of my friend Jan Eastburn. She found this dish on the website Food52.com, an excellent food website, indeed. So glad she introduced me to Food52.com. The dish is more of a ratatouille, served with pasta, but she liked it so much without the pasta, you can eat it either way. This recipe calls for roasting the vegetables. Don't worry if you don't have everything it calls for; with roasting, it develops its own character, so substitutions could be in order.

Roasted Ratatouille

12 ounces eggplant, (about 1 small), chopped into 1-inch pieces
1 ¼ pounds tomatoes, chopped into 1-inch pieces (or halved cherry tomatoes)
12 ounces zucchini (about 2 small), chopped into 1-inch pieces
2 red bell (or other) peppers, seeded and coarsely chopped
1 yellow or white onion, chopped
1 shallot, thinly sliced
4 cloves garlic, minced
¼ to ½ cups olive oil, see notes above
2 to 4 tablespoons balsamic vinegar (I prefer white)
2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme
1 teaspoon kosher salt plus more to taste
freshly cracked pepper to taste
¼ to ½ cups thinly sliced fresh basil and/or parsley
8 ounces penne or gemelli pasta (something firm)
grated parmesan cheese to taste, optional

1. Preheat the oven to 400° F.
2. In a large roasting pan or casserole, combine the tomatoes, eggplant, zucchini, peppers, onion, shallot, and garlic. Note: I've been adding the vegetables to the pan as I finish chopping them and sprinkling each layer of vegetables lightly with salt.

3. In a small bowl or measuring cup, whisk together the olive oil, vinegar, thyme, and 1 teaspoon kosher salt. Pour over the vegetables. Toss to coat. Season with pepper.
4. Bake for 20 minutes, then stir well. Bake for another 20 to 30 minutes more (or even longer, especially if you've increased the quantities) until the vegetables are all very tender and the released juices are beginning to thicken. Taste and adjust seasoning with more salt and pepper as desired. Stir in basil.
5. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Season with a tablespoon of kosher salt. Cook pasta al dente. Drain, reserving some of the pasta cooking liquid. Transfer pasta to a large bowl. Add ratatouille to taste. Toss. Taste. Add parmesan if desired. Serve immediately with more fresh pepper on the side.

Daikon Radish: Is this a new vegetable for you? When I was in Japan, I saw daikon growing on almost every available patch of garden/yard available, since they use it in many ways. I learned to slice them into paper-thin slices and add them to sandwiches spread thickly with butter. Apparently, the butter takes some of the bite out of the radish, and don't forget to add salt to the sandwich.

The pickled daikon recipe below is adapted from one on allrecipes.com. It is a "fresh pickle" that takes only a few minutes to make, and a few hours to mellow. It keeps for weeks in the fridge, and may be used on Bahn mi sandwiches, grilled cheese, other sandwiches, and relish trays.

Pickled Daikon and Carrot

1 cup distilled white vinegar

½ cup sugar

1 or 2 small carrots, peeled and cut into matchstick shape

1 daikon radish, cut into matchstick shape (if yours is large, use about 2/3 of the daikon.)

2 tablespoons chopped cilantro, optional

1 small Thai chili (or ½ of a small jalapeno), optional

½ teaspoon salt

Heat vinegar, salt, and sugar in a saucepan over low heat until sugar is dissolved. Remove from heat; refrigerate to cool. Place daikon and carrot in a glass jar with the cilantro and chile peppers, if using. Pour the cooled vinegar mixture over, submerging the vegetables. Cover and refrigerate for at least 4 hours, or overnight.

Roasted Vegetables: As I mentioned above, many vegetables can reach new heights in flavor by roasting in the oven with good olive oil, fresh herbs, and kosher salt. For instance, you can cut 1" or smaller pieces of potatoes, sweet potatoes, eggplant, peppers, turnips, daikon, summer & winter squash, onions, and others. Drizzle the mixed vegetables with olive oil, and add herbs such as rosemary, basil, thyme, garlic, or whatever you like. Roast at 350-400 degrees, stirring every 10-15 minutes until tender. *This also makes a great leftover re-cooked in an iron skillet, with a poached/fried egg in the center.*

Turnips: If you did not grow up eating turnips, you may not know about their value. Even if you do not love cooked turnips, they are wonderful when roasted with other vegetables, and when cooked with potatoes for mashing—one turnip to 4 or 5 potatoes--the mashed potato flavor soars. Several high-end restaurants use this little-known technique. Further, the small turnips are delicious raw. The caveat, though, is that the peel of all but tiny turnips can be bitter, so it's best to peel them.

Do you have a recipe you think others would like to try? Please send them to me and I'll share with others.

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