



A Place on Earth CSA Notes, August 11-14, 2021

In your share this week:

Pears; Thyme; Rhubarb; Peaches; Eggplant; Potatoes; Tomatoes; Cherry Tomatoes; Sweet Peppers; Cucumber; Onion; Summer Squash; Chard; Garlic

Sorry for the late notes for last week's CSA boxes. This week's notes will be in 2 parts, but I don't want you to waste a morsel of this week's goodies, because there are some amazing foods that we don't always get. In a couple of days, I'll send another e-mail that will include Part 1 and Part 2. For now, pay attention to these fruits:

- Pears: I am guessing that these are a variety of small pears that are usually, 2-2 ½" long—perhaps Seckle/Sickle pears that may feel hard, but are soft inside, and absolutely delicious, juicy, and perfect for eating out of hand. Wash one and take a bite; you may be amazed! Whatever you don't eat right out of the box, do refrigerate to keep them firm and juicy. Personally, I would not try to make anything out of these pears except a fabulous snack, since the core takes up a bit of space! Enjoy!
- Peaches: If you haven't already noticed, the peaches are probably just at the right stage to use right now, either to eat out of hand, or refrigerate for another concoction that might involve ice cream, yogurt, etc. If slightly soft, eat or refrigerate right away.
- Rhubarb: We usually get rhubarb in spring, so this was quite a treat. If you're not sure what to do with it—or think you don't like it—wash the stalks, slice into ½" pieces and freeze in good quality freezer bags. Use them in one of these recipes today or later: [Sour Cream Rhubarb Squares \(phyllisfitzgerald.com\)](http://phyllisfitzgerald.com). Or, if you are convinced that you don't like it give the fresh or frozen rhubarb to a friend who loves rhubarb. (Like me!) But please, don't waste it!

In the case of all these fruits—and veggies—they are organic, so simply running them under cool water to remove germs (no soap!) will suffice. No nasty toxins here!

And Now, for The Rest of the Story!

Eggplant: Eggplant is a vegetable that I wait for and am so excited about it because there are so many wonderful dishes I make from it. Knowing that we recently had a little drought, I cut open the eggplant, took a thin slice of raw eggplant to make sure it was sweet. (It was!) But I remember 30 years ago a friend brought me several eggplants, and I made one of my favorite eggplant dishes that included ground beef, tomatoes, and lots of other expensive ingredients. When I took the casserole out of the oven and served it, it was so bitter it was inedible because it had been raised in drought. I tell the story as a warning that it's a good idea to take a small taste

of any raw eggplant to make sure it's not bitter. I've never had another bitter one but trust me that you don't ever want to taste a bitter eggplant—cooked or not. Always taste a tiny piece. You'll know right away if it is OK. (I've never had a bad one from A Place on Earth CSA!)

My absolute favorite eggplant dish is Baba Ghanoush, a middle eastern dish similar to hummus. When my kids get together, we do a lot of munching until time to eat, and this is something we use as a dip. I cook the eggplant in the slow cooker/Crockpot, adding a few tablespoons of water and as many eggplants as will fit. Turn on high and cook for 3-4 hours, until it is fork tender. Allow to cool; cut open and scrape the pulp into the bowl of a food processor—or into a freezer zippered container to await the making of Baba Ghanoush. It is so easy, and ready to whip up when you know you have guests coming. The recipe is very forgiving; you don't have to be exact in your measurements.

Baba Ghanoush (This eggplant-tahini spread is from Jane Brody's "Good Food Book," a favorite cookbook of mine.)

2 pounds eggplant (2 medium or 1 large, whole, and unpeeled)
¼ cup tahini (sesame paste)
¼ cup fresh lemon juice
1 large clove garlic, crushed
¼ cup minced onion
Salt & freshly ground black pepper to taste
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley

Prick eggplant in several places with a fork, place it on a baking sheet, and broil* it in a preheated oven for about 20 minutes, turning several times so the skin can char on all sides. Let eggplant cool.

When eggplant is cool enough to handle, cut in half and scrape flesh into a bowl; discard the skin, and mash eggplant with tahini, lemon juice, garlic, onion, salt, and pepper. Before serving, sprinkle with oil and minced parsley, and serve with toasted pita bread wedges or crackers. Scrumptious, and very similar to hummus!

*If you don't want to broil, it may be cooked on the grill, in a slow cooker, or baked when you have the oven on. I have even had success microwaving the eggplants, pricked as above, and cooked 4-6 minutes, each, or until tender.

What About Those Radishes?? And Radish Leaves? Because we don't have lettuce in the CSA right now, I am not making salads, which is the way I often use radishes. Two other ways I use radishes is to roast the—with or without another vegetable—or use them as a substitute for turnips whenever I made soups or stews. This week I quartered the radishes, microwaved* them until almost tender, cooled them, and packed into freezer bags to use for the next stew or soup. *(The canning/freezing experts don't recommend microwaving vegetables before freezing, but I know it will be a brief time in the freezer, and know it works, short term. One of the reasons

they don't recommend it is because longer term freezing could cause freezer burn with improper blanching, which would not be dangerous, but might detract from the flavor.)

And about the radish leaves? Admittedly, the fuzziness of radish leaves has always turned me off, and I discarded them for years. But eventually my frugal self fought back, and I now cook them with other greens—this week it was with chard. They are quite delicious, especially when cooked with other greens. As for the chard, for years I discarded the chard stems, thinking that they would be too tough. Now I strip the tender leaves off the stems, chop them into ½” lengths; saute them in a little butter for a few minutes before adding the sliced chard leaves into the pot. Add a couple of tablespoons of water, salt and pepper, and cook/steam just long enough to wilt +one minute. The chard/radish/stem concoction is delicious and a little crunchy—quite lovely!

Cucumbers: So far, we have not had a bumper crop of cucumbers, but there are probably more on the way. This recipe will be good when we have both cucumbers and watermelon. I would never have tried it, except that my friend Tomese Buthod—a fabulous cook—shared the recipe, and it is indeed wonderful. Now I keep Hoisin Sauce just for this dish. You can make a half, whole, or double recipe, depending on your crowd. Also, a good reason to keep limes on hand!

Cucumber Watermelon Salad with Hoisin Lime Dressing

2 cups chopped/sliced cucumbers (peeled, if desired)
3 cups cubed watermelon
3 ½ tablespoons lime juice
2 tablespoons fresh mint leaves, minced
1/3 cup chopped peanuts
3 tablespoons Hoisin sauce

Mix lime juice, mint, peanuts, and Hoisin sauce, combining well. Pour over cut up cucumbers and watermelon. Delish!

Did you lose a recipe from another year? My friend Jan Eastburn has been putting these on my website, www.phyllisfitzgerald.com. Feel free to look for a recipe there, or send an e-mail to me at phyllisfitzgerald@yahoo.com, and I'll forward it to you.

Would you like to submit a recipe? I'll be happy to share your favorite recipes for using CSA food. Just e-mail them and I'll include them in the notes.

Phyllis Fitzgerald

phyllisfitzgerald@yahoo.com

www.phyllisfitzgerald.com