



Live Earth Farm (Com)Post

A weekly newsletter for the Live Earth Farm CSA Community

2nd Harvest Week

April 16th - 22nd, 2003

Season 8

What's in the box this week:

Fruit:

Strawberries

Veggies:

Arugula

Forono beets

Bok choy

Broccoli raab

Red cabbage

Carrots

Yellow chard

Green garlic

Red russian kale

Lettuce

Young onions

Blue potatoes

Radishes

Spinach

(Remember, "Extra
Fruit option" doesn't
start until May!)

A telltale sign that each of us must have inherited farmer genes somewhere along the line is how we talk and relate to the weather on almost a daily basis. At last weekend's farmer's market, with wind and rain as our best customers, we all contemplated how the weather might affect our crops and change our expectations of what next week's harvest might yield. We love comparing the current weather with that of past seasons, in search of some predictable pattern. As farmers and gardeners, we've come to accept that the most predictable aspect of weather is its unpredictability. I don't think I've ever heard a farmer say, "my, isn't this usual weather we're having?" Weather is full of surprises. It holds our attention and adds excitement to our work. We

work with the elements because they're there, and because they are the basic building blocks of life. The weather provides us with sunshine, water, and warmth; it keeps our farms alive and growing, and it keeps us alive along with them. As I

write this, the fields are gleaming in the morning sunlight, and as I honor my connection to this place I wonder what the story will be today... maybe, even after all this rain, we'll be able to harvest and savor some nice juicy red strawberries after all!! – Tom

*"A good gardener always plants
three seeds -- one for the grubs, one
for the weather, and one for himself."*

- C. Collins from Zen Gardening

Crop of the Week

Broccoli raab, also known as rapini, is more closely related to the turnip than to broccoli, and is grown for its greens ('rapa' means 'turnip' in Italian). It has bright green leaves and only medium-thick stalks (thinner than regular broccoli), with tiny yellow or yellow-green flowerets. It is one of the tastiest and most neglected members of the Brassica family, and has a nutty and slightly bitter flavor all its own. Brassicas are very popular. You'll find at least one of their members in each weekly share, such as our popular Asian mustard greens, broccoli, cauliflower, kale, kohlrabi or cabbage. Brassicas, when fresh or not overly cooked, are packed with vitamin C, A, calcium, potassium and iron, and are purported to help prevent cancer due to a special enzyme called sulforaphane. 🌱

Tips and Techniques for Preparation and Storage

What's important to remember is that you *really do* need to spend a little time with your goodies when you get them home. This is not pre-washed, pre-packaged ready-to-eat stuff. It is vibrant and alive though, and fresher than anything you'll get in the store, so it's well worth your time and trouble to prep. In some cases, you can create your own 'ready-to-eat' veggies, so when you come home late, a quick healthy meal is a snap. In any case, a little preparation goes a long way towards making your goodies last the week (or much longer, in some cases!). In past years I've talked about how to store greens (see newsletters from weeks 6 & 7 of 2001, on our website), and strawberries (see Strawberry tips and Ideas, in recipe database). But for the benefit of people who feel a little overwhelmed by the weekly abundance of produce, I thought I'd talk about how to prep and store each veggie that's in this week's box. Who knows... maybe this will become a regular column? – Debbie

Arugula, spinach and beet greens (also Asian/mustard greens). All these are treated the same in my book. Put them in a sink or basin of cool water & swish around to loosen dirt etc. If the spinach or arugula leaves are still attached at the root, I hold them upside down under a faucet spray to clean thoroughly then pinch off leaves and drop into a salad spinner. Discard root ends, and any yellowed or damaged leaves. Spin well (2 or 3 times) to remove as much water as possible. Lay leaves on a clean cotton dishtowel ('floursack' towels work great) or paper towels, layering if you have lots. Gently roll up leaves/towel like a jellyroll and place in a plastic bag. Carefully squeeze out extra air and secure with a twisty tie, then store in the fridge. They last at least a week for me this way, sometimes 2 or 3

weeks if I use 'Evert-Fresh' bags (specially designed to absorb and remove ethylene gas and filter out UV light – see discussion on this in Week 7, 2001 newsletter on our website). Although this seems a bit time consuming up front, it is SO satisfying when you go to use your greens later in the week, as they are all wonderful, washed and ready to eat! Note: the stems of all these greens are perfectly edible. It is only a taste preference as to whether or not you like to eat them.

Chard, kale, bok choy, broccoli raab, lettuce. Do not wash before storing. If they have moisture on them, blot or shake as much of it off as you can, and wrap in a paper towel and place in a plastic bag. Squeeze out extra air and secure with a twisty; refrigerate. If the veggies are *not* wet, skip the blot-and-wrap step. With lettuce, if outer leaves are a little battered (lettuce is on the delicate side, so this can happen pretty easily), remove and discard 'em before storing head as described above.

Beets. Cut greens off about 1" above the root. (Note: the small, usually dark red leaves from over-wintered beets are edible but pretty tough, however the beautiful dark-green-veined-with-red leaves from spring plantings are well worth saving! I believe the beets we have this week are over-wintered.) Anyway, after cutting off the tops, store beets in a plastic bag in the fridge. They keep well for many weeks. No need to wash/scrub at this stage, but if you want to it won't hurt anything. Just be sure to dry them well before bagging them.

Cabbage. Simple. Store in a plastic bag in fridge. It should store well for many weeks. You don't even have to bag cabbage if it's whole -- you can just stick it in your crisper drawer. However once you cut into it, I'd bag it.

Carrots. The most important thing to remember about storing your fresh carrots is to *remove the green tops*. If you store your carrots with tops attached, they will go limp and rubbery on you, because the greens continue to draw (energy? water?) from the root. An easy way to remove tops is to hold the carrots in one hand and the tops in the other and twist! They pretty much all come off in a bunch. Like beets, you can pre-wash or not as you prefer then store in a plastic bag in the fridge (again, dry 'em off before you bag 'em).

Green garlic and young onions. Cut roots off right at the base, and wipe off any dirt clinging to the stalk (sometimes I peel off the outermost layer to do this). I also trim down excess greens, mostly so they'll fit in a plastic bag. Bag and refrigerate. These guys'd probably store okay un-bagged if you have a good crisper drawer.

Blue (or any) potatoes. This may be controversial. Everything I read says not to store potatoes in the fridge, because supposedly the starch in them changes to sugars. They say to 'store in a cool, dark place' (who's got a root cellar these days?). Personally, I have always stored my potatoes in a crisper drawer in my fridge (they need ventilation though, so if you keep 'em in their bag, don't tie it closed. Leave it open so they can breathe). They've always lasted a long time and tasted just fine. And when I've stored them in the cupboard, say, they start sprouting roots on me before I use them up! So either way is fine I guess. You choose. What's important is that you DON'T store potatoes and onions together!! There is some sort of chemical incompatibility -- I believe the onions offgas and cause the potatoes to prematurely rot. I keep my onions in one crisper drawer along with my lettuces and such, and the potatoes, beets, and other root veggies in the other drawer. 🍄

Live Earth Farm Calendar

(see calendar on website for more detailed info)

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| Sat. Jun 21 | <u>Summer Solstice Celebration</u> 4pm - 10pm <i>with Kuzanga Marimba!</i> |
| Aug 8, 9, 10 | <u>Children's Mini Camp</u> Friday evening to noon Sunday |
| Sat. Sep 20 | <u>Fall Equinox Celebration</u> 3pm - 9pm <i>with the Banana Slug String Band!</i> |
| Sat. Oct 26 | <u>Halloween Pumpkin Palooza</u> all day <i>the Banana Slug String Band will play here too!</i> |

Notes from Debbie's Kitchen

Have a recipe you'd like to share? Contact the newsletter editor.

Simple broccoli raab

3 different cookbooks agree that the bite of broccoli raab marries wonderfully with lots of sweet garlic! Dean and DeLuca says, "simply sauté 7 or 8 smashed garlic cloves in a little olive oil, toss a bunch of washed broccoli raab in the pot, cook over moderate heat 7 to 8 minutes, uncovered, season well, and enjoy." Alice Waters (of Chez Panisse fame) sautés onion over high heat to wilt and brown a bit, adds garlic, red pepper flakes (to taste), salt, then the raab and a splash of water. Lower heat and cook 'til tender, stirring and tossing frequently. Meanwhile she cooks a pot of penne pasta. She tastes raab for seasoning, adding a generous amount of olive oil and a splash of red wine vinegar, then tosses with the

drained pasta and garnishes with grated fresh parmesan or romano cheese.

Pan browned blue potatoes

Blue potatoes are great for baking or pan browning, but not boiling! Although perfectly edible when boiled, they are most unappealing in appearance, turning greyish and falling apart. My favorite way to prepare blue potatoes is to simply pan brown them. First scrub and cut out any bad spots, then cut into small chunks/cubes. Pour a goodly amount of olive oil in a skillet over medium heat and toss in potatoes, stirring and shaking pan to coat them well with oil. Cover, and shake pan or lift and turn potatoes with a spatula every few minutes, to brown evenly. In 10 to 15 minutes, you

should have nicely browned potatoes! Sprinkle with salt, and pepper too if you like and eat! They are sweet and creamy with a crusty brown outside. Yum!

Salad dressings

I encourage creativity here! We have lots of marvelous salad-makings: spinach, lettuce, arugula, carrots, radishes, beets (sure! grate raw beets into a salad, you bet!). A yummy tahini dressing is very versatile – blend a spoonful of tahini with some olive oil, whisk in some cider vinegar and soy sauce, add a crushed clove of garlic, and a little grated fresh ginger if you have it. Use your imagination in making dressings! I also like lemon-soy-garlic-olive oil, or red wine vinegar, garlic, salt, pepper, oregano & oil.