



In Your Box

Celery
Beets
Greenhouse Cucumber*
Red Tomatoes*
Sungold Tomatoes
Salad Mix
Italian Parsley*
Gold Zucchini*
Eggplant
Fresh Red Onion
Carrots*

*included in Salad Shares

Truth in Labeling

Over the years, Kim and I have had a running debate about the color standards to apply to harvesting tomatoes. Tomato fruits ripen from the bottom up, gradually turning from green to light green to red. We pick all of our red tomatoes when they are between a darkish light red and fully red, but that red color can have different shades that indicate how far from “dead ripe” the fruit is. Picking consistently throughout the greenhouse can present a real challenge, since the presence of a fully red tomato can make a less ripe tomato look much less red than it really is, since the eye tends to be somewhat relativistic. Communicating a standard for picking red tomatoes to employees is likewise difficult: are we picking red red tomatoes, or red tomatoes, or red tomatoes with a touch of orange?

So, naturally, we went on the internet to learn about the industry’s terminology and standards, and the standards were shocking! According to the California Tomato Commission, “vine ripe tomatoes are picked at the first blush of color, usually stage 2.” The accompanying chart describes stage 2 as having a “definite “break” in color from green, to tannish-yellow, pink or red on not more than 10% of the surface.” Is this what you think of when you think of a vine ripe tomato? I think of a vine ripe tomato as a tomato picked when it is actually red!

This is just another example of a common-sense term that the produce world has twisted around to mean something completely different. In the industry, nobody refers to stage 2 tomatoes as “vine ripe”, they call them “breakers”; they save the term vine ripe for you, their dear consumer.

Likewise, nobody in the vegetable world refers to those little carrots in the store as “baby carrots”; they call them “cut and peel” carrots, because that’s what they really are: eight-inch carrots cut into three two-inch carrots, run through color scanners, cement mixer-sized peelers, and sorted for uniformity. Nothing baby about them.

The same thing is true of “new potatoes”, which are only truly available for a few months each year. The

Help!

We would like to get these newsletters and recipes on the web in an HTML format, but we don’t know how to do it without just plugging and chugging away at it, which takes a lot of time from the IT guy (that’s me, and time is something I’m not long on these days). Can somebody help us figure out a simpler way? We are currently using Publisher for our newsletters and GoLive for our web design, but we’re open to suggestions.

rest of the time, most of what are sold as new potatoes are referred to in the produce industry as “red B’s”; these are the waxy-fleshed, red-skinned potatoes that are too small to sell as red A’s.

Most people probably don’t get as outraged about vegetable misrepresentation as we do. But misrepresenting your vegetables is really an attack on the culture of food production and food consumption. When “fresh vegetables” spend fourteen days in the marketing chain, what does it really mean to talk about fresh? When “free range” means that chickens have access to the outdoors, but that outdoors can be a narrow strip of denuded soil, what does free range mean? How do we find a language to communicate about food in a meaningful way?

(By the way, we’re still working to find a way to describe the difference between a red tomato and a really red tomato.)

Weather: It rained on Sunday, warmed up on Tuesday, and rained again on Wednesday as another cold front moved through. The cold weather is slowing down a number of our outdoor crops (we could really use some heat on the late-planted winter squash), but it’s the gray weather putting a crimp in our greenhouse crops—you just can’t grow without sunlight.

Activities on the Farm: We started the storage onion harvest with our earliest varieties, including an early yellow (the standard sort), cippolinis, and shallots. Over the next three weeks we will continue to pick up the remainder of the onion crop as the tops dry down, then take them into the greenhouse where we lay them out to finish curing.

Comings and Goings: Chris’ stepmom, Mary, arrived on Wednesday during box packing. She’ll be taking the boys back to Colorado for a two week visit on Saturday.

Next Week’s Box may include: red tomatoes, sungold tomatoes, cucumber, yellow onions...

The Farm Kitchen

Novelist Tom Robbins writes on **Beets**: "The beet is the most intense of vegetables. The radish, admittedly, is more feverish, but the fire of the radish is a cold fire, the fire of discontent, not of passion. tomatoes are lusty enough, yet there runs through tomatoes an undercurrent of frivolity. Beets are deadly serious."

Eric's Mom's Beets

We first ate this gloriously pink dish at Madison's L'Etoile restaurant, where the kind chefs would serve lunch to weary farmers following farmers markets. We subsequently served it at our wedding (9 years ago next weekend).

1 1/2 lbs red beets

1/2 cup yogurt, sour cream, or creme fraiche (best choice)

salt and pepper to taste

2 tsp chopped mint

Place beets in a casserole dish with 1/2 inch of water. Cover and bake in a 400 degree oven for about an hour. The beets are ready when they can easily be penetrated with a paring knife. Cool slightly and slip the peel off. We slip the peel off under running water; it saves on burning the fingers. Cool beets, then grate on a coarse grater. Mix in creme fraiche, mint, salt and pepper. Serve chilled or at room temperature.

Italian Parsley is more than just an herb. We use it in everything from seasonings to a salad base. It really shines in this next recipe.

Rock Spring Farm August Salad

This summer, we have really been enjoying salads that verge more on the "slaw" side of things, rather than just greens and chopped tomatoes.

The cabbage in this recipe is optional; if you leave it out, use a little more celery in its place.

4 medium Tomatoes, chopped

3 Celery stalk, finely sliced

1/4 cup chopped onion

6 Sungold Cherry tomatoes, sliced in half

1/2 cup chopped Parsley

1/2 cup chopped red cabbage (optional)

1/4 cup olive oil

2 tablespoons lemon juice

salt and pepper to taste

Toss all ingredients together in a bowl. Serve as side or over salad mix.

We really wish we had more **Eggplant** to offer this week, but cool weather is not something this southeast Asian vegetable particularly enjoys. The eggplant is a member of the potato family (as are tomatoes, peppers, and tobacco), and it is known worldwide as aubergine, eggplant, brinjal, melanzana, garden egg, and patlican. We didn't have enough of any one variety today to offer the same in every box: most of you received an Asian-style eggplant, long and skinny with purple skin. A few of you received a striped eggplant, more similar in shape to the traditional globe eggplant, but smaller and striped purple and white. In both cases, these smaller eggplants are relatively devoid of seeds, and don't have the bitter flavor of the large American types.

Roasted Trout on a Bed of Summer Vegetables

We like trout, but any fish fillet can be used here. Or skip the fillet, and just serve the vegetables.

1 eggplant, sliced 1/4 inch thick

3 medium tomatoes, 1/4 inch slices

1 medium onion, thinly sliced

4 tablespoons olive oil

1 teaspoon cilantro or parsley, minced

Salt and pepper to taste

1 1/2 pounds fresh trout fillets

Preheat oven to 450. Spread on the bottom of a 13 x 9 inch baking pan 2 tablespoons olive oil, followed by the onions, eggplant, and tomatoes. Season with salt and pepper. Drizzle over the top 1 tablespoon olive oil. Roast, until the tomatoes are beginning to bubble, 10 to 15 minutes. Place the trout on top of the vegetables, brush with 1 tablespoon olive oil. Sprinkle the top with the cilantro or parsley. Roast for 10 to 15 minutes, or until fish is done.

This week's **Salad Mix** may be the last for a couple of weeks. We missed several weekly plantings due to an extended rainy period. Our fall crop of head lettuce is looking beautiful, but it is still several weeks away in these short days and cool weather.

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