



My Summer Vacation at the Farm

By Kim Mancini

Week of June 23rd

A budding sustainable dietician gets hands-on experience at Provident Organic Farm:

Once upon a time, it was common for city kids to spend the summer at a family member's country farm. I grew up in metro Detroit, with almost every grandparent, uncle and aunt working for the auto industry, so this wasn't an option for me. But better late than never.

I came to the Eastern Shore last fall to complete the last stages of training to become a dietitian. Yes, Jay has hired another overeducated, sassy lady farmhand, and I thank him for it! My initial interest in studying nutrition stemmed from some charming dreams of changing the way we eat in this country, from start to finish, or farm to market if you will. Five years of formal education later, I've seen how institutional foodservice operations desperately cling to the status quo.

At schools, hospitals and nursing homes, most food comes from a major distributor like Sysco. Fruits and vegetables are generally canned or frozen. Menus are planned to appeal to the average customer's palate, with little interest in incorporating more whole grains, beans and legumes, fresh or local produce—the very foods recommended by our own USDA food guide pyramid. Pretty discouraging stuff.

I might be a city mouse at heart, but I've really enjoyed living in a more rural and agriculture-driven area this year. I started questioning the foodservice directors I worked with here about why they don't take advantage of the abundance of crops being grown in their backyards and incorporate more local food into their menus. Their responses were surprising. Many genuinely wanted to get local produce, but their facility demanded that all food come from approved suppliers like the aforementioned Sysco, or (gasp) Wal-Mart. Their hands were basically tied.

Fortunately, the growing emphasis on sustainability and green living is bringing about some changes. Effective this fall, Maryland will be one of 39 states participating in Farm-to-School initiatives, which connect schools with local farms to provide fresh produce for meal service, as well as nutrition-based curriculum like farm visits, gardening and recycling programs. Major foodservice management companies such as Aramark are promoting sustainable choices in their cafeterias. For example, Johns Hopkins prioritizes the purchase of locally-sourced produce and seafood, and exclusively serves organic, fair-trade coffee, free range eggs and hormone-free milk. The 2008 farm bill, twice vetoed by the president but overridden in both houses to become law, will continue to fund the Farmer's Market voucher program for WIC recipients and low-income seniors (and kudos to Jay for taking part in this voluntary program).

I'm very excited to be involved with Provident Organic Farm this summer. This is the first food and nutrition-related work I've done that actually feels meaningful and supports my value system. I'm soaking up all the lessons (and sunshine) I can and will apply them to my first dietitian job, whenever and wherever that will appear! Until then, it's an honor to help grow and harvest your veggies and I'm looking forward to meeting more of you at market.

In This Week's Share

Lettuce
Squash
Russian Banana Potatoes
Beets
Scallions
Garlic
Chard
Cucumbers

This list represents a 'best guess' at this time.

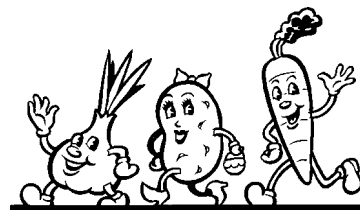
Recipe of the week

Grilled Potato And Summer Squash Salad With Marjoram-Lemon Vinaigrette

Servings: Makes 6 servings.

Ingredients

- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons minced shallot
- 1 tablespoon plus 2 teaspoons chopped fresh marjoram
- 1 teaspoon finely grated lemon peel
- 1/4 cup plus 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 pound small fingerling potatoes (such as Russian Banana), unpeeled, halved lengthwise
- 1 pound assorted summer squash (such as zucchini and yellow crookneck), cut on diagonal into 1/3-inch-thick slices
- 1 large red bell pepper, cut into 1-inch-wide strip



Preparation

Whisk lemon juice, shallot, 1 tablespoon marjoram, and lemon peel in small bowl. Gradually whisk in 1/4 cup oil. Season vinaigrette with salt and pepper.

Prepare grill (medium heat). Place potatoes in large saucepan; add enough cold salted water to cover. Boil just until almost tender, about 4 minutes. Drain. Transfer potatoes to medium bowl. Add 1 teaspoon marjoram and 1 1/2 tablespoons oil; sprinkle with salt and pepper and toss to coat. Combine squash and bell pepper in large bowl; add remaining 1 teaspoon marjoram and 1 1/2 tablespoons oil. Sprinkle with salt and pepper; toss to coat. Arrange potatoes in single layer in grill basket. Grill until tender, 5 minutes per side. Transfer to large bowl. Grill squash and bell pepper until tender, turning occasionally, 10 minutes. Transfer squash to bowl with potatoes. Cut bell pepper into 1-inch pieces; add to vegetables. Add vinaigrette; toss. Season with salt and pepper. Serve warm or at room temperature.

FAQ's

Why are my potatoes dirty? Potatoes store better with the dirt left on them. You can wash them and store them in the refrigerator if you like or leave the dirt on them until you are ready to use them and leave them out on the counter top or in your pantry.

Why are these PLU's (yellow twist ties with a bar code) on my beets? Where are they coming from?

We have been getting some of your produce from Betsy Thornton of Chesapeake Organics in Marion Station. Betsy grows a few different crops in large quantities and ships them to distributors who then sell them to retailers such as Whole Foods. We asked Betsy if she would like to dedicate a couple of crops to the CSA, but she has been hesitant to make that type of commitment to us. She picks for us on Mondays and Thursdays.

The Green Book Club

When: Saturday, July 26th , 6:00 PM

Where: Chrys and John Egan (210 Glen Ave, Salisbury, 410-726-5995, cnegan@salisbury.edu)

Subject: Potential risks and benefits of genetically modified (GM) crops, including those containing genes from organisms that would not be able to mate in nature.

More information: LESSON website under Activities: Book Club at www.livingontheveg.org.

A Note on the "Share Bin"

We like to leave a "share bin" at each distribution point for you to exchange vegetables. If there is anything in your share you do not want, you can leave it for others to take. You don't have to put something in to take something out. You just have to play nicely with others. Sometimes, when we first start picking a crop, there is not enough for everyone. Often, the same thing happens at the finish line. We will stock the share bin with these crops and/or we will sell them at markets.
