

Fair Fields News

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On the Farm

We finally got a good soaking. With three days of on-and-off rain and some showers, the ground is finally starting to look alive again. If you dig down about six inches, the soil in the field is still not saturated, but it is moist. Coming out of the drought I realize our vegetable operation has done okay. Some vegetables have struggled but irrigation has brought most of them through.

Many other farmers have not been so lucky. Tarrah and Nathan of Green Being Farm down the road raise livestock. In late June they were buying scarce hay at three times the normal price. This hay would normally be destined for winter feeding, but this year it was used immediately as

the pastures were bare. Corn and soy producers have also struggled this summer. One could make a strong case for diversification away from these monocrops, as farmers who had winter grains or drought – tolerant pulses and legumes fared much better.

The heat this season has helped some crops, especially melons. We will be giving plenty this week as they have come on early and all at once. When planning last winter I aimed to have about 4-5 weeks of melons. With the incredible heat however, most will ripen over 2.5 weeks! With all the dry weather followed by heavy rain many of these melons have also started exploding in the field. The

internal pressure is such that just picking some of them up causes them to split in your hands.

And finally... tomatoes. We should have them now until the first big frost. The tomato vines hold many ripening fruits so I hope we continue to have warm weather and are able to eat them all! Our earliest tomatoes succumbed to blossom end rot, a disease which affects plants that are deficient in calcium. From soil tests I know that calcium is low in our soil. I have plans to amend the soil in the coming years, which should help. However, improving the nutrients in our fields will probably take several years... good ones I hope.

This Week's Harvest

- ◆ Basil
- ◆ Beets
- ◆ Beans
- ◆ Bulb onions
- ◆ Carrots
- ◆ Cucumber
- ◆ Eggplant
- ◆ Head lettuce
- ◆ Melons
- ◆ Peppers
- ◆ Tomatoes
- ◆ Zucchini
- ◆ Salad mix (mesclun)

Feature Produce – Radicchio

Radicchio is a leafy wine-red, somewhat bitter vegetable from the chicory family. Also known as Italian chicory, radicchio has been grown in the Veneto regions of Italy for centuries. In Italy, it is often coated with olive oil and grilled. In North America, it is commonly added to salad mix-

es to increase colour and flavour.

One cup of radicchio gives you more than your daily requirement for vitamin K. Vitamin K is best known for its blood clotting role but it is also a critical nutrient for bone formation and strengthening.

Like other chicories, radicchio appears to be effective at eliminating intestinal worms and is sometimes fed to farm animals for this purpose!



Some Notes on Preparing Radicchio

Many people are familiar with radicchio in salad mixes, where it adds colour and a crisp, somewhat bitter taste. If you want to use radicchio in a salad but find it too bitter, use less of the white ribs and core.

You can also reduce the bitterness of radicchio by cooking it. We suggest you try radicchio grilled, roasted or braised.

(Braising is a cooking technique that involves browning a food in butter or oil and then adding liquid and simmering it.) Cooking radicchio in one of these ways reduces its bitterness and gives it a nice, nutty flavour. If you are going to grill, roast or braise radicchio, you should quarter it so that the leaves remain attached at the bottom. This helps hold them together.

Simply Recipes has a good recipe for grilled radicchio that you might want to look up. Go to: http://www.simplyrecipes.com/recipes/grilled_radicchio_salad/.

Riverford Organic Farms in the UK has also produced a great YouTube video on *How to Cook Radicchio* that you might want to watch. Go to: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?>

Spaghetti or Linguine with Radicchio and Ricotta

1 pound pasta
8 oz fresh ricotta cheese
2 tbsp olive oil
Coarse salt
3 garlic cloves, minced
1/2 C finely chopped flat leaf parsley
1/2 C breadcrumbs
Salt and pepper
1 head radicchio, quartered, cored and thinly sliced crosswise
Freshly ground black pepper

Heat 1 tbsp olive oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add garlic and cook until softened but not browned, 1 to 2 minutes. Add parsley and breadcrumbs and cook, stirring frequently, until breadcrumbs are golden, about 3 minutes. Transfer to a bowl and set aside.

Bring a large pot of water to a boil and add salt. Add pasta, and cook until very slightly chewy. Drain, reserving one cup of cooking liquid. Return pasta and reserved liquid to pot, add ricotta and remaining tbsp of oil. Toss to coat evenly. Add radicchio and half the breadcrumbs and season with salt and pepper. Toss to combine. Serve immediately, sprinkled with remaining breadcrumb mixture.

From Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia
Makes 4 servings

Save the Date!

Fair Fields 1st Annual Pot Luck Picnic

4 p.m. Saturday, September 22nd

An optional work bee will be organized for earlier in the day for CSA members who would like to help in the garden or hoop house.