

Four Friends' CSA News

The Bean Pole

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2008 Season

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Dear Shareholders and Friends,

The harvest for this week includes: Mixed lettuce, sweet peppers, potatoes, tomatoes, onions, Swiss chard, and culinary herbs. Summer squash is available for the full shares only.

Swiss Chard Casserole

A good sized bunch of Swiss chard
About 1 cup of chopped onions
½ cup of chopped sweet peppers
4 cups of cooked organic brown rice
½ cup of chopped parsley
1 cup of grated cheddar or Swiss cheese
1 cup of milk
4 large eggs
2 small cloves of crushed garlic
1 Tbsp. of Tamari sauce
Salt and pepper to taste
2 Tbsp. of olive oil

Cook the rice. Wash and chop the Swiss chard. Sauté the onions and peppers in the olive oil till the onions are translucent. Add the crushed garlic and cook 1 minute more. Add the chopped Swiss chard to the sauté pan. Cook the chard with the onions, peppers and garlic just long enough to wilt the leaves. Reserve till later.

Set aside a little bit of chopped parsley and grated cheese to sprinkle over the top of the casserole.

Whisk the eggs till they are slightly beaten. Blend together the eggs, milk, and Tamari sauce. Combine the liquid ingredients with the cooked brown rice and grated cheese. Fold in the sautéed chard, onions, peppers, and garlic. Add about ½ tsp. of salt and a dash of pepper or salt and pepper to taste. Top with some grated cheese. Cover, and bake for 30 minutes at 350 degrees. Remove from the oven, and uncover. Return the casserole to the oven and bake, uncovered for an additional 5-10 minutes till the top is lightly browned. Remove from the oven and sprinkle some chopped parsley on top. Serve.

MORE ON HERBS:::::

**"An herb is the friend of physicians and the praise of cooks."
- Charlemagne**

How to Prepare Herbs for Cooking

For most recipes, unless otherwise directed, mince herbs into tiny pieces. Chop with a chef's knife on a cutting board or snip with a kitchen scissors. To speed cutting with a scissors, cut herbs coarsely into a small bowl or cup and snip back and forth with your scissors. Some recipes may direct you to cut large leaves, such as basil, "chiffonnade-style" or into thin strips. An easy way to do this is to stack several leaves (about 3 to 5), roll into a tight roll, then cut into thin (1/16 to 1/8 inch) strips with a sharp knife.

While some recipes call for a sprig or sprigs of herbs, normally the part of the herb you harvest will be the leaves. For herbs with sturdier stems, such as marjoram, oregano, rosemary, sage and thyme, you can strip off the leaves by running your fingers down the stem from top to bottom. With small-leaved plants such as thyme, you can use both leaves and stems for cooking early in the season. Later in the season, as the stems become tougher, use just the leaves. For herbs with tender stems, such as parsley and cilantro, it's OK if you snip some of the stem in with the leaves when you're cutting these herbs.

Be careful if using a food processor to cut herbs -- it's easy to turn them to a paste rather than tiny pieces.

When to Add Herbs During Food Preparation

Unlike dried herbs, fresh herbs are usually added toward the end in cooked dishes to preserve their flavor. Add the more delicate herbs -- basil, chives, cilantro, dill leaves, parsley, marjoram and mint -- a minute or two before the end of cooking or sprinkle them on the food before it's served. The less delicate herbs, such as dill seeds, oregano, rosemary, tarragon and thyme, can be added about the last 20 minutes of cooking. Obviously, for some foods, such as breads, batters, etc., you'll need to add herbs at the beginning of the cooking process.

Fresh herbs can be added to refrigerated cold foods several hours before serving. Allowing time (at least a couple of hours, if possible) for cold foods with herbs to chill helps the flavors to blend.

Another Idea: Herbed Butter: Beat 1-4 cup butter, softened with 1 to 2 tablespoons dried herb...(basil, chives, oregano, tarragon or thyme), 1 teaspoon lemon juice and 1-4 teaspoon salt. Yummy!

FARM NEWS

The farmers are reporting that things are slowing down and that now is the time to put down cover crops. Cover crops are grown to protect and improve the soil, not to harvest. Cover crops have the potential to improve soil tilth, control erosion and weeds, and maintain soil organic matter. They can reduce compaction and increase water infiltration which decreases leaching of nutrients. Cover crops retain and recycle plant nutrients (especially nitrogen) between crops, provide habitat for beneficial microorganisms, and increase plant diversity.

That is all folks Till next week.