

Four Friends' CSA News

The Bean Pole

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2009 Season

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Dear Shareholders and Friends,

This week's harvest list includes; Potatoes, sweet potatoes, lemon grass, green beans, parsnips, and cooking greens.

Well folks, this is our last week. We hope you have enjoyed being part of Four Friends CSA! The farmers worked hard to grow the best and the freshest vegetables, herbs, flower and eggs that we could produce from our farms. We thank you very much for all your support during the past 20 weeks. It was a difficult season and we appreciate that you made the commitment and shared the risk with us! Till next year..

Here's a soup recipe from www.thaifood.about.com ...

"Thai Chicken Noodle Soup with Lemon Grass

- 12-16 oz. fresh egg noodles (OR enough fresh or dried noodles for 2-3 portions)
- 6 cups good-quality chicken stock
- 1-2 stalks fresh lemongrass, minced OR 4 Tbsp. frozen prepared lemongrass
- 1/4 to 1/2 lb. chicken breast or thigh, chopped into small pieces (or use leftover roasted chicken + bones)
- 1/2 cup good-quality (thick) coconut milk
- 3-4 kaffir lime leaves (available fresh or frozen at Asian stores)
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 thumb-size piece galangal OR ginger, shredded
- 1 red chili, sliced, OR substitute 1/4 to 1/2 tsp. dried crushed chili or cayenne pepper
- 1 large carrot, sliced

- 1 Tbsp. oyster sauce (I used Golden Dragon brand)
- 1/2 to 1 Tbsp. brown sugar
- 2 Tbsp. fish sauce
- 2-3 cup bok choy (or baby bok choy), chopped
- generous handful fresh coriander
- Optional extra vegetables: handful mushrooms and/or broccoli segments
- Optional: 1 Tbsp. fresh lime juice

Prepare the noodles according to instructions on package. Drain and rinse through with cold water to keep from sticking. Set aside.*

1. Bring stock to a boil in a large soup pot. Add the prepared lemongrass, kaffir lime leaves, and the chicken. Boil over medium-high heat 3-4 minutes.
2. Reduce to medium heat and add the garlic, galangal/ginger, chili, and carrot. If adding mushrooms, add them now. Simmer 2-3 more minutes.
3. While soup is simmering, add the oyster sauce and fish sauce as well as 1/2 Tbsp. sugar.
4. If your bok choy is the large variety, add only the thick white stalk pieces now (the green leaves take only seconds to cook, so reserve those for later). If using broccoli, add it now too. Continue simmering the soup 2-3 more minutes.
5. Lastly, add the leafy greens of the bok choy. Stir and simmer 30 seconds.
6. Reduce heat to low. Add the coconut milk, stirring well to incorporate.
7. Taste-test for salt, adding more fish sauce if not salty enough. If too salty or sweet for your taste, add 1 Tbsp. lime or lemon juice. If too spicy, add more coconut milk. If too sour, add another 1/2 Tbsp. sugar.
8. To put the soup together, mound a generous amount of the cooked noodles in each bowl. Ladle over the hot soup and top with fresh coriander. Note: this soup can be served with chili sauce

on the side for those who like it extra spicy.
ENJOY!

*A note about cooking the Noodles: If you're in a hurry, you can also add your noodles to this soup as you cook it. However, generally I find the starch from the noodles reduces the flavor and changes the texture of the soup. Also, leftovers won't be as good, since the noodles will become soggy."

All About Lemongrass (*dtakrai*):

Related to citronella, this bulbous, greyish green tropical grass is a favored herb in Southeast Asian cuisines, where its delicate, lemony essence permeates a wide assortment of dishes. In Thai cooking, lemongrass is used most frequently to flavor soups, salads and curries.

Lemongrass is a very fibrous grass and comes in long, slender stalks about a foot long, normally with its coarse, flat, grassy blades already cut off. **Choose thick, light green stalks that feel firm all along its length and that are not dried out and wilted. They usually require further trimming before they can be used. Cut off the woody root tip of each stalk until the purplish-tinted rings begin to show. Remove the loose, dry outer layer(s) and use only the faintly colored, dense inner stalk that holds together when cut into shorter segments or into concentric rings. Usually, the top third of the stalk is dry and fibrous and, if so, should be trimmed off.**

For soups and simmered dishes, cut the trimmed stalk at a very sharp angle into inch-long pieces, exposing its fragrant interior. Smash with the flat blade of a cleaver or heavy knife to bruise and release the aromatic oils before adding to these dishes. The stalk may be cut crosswise, then split in half lengthwise to expose the wetter interior, or easier yet, sliced at a long slanted angle, then bruised. **In soups, lemongrass serves as a stock ingredient to flavor the broth; the tough pieces are not meant to be chewed and eaten.**

Thai people usually do not strain them out before serving; they know what can be eaten and what cannot, and some like to suck on the lemongrass pieces for a delightful hit of flavor. But if you are serving guests who may not be familiar with Thai soups, you may want to strain out these hard pieces so that no one gags on them, especially if you like the flavor of lemongrass and use lots of it, like I do.

For salads, cut with a sharp knife into very thin rounds, breaking up the fibers that run the length of the stalk. When slicing, if the outer layer seems fibrous, peel it off before proceeding. Such thinly sliced rounds of the inner stalk can be easily chewed with other salad ingredients for a refreshing burst of lemony herb flavor.

For curries, cut the stalk into thin rounds before pounding in a stone mortar to reduce to paste.

Although lemongrass appears dry when you are slicing it, when crushed, you will see that it really is quite moist. **Crushing breaks the juice sacs in the fibers and releases the aromatic oils that make lemongrass so special.**

lemongrass is now widely available all over the country and can even be found in some chain supermarkets. Its mild, delicate, but yet exotic, flavor has made this tropical herb popular in East-West cuisines. So there is no reason to use the inferior dry or powdered kinds. **Lemongrass can be easily grown in any frost-free area, or in a planter to bring indoors in winter; it is not particular about soil as long as it gets plenty of moisture. Root a stalk by submerging the root end in a glass of water, or insert directly into damp soil and keep well watered.** One stalk easily multiplies into fifty in no time and forms a large clump. Lemongrass grown in cool-weather areas tends to be more grassy with smaller and shorter stalks tinted a deep purplish green.

I find the stalks grown in the less-than-tropical climates of California and Florida to be less full-flavored than the lemongrass from my mother's backyard and the marketplaces of Thailand, and so I use more of it than I would in cooking back

home. The strength of flavors of many tropical herbs derive from secretions the plants produce to protect themselves from the intensity of their environments. The more intense the environment, the more intense the herbs' flavors become. Therefore, when cooking Thai food with ingredients grown in more temperate climates, it is best to go by taste rather than specified quantities in a recipe

Wrap well in plastic before storing in the refrigerator to keep the stalks from drying out. Depending on how fresh the stalks are when bought, they can keep for one to three weeks. If you must substitute with dry lemongrass, simmer in water to make stock for soups and soak in warm water to soften a little before chopping and pounding in a mortar to make a chilli/curry paste. Since the powdered kind does not substitute well and the dried pieces do not soften enough to chew, skip lemongrass entirely in salads that require thinly sliced rounds.

Beyond its popularity as a culinary herb, lemongrass is highly regarded by traditional herbal doctors for its profuse healing qualities. It has been used for centuries to treat colds and flu, stomach cramps and indigestion, flatulence and urinary dysfunctions, fatigue, back pain and menstrual irregularity and yeast infections.

Infusions of lemongrass are said to be good for the fire element and an effective treatment for conditions arising from too much wind. Its essential oils are reputed to contain a substance similar to insulin and, therefore, can be used in the treatment of diabetes.

OTHER IDEAS: LEMONGRASS TEA

It is very simple. Use 10 leaves, cut them up into 2 to 3 inches. Wash them well and boil them in a liter of water. The resulting liquid is very fragrant, rich lemon gold in color, very refreshing!

And, lemongrass is loaded with good vitamins and minerals...see below:

