

Monroe Family Organics

CSA Newsletter

SEPTEMBER 16, 2012

Hello everyone! It is starting to feel like fall, and this week's share is starting to reflect the changing season.

Farm Update

It has been a long week with a lot going on at the farm, and the next couple of weeks will be very busy. This last Saturday Fred and Malcolm harvested a large order of Roma tomatoes for Food for Thought up in Honor, MI, who is making them into an organic salsa. We ended up harvesting about 1500 pounds! The pigs are now very large, and have about a month to go before being butchered. In the next newsletter, we will have more information on buying half or whole pigs if you are interested. The chickens keep producing eggs, but they are getting ever more cranky when we go to collect eggs. The tomatoes are starting to yield less outside, as are most of the other warm season crops, since the nights are so cold. However, the cool season crops have taken on a new vibrancy and the root vegetables are growing especially fast.

This week we have tomatoes for sale for \$12 per half bushel, and basil for \$10 per pound. This is likely to be the last week we will offer basil for freezing, and tomatoes probably have another week yet before we close those down as well.



The pigs love to eat leftover veggies!



What to Expect in This Week's Share

- ❖ Brussels sprouts or carrots
- ❖ Cherry tomatoes or kale
- ❖ Beets or beans
- ❖ Salad mix or bok choi
- ❖ Green pepper, eggplant, or onion
- ❖ Green onions, basil, garlic, or dill
- ❖ Tomatoes

Have questions or comments? Email us at mfororganics@yahoo.com or call Michele at

517-896-6884.

Vegetable Spotlight: Beets and Swiss Chard

The humble beet has a very long history; it has been cultivated to provide food for people groups along the Mediterranean coastline for several thousand years. Its history of being consumed by humans goes back to a couple thousand years BC, but consuming it for the rounded root portion is more recent. Until the time of the Romans, beets were primarily consumed as a leafy vegetable with an almost inedible thin taproot. However, it is thought that the Romans may have been the first people to eat the root portion, and by medieval times in Europe the root was being eaten more regularly than the greens. Then in the days of Napoleon when the British halted trading sugar with France, Napoleon started rapidly developing the beet for sugar, and now we have sweeter varieties of table beets as well. One interesting fact in all this is that the beet was eaten as a leafy vegetable for a very long time, and the most modern domesticated form of this is the Swiss chard we enjoy today. The red beet and Swiss chard we have today exhibit the best of both traits that humans have selected over time.

The beet has often been used in traditional medicine; the Romans are known to have used it as a laxative and to help heal wounds. Today we know them as an anti-inflammatory, and they have unique antioxidant compounds rarely found in other foods. Initial lab tests show beets to fight tumor growth, and they are likely to help to some degree against cancer, but this has not yet been well studied.

Beets and beet leaves come in many different colors. This year, we are growing the red and white striped variety, as well as red beets and gold beets. We also grow an heirloom variety used primarily for the leaves, which are a dark burgundy and show up most often in the cooking greens mix.



When beets were first cultivated, it was more common for people to eat the greens than the root.



At the farm, we grow rainbow chard, which has many different brilliant colors of stems and veins.



Citrus-Ginger Roasted Beets and Carrots

As for Swiss chard, we grow a rainbow chard mix, which has brilliant stems of many colors. Every now and then we see some of these Swiss chard types grow an enlarged root that is mostly tough and brownish in color, which shows similarities to a beet. In the spring we grow our beets from transplants. This allows us to have beets available earlier in the season, because we don't have to wait for a raw seed to germinate in the cold soil. Later in the season we seed the beets directly into the soil with our largest plantings for the fall time. In the fall these beets start taking on more sugars, and the plant puts less development into the leafy portion of the plant as it prepares to overwinter. This is why fall beets are usually at their best, and are the sweetest of any time during the year. Our Swiss chard we transplant in April into black plastic beds. These beds produce nice Swiss chard leaves throughout the entire growing season, and often have to be cut back to rejuvenate leafy growth at some time during the summer. The harvest on these hardworking chard plants goes from the first week of June until sometimes December!

At our house we almost always eat beets fried in olive oil as a breakfast side. However, we have also made a beet arugula salad with feta. We have also boiled beets then chilled them and used slices for an hors d'oeuvre. Hopefully, this leaves you a little more knowledgeable about the humble beet and how we raise it here on our farm.

Recipe: Citrus-Ginger Roasted Beets and Carrots

Ingredients:

- ❖ 4 beets, peeled and sliced
- ❖ 3 large carrots, peeled and quartered
- ❖ 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ❖ 1 teaspoon sea salt
- ❖ 1/3 cup fresh pink grapefruit juice
- ❖ 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
- ❖ 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- ❖ 1 tablespoon honey
- ❖ 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- ❖ 1/2 teaspoon soy sauce
- ❖ 1 tablespoon olive oil

Directions:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F (200 degrees C). Set aside 1/2 cup each of the beets and carrots for the dressing. Place the remaining beets and carrots in a 9x13 inch baking dish, drizzle with 1 tablespoon of olive oil, sprinkle with the sea salt, and toss to coat. cover the dish with aluminum foil. Bake the vegetables in the preheated oven for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, place the reserved beets and carrots into a blender. Add the grapefruit juice, lemon juice, vinegar, honey, ginger, soy sauce, and remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil. Blend until smooth. After the vegetables have roasted for 15 minutes, stir in the citrus sauce, then recover, and continue cooking until the vegetables are tender, about 45 minutes more.

If you have ideas for an article, or you would like to contribute a recipe to a future newsletter, please email mforganics@yahoo.com or call Michele at 517-896-6884.