



May 30, 2008

Newsletter

Issue #22

# BloomingNow!

## Features Fresh from the Farm

Community

Supported

Agriculture

## From the field...

If there was ever a time of the season when we are reminded of our soil type, it is another variable Spring in Bucks County. The stoop in front of our house and our assortment of tall muck boots are covered in clumps of wet, sticky red earth- drying and hardening at a pace that matches the turtle seen cruising by the kids garden. One of our farm "textbooks" has a few articles written by a New England organic farmer, well known and respected, who writes some advice about looking for a farm to settle on. His resounding theme: don't choose a place with clay soil. Well, we aren't ready to pick up and head for sandy southern Jersey quite yet. But of all the farms we have worked on, this soil is by far the most challenging. There's nothing worse than waiting, and then waiting some more, for the soil to dry out between rains, enough to work up

and plant into. The beginning of this week, Memorial Day, we were finally able to get back out in the fields and prep ground for a massive few days of planting- sweet potatoes, the very long leggy cherry tomato plants went in with an audible sigh of relief, which we did by hand so we could get them deep enough, and fall celeriac, and leeks. Hopefully with a little heat, things will start growing a bit more out there, as many of the crops we planted almost a month ago have been in a holding pattern with all the cool weather and rain. Not to say the rainy days didn't come in handy- we got caught up on lots of indoor work- a chance to clean out our corner of the barn, pick up a few hay carts of straw to use to mulch our aisles, build a large new farm wagon, and go on a couple field trips: to Manoff Orchards in Solebury to see Gary Manoff's high tunnel

raspberries and other fruit crops and to nearby Branch Creek Farm to check out the Domstreich's micro greens and edible flowers. As we have been planting lots and lots of tomatoes on mulch, I am excited to say that the majority of the black mulch you see on the farm is biodegradable. This type of mulch has officially been approved for organic production, and we have fully embraced its use after trialing it last year. For most of our crops that are in the ground for an extended period of time, the biodegradable mulch can't be beat. Though it looks like black plastic, it is actually made of a corn starch based raw material that will break down over time and can be completely tilled into the soil. Check it out in the onions, flowers and tomato fields. Hope you are enjoying the first fruits of the farm. It's just the beginning! -Farmer Tricia

### News and Notes:

- ♦ **Coming up in the share: more strawberries, Chinese cabbage, hakurei turnips, broccoli raab.**
- ♦ **First Potluck scheduled for Saturday June 14 at 6pm. Bring a dish to share, and your own beverages and place settings. Share delicious food and great company!**
- ♦ **Pick-ups are Tuesday and Fridays from 2-8pm. Please pick-up on your regularly scheduled day. If you need to switch pick-up days because of vacations or other reasons, prior notice is required. Check the CSA Rough Guide for detailed information on how to do this. You can also send someone to pick-up for you, but it is your responsibility to make them aware how the CSA distributions function.**
- ♦ **Remember to bring bags to the farm to get your veggies.**
- ♦ **On distribution days please drive slow and watch for people crossing the street. Please do not block the gate into the farm when parking.**

## Herbal Classes held at farm

**"The Herbal Home: Cleaning the Home Naturally"**, June 14, 11-1pm, \$15. Forget about all those expensive cleaners and polishes...come learn about cleaning your home green. Leave with natural recipes and more.

**"The Herbal Home: Cleaning your Clothes Naturally"**, June 21, 11-1pm, \$15. Learn how to make your own laundry detergent and herbal fabric softener. Leave with recipes and a free herbal laundry gift.

**"The Herbal Home: Natural Hair"**, June 28, 11-1pm, \$15. This class will help you learn to use basic ingredients from

the kitchen and garden to help improve the look and feel of your hair.

**"The Herbal Home: Natural Body Care"**, July 12, 11-1pm, \$15. Looking for a natural way to clean your body and teeth? Leave with recipes for your own herbal toothpaste, mouthwash and more.

**"Bites, Stings and Rashes"**, July 19, 11-1pm, \$15. Learn to make poultices, tinctures, homemade bug repellent, salves, and even a "spit" to help your family with the onslaught of ailments during the summer months.

**"Summer Sun and Fun"**, July 26, 11-1pm, \$15. Natural

remedies for jellyfish stings, swimmers ear, and sunburn. Learn to combat the "summer sweets" that can depress the immune system and cause hyperactivity in children.

*To see complete class descriptions offered by herbalist Carla Klimuk, go to the Home page of the website and in the column on the right follow the link to the Herbal Class Series, or check out the online calendar. Space is limited, so register early. Carla is offering a \$5 discount to those who sign up for all 4 classes in the Herbal Home Series. Do not contact the farm to register- contact Carla directly at carlalynne@fmgirl.com or call 267-816-0848.*

## The Basics of Broccoli Raab

Broccoli raab, also spelled broccoli rabe- or rapini - is a leafy green vegetable that is eaten in China and Southern Italy and growing more popular in the United States. A descendant of a wild herb, broccoli raab was once highly prized by the Romans and cultivated all over the southern Mediterranean, but it didn't appear in North America until the 1920s, when Italian farmers brought it to the United States.

It is slightly bitter and nutty, often considered an acquired taste. It is often steamed or sautéed with olive oil as a side dish. Its strong flavor makes it a perfect complement to milder foods, like polenta.

It is grown as much for its tasty mustard-like tops as for the multiple small florets with clusters of broccoli-like buds. Although it has broccoli's name, broccoli raab is a very different vegetable. Lots of broccoli-like buds appear, but a head never forms.

To maintain crispness, refrigerate the raab unwashed and loosely wrapped in a plastic bag. Clean and prepare broccoli raab as you would any leafy green vegetable, wash well and trim the tough ends of the stems. If you wish,

the stems can be removed up to the leaves before sautéing or steaming. The flavor and texture can be controlled by cooking time - less cooking means crisper texture and somewhat sharper flavor. It can be steamed, blanched and stir-fried, served as a side, added as a finish to soups or used in frittata. It matches well with lemon, olive oil and garlic. A popular dish consists of a delicate pasta like capellini topped with lots of lightly cooked broccoli raab, with oil, red or black pepper, and whatever else, to taste.

Broccoli raab is a good source of vitamins A, C, and K, as well as potassium, calcium, and iron. It cooks up quickly (be careful not to overcook!) and can be used in a variety of ways. Yes, it is an acquired taste, but it's a taste you should try. What can be quicker at the end of a busy day than pasta tossed with lightly sautéed broccoli raab? It's a tasty, quick meal that is healthy and leaves you satisfied at the same time.

*Article compiled by Rachel Dilkus, food lover and fiber enthusiast.*

## Canadian Bacon, Potato and Swiss-Chard Gratin

*2 TBS butter*

*1/2 lbs Swiss card, large stems removed, leaves cut crosswise into approximately 1-inch ribbons (Any green can be substituted)*

*1 clove garlic, minced*

*1/2 tsp fresh-ground black pepper*

*1/2 tsp. salt*

*1 1/2 lbs. baking potatoes (about 2) cut into approx 1/8-inch slices*

*1/4 lb. Gruyere grated (about 1 1/2 Cups)*

*2/3 Cup chicken broth or homemade stock*

*1/2 pound sliced Canadian bacon*

1. Heat oven to 425. In a medium frying pan, melt 1 TBS butter over moderately low heat. Add the Swiss chard and cook until starting to wilt, about 1 minute. Stir in garlic and 1/8 tsp each of salt and pepper. Cook until no liquid remains in the pan, about 2 minutes.

2. Butter and 8-by8 inch baking pan or similarly sized gratin dish. Layer one third of the potatoes in the dish and top with 1/8 tsp each of salt and pepper, a third of the cheese and half of the Cana-

dian bacon. Spread the Swiss Chard in a single layer. Top with half the remaining potatoes and sprinkle with 1/8 tsp each of salt and pepper. Spread half the remaining cheese and the remaining Canadian bacon over the potatoes. Add the remaining potatoes to the dish, sprinkle with the remaining 1/8 tsp each of salt and pepper and top with the remaining cheese and TBS butter. Pour broth all over.

3. Cover the gratin with aluminum foil and bake for 15 minutes. Remove the foil and continue baking until the potatoes are tender and the top is golden brown, about 30 minutes longer. Let stand 2-3 minutes before cutting.

*Source: Quick from Scratch One-Dish Meals.*

Contributor Laura Thomas says "This is a treat for the whole family- any substitutions can be made for the Canadian bacon and the cheese, but we love the Gruyere. I also just steam Chard, Kale, or any of the other tasty greens and add them to homemade macaroni and cheese.

## Quick-Cooked Bok Choy

Bok Ckoy's thick stems become creamy and tender during cooking in a way that you cannot duplicate with other greens. Other vegetables you can use: Chinese cabbage, chard, or broccoli raab.

*1 head bok choy*

*3 Tablespoons vegetable oil*

*Salt and freshly ground pepper*

Cut the leaves from the stems, and cut the stems into roughly 1-inch pieces. Heat oil in large skillet over med-high heat. When hot, add the stems and cook, stirring occasionally, until they just lose their crunch, about 3 min. Add the greens and about 1/2 Cup water or stock.

Cook, stirring occasionally, until the liquid evaporates and the stems become very tender, about 10 min. more. Add a little more water or stock if necessary. Sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste.

*Variation: Add diced spring onions with the stems. Add some black beans along with 2 teaspoons minced garlic and 1 teaspoon minced ginger. Add 1 tablespoon of soy sauce to taste during last 5 min. of cooking.*

*Source: How to Cook Everything Vegetarian*

## Sesame Kale Salad

*1 pound fresh kale (or chard, spinach or other greens)*

*2 tablespoons soy sauce*

*2 tablespoons toasted sesame oil*

*1 tablespoon toasted sesame seeds or substitute chopped roasted walnuts.*

*1 clove garlic minced*

*2 teaspoons honey (or other sweetener)*

*1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar dash of black or ground red pepper, or more to taste*

Separate kale leaves from stems. Chop stems and greens. Steam stems a couple of minutes, then add the greens and steam until just tender. Drain; let kale cool enough to handle it. Squeeze out as much water as possible. Place in a serving bowl. Mix the remaining ingredients in another bowl; add to greens. Mix, chill, and serve. Makes 4-6 servings.

*Source: From Asparagus to Zucchini*