

THIS WEEK'S BOX:

Cucumbers
Carrots
Green Top Gold and/or
Chioggia Beets
Fresh Garlic
Green Beans
Green Zucchini
Patty Pan Squash
Red Cabbage
Red Leaf Lettuce
Snow Peas
Sugar Snap Peas
BONUS ITEM: Basil



News from the Fields of Driftless Organics

Week #5! It is raining once again and right about now, we have numerous unmentionable words that we'd like to shout towards the sky. We can't help but laugh though and are remaining optimistic, even as the rain continues and the creeks rise. I keep reminding myself that the world can not and should not revolve around our daily plight - and that this is just another day in the life.

The extremely good news is that last week was warm and rain-less and the fields dried out enough for us to get in there and get some work done. We all put in extra hours and we're able to accomplish some mighty impressive feats to get us back on track.

Let's Talk Soil!

No matter how you slice it, when it comes to growing great veggies, it all comes down to the soil. Great vegetables come from great soil - it is as simple as that. Yet the complexities of the matter are too many to explain in this one newsletter. This much I will say: it is guaranteed that the most successful vegetable farms out there have some of the best soils. You can be the best damn farmer around, with all the biggest and shiniest equipment and a thousand workers working for you; and unless you have good soil under your feet, you won't amount to much.

For the last few years, Driftless Organics has been on the search for some land to purchase. We've looked at many a farm and we've yet to find a place that has the soil we're looking for. We are pretty picky because we know that vegetables won't grow in just any plot of dirt.

You see, all soil is not created equal. Some soils are sandy and dry, some are

nothing but clay. Some soils are rocky and thin, others are really deep and rich. And each type of soil has it's own set of positives and negative attributes.

For example a very sandy soil dries out really quick and you have to irrigate all the time, which leads to nutrient leaching and poor veggies. Yet, if you can keep up with the watering and feeding, you can pull out some mighty nice looking root crops because they have the space to grow.

On the other hand, If you have a soil that is heavy and dense, you've most likely got a lot of nutrients at your disposal. But with that heaviness comes it's drawbacks. When it rains a lot (like this year), you're hard pressed to get into the fields to work them (like this year).

The key is to find a soil is balanced; one that is sandy enough to be well drained, but can still hold enough water and nutrients to feed those hungry vegetables.

To further the matter, the soil a farmer has to work with, good, mediocre or otherwise, needs to be taken care of. It needs to be nurtured and fed and coddled and most of all not abused. We remind

"While the farmer holds the title to the land, actually it belongs to all the people because civilization itself rests upon the soil."

--- Thomas Jefferson

ourselves of this each and every day we go to work. From not allowing a tractor into a wet field, to carefully planning what cover crops are going where, we pay very close attention to the health of our soil.

We do this, not just because we are organic or because it is the hip thing to do right now. We take care of the soil because if we didn't, the quality and health of your vegetables would suffer and we'd be

out of a job pretty quick.

We dream of the day when we will find that farm with ample amounts nice, deep, loamy soil that we can grow prize winning vegetables out of. Until then, we'll work with the soil we have to work with and take care of it as if it belonged to all of us.



THIS WEEK'S BOX by Dani Lind

Carrots – early carrots are exciting but frankly not quite as tasty as fall ones, as there hasn't been any frost (knock on wood: It got down to 45 degrees the other night!) to sweeten them up. Store in plastic in the fridge.

Cilantro – is such a versatile yummy herb, at least to those of us who like it. I have to admit that the first time I ever had it I hated it - it totally tasted like soap. Now I love it! It keeps best in a plastic bag with a paper towel in the fridge & should be used within 5 days or so.

Cucumbers – are cooling & thirst quenching! They have modest amounts of minerals & vitamins A, C, & E, mostly in their skin - so please don't peel the fresh tender organic skin! Top salads with them or cut them into wedges solo or served with dip. Store in your fridge's crisper drawer for up to a week.

Fresh Garlic – is simply uncured full-size garlic heads. Due to their moisture content they won't store like cured garlic, though, so keep it on the counter for only a couple days or in the fridge for a couple weeks. Notice how much easier the fresh stuff is to peel!

Green Beans – Hurray! Nothing means July like green beans. Eat them fresh in the car on the way home, or lightly steamed drizzled with fresh lemon juice & butter, or stir-fried with fresh garlic. Keep in the fridge & use them up within 5 days or so.

Green Zucchini – is nice with black beans, either cooked into them or sauteed or grilled on the side. A great filler for fajitas! For Josh's wedding this weekend, we're roasting zucchini with fresh onions, garlic, & green beans tossed in a bit of his sunflower oil & white wine vinegar in tinfoil packets on the grill. Store on the counter for a few days or in the crisper drawer for over a week.

Green Top Carrots – first carrots of the year! These early carrots are tender & mineral rich. Throw the green tops in the compost before storing the roots in plastic in the fridge.

Green Top Gold and/or Chioggia Beets – are nice because they don't stain like red beets. Chioggias are the light red ones have bulls-eye stripes inside. The golds are bright yellow inside like a gem. Grate them raw on salads; slice them into rounds to eat with dip; roast or boil them whole, slip the skins off, & serve right away with butter, a dollop of creme fraiche (or sour cream) & fresh dill. The tops are super nutritious, too - steam or stir-fry them & serve with butter or balsamic vinegar.

Red Leaf Lettuce – should be stored in plastic in the fridge & used up within 4 days or so.

Red Spring Cabbage – well, so it's not still spring, but this is indeed an early cabbage. Doesn't keep as long or have quite as deep of color as its fall counterpart the red storage cabbage. If you keep the outer leaves on as protection, it will keep whole in the fridge for weeks. Once you cut into it, though, you should store it in plastic & use it up within a week or two.

Scallions – There'll be fresh bulb-y onions sometime very soon! In the meantime, use these in their place. Keep in plastic in the fridge & use up within a week.

Snow Peas – tend to be cooked - especially in stir-fries - whereas the sugar snaps are best raw. Keeps in the fridge for up to a week. Delicious blanched for no longer than a minute & dressed with scallions, tamari, toasted sesame oil, rice vinegar, & honey.

Sugar Snap Peas – are so crunchy & sweet! Eat them whole out of hand or cut at a bias on salads. Don't forget to peel back the stem and remove the little pea-string that runs along the back edge of the pea.

Yellow Patty Pan Squash – can be grilled like the zucchini, or sliced & sauteed or stir-fried. Keeps a few days on the counter or about a week in the fridge.

Fish Tacos w/ Red Cabbage & Cilantro

1 lb. white flaky fish like cod, mahi mahi, or walleye or tilapia, cut into long strips

Corn tortillas

1 cup red cabbage, very thinly sliced

1/4 c. scallions, chopped

1/4 c. cilantro, ripped into large pieces

lime wedges for garnish

Sauce:

2/3 c. plain yogurt or sour cream

3 Tbsp. mayonnaise

1 lime, juiced

1 jalapeno pepper, minced OR 1 Tbsp. hot sauce

1/2 tsp. ground cumin

1/2 tsp. ground coriander

1/4 tsp. chipotle powder (optional)

Squeeze lime juice & salt over fish.

Whisk sauce ingredients together & set aside.

Either grill or bread & deep fry fish. (Mix 1 c. flour, 2 Tbsp. cornstarch, 1 tsp. baking powder, 1/2 tsp. salt & quickly mix in an egg beaten with some light beer. Roll each piece of fish in flour then dip in breading & slide into a couple of inches of 375 degree oil until golden brown. Drain on paper towel.)

Warm each tortilla on a hot pan & serve topped with fish, cabbage, scallions, cilantro, sauce, & lime wedges.

Beet-Cabbage-Carrot Slaw

2 medium raw beets, grated (no need to peel)

2 medium carrots, grated (ditto)

2 cups red cabbage, shredded

1 Tbsp. fresh ginger, minced

2 fresh garlic cloves, minced

3 Tbsp. oil (sunflower, sesame, peanut, etc.)

1/4 c. vinegar (apple cider, rice, or white wine)

1 Tbsp. sugar

2 Tbsp. cilantro, chopped

1/4 c. green onions, chopped

In serving bowl, whisk together ginger, garlic, oil, vinegar, & sugar until sugar dissolves.

Add beets, carrots, & cabbage. Garnish with cilantro & green onions. Serves 4-6.