

one potato two

News from the Fields of Driftless Organics

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Week #11! The days rush past in a never-ending blur of work, eat and sleep. We sound like broken records when people ask what we've been up to: "oh, y'know, been busy with work..." But, we'd have it no other way and we are excited as ever for this week's box: lots of goodies to offer and we hope you've been enjoying the boxes thus far.

On the farm, we say goodbye to 3 of our crew-mates, Luke, Lauren and Jack, as they make their way to their various colleges. They will be sorely missed! We wish them all the best of luck. Otherwise, all is GOOD and we are finding our happiness daily.

Happiness is a Cherokee Purple Heirloom Tomato

We all have our own idea or ideas of what happiness is. My personal opinion is that we need to constantly remind ourselves of the importance of being happy and more importantly, we need to really dig down deep and ask ourselves, "What makes me happy?" Once we discover a thing or two that does, we need to seek that out with a no-holds-barred fervor.

C'mon, you can't disagree with me on this one - happiness is a wonderful feeling; smiling feels really, really good and satisfaction is next to euphoria.

Happiness for me comes in many forms. Examples include a day of hard work and knowing that I got something down and I did it well. This is happiness. To put a cherry on it, I go home and have a fabulous dinner with Dani. This is EXTREME happiness. The kind that makes me feel grateful to be alive. Happiness is fishing with my dad (catching a walleye tops it). Happiness is spending a Sunday afternoon canoeing on the Kickapoo. Happiness is a winter squash harvest in before the impending frost.

Happiness is (and I mean this) packing a full CSA box.

What else? Oh yeah, the simplest form of happiness: A tomato. Not just any tomato, but a Driftless Organics' Cherokee Purple Heirloom Tomato. This is one of my all time faves - deep, dark reddish-purple and extremely juicy. The perfect level of acidity, balanced with the right amount of sweetness. You gotta let these suckers get reeeaaaalllly ripe and then you eat them raw with wild ambition. A slice of Cherokee on a baguette with mozzarella and basil.... are you kidding? Does it get any better?

Cherokee Purple is just one of many varieties of tomatoes we grow - and they just happen to be doing the best. To be perfectly honest, overall, our tomato crop this year has been a severe disappointment. Be it the cool early summer weather or the lack of fertility in the soil or some other unexplainable reason, our tomatoes, thus far have yielded poorly and we have been plagued with a disorder called blossom end rot. (The bottoms of the tomatoes are all rotty).

We plant our tomatoes on the ridge to maximize air movement which theoretically helps to prevent disease. This year, for the first time, we planted our tomatoes into red plastic mulch (usually we mulch with straw, which takes about a thousand years to do...). We irrigate our tomatoes with drip tape that goes underneath the plastic mulch and puts water right where the plant needs it the most - it's roots.

Instead of staking our plants, we trellis them, which seems to be the preferred method amongst commercial growers. During a good year, it is quite a site to see row after row of walls of green plants, all hanging heavy with fruit. This year.... not so much. In places, the plants are thin and spindly with a few fruits hanging.

I'd like to blame it solely on the weather, but I think the

the-box!

Cilantro
Cucumbers
Garlic
Heirloom Tomatoes:
Cherokee Purple + Various
Green Kale
Green or Red Leaf Lettuce
Red Slicer Tomatoes
Sungold Tomatoes
Sweet Corn
Sweet Peppers
Yellow Onion
Watermelon
Zucchini & Summer Squash

**BONUS ITEM: Pickling
Cukes + Dill**

quality of the field is as much to blame. Once again, we were dealing with a field with low fertility. You see, fertility management is one of the hardest aspects of farming because you don't see the return on your work and investment right away. Therefore, it's priority gets pushed back by things like weeding, harvest and delivery of product. But then, you pay for it with events like poor tomato yields. To keep things simple let me just say this: don't wait to feed the soil!

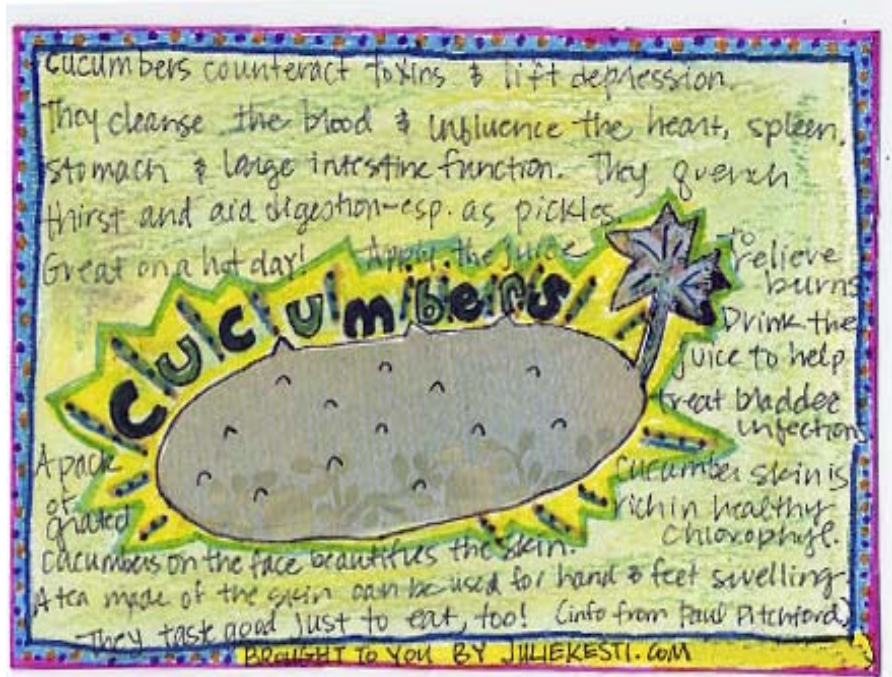
Anyway, the tomatoes we DO have look great and taste wonderful as well. And, with any luck at all you will find a shred of happiness during a meal or two this week as you bite into your very own Cherokee Purple Tomato.



TOM'S CUCUMBER SALSA

- 2 cucumbers, seeds removed, coarsely chopped
- 2 jalapeno peppers, seeds removed, finely chopped
- 1/4 c. onion or scallion whites, finely chopped
- 3 Tbsp. cilantro, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- zest & juice of 1 lime
- salt & pepper to taste

Combine all ingredients & let stand in fridge for an hour to meld flavors. Serve with chips or on grilled chicken. Will keep for several days. Do not freeze.



YOUR BOX!

CILANTRO - finally some cilantro! Keeps best in plastic with a paper towel in the bottom in the fridge, but even so try to use it within a few days or it'll rot. If you're going out of town or something just chop it up & freeze it to pull out for emergencies. Use the leaf & upper parts of stem. Cilantro is such a versatile herb - equally at home in Mexican & Caribbean dishes as it is in Indian, Thai, or Chinese ones. An essential component of any salsa, fresh or cooked.

CUCUMBERS - you have to appreciate the cooling nature of cukes on hot days like these! Use them instead of crackers for cold dip receptacles, add 'em to salads, put them on tired eyes, or chop them up into Mike's dad Tom's special cucumber salsa recipe below! No need to peel these fresh organic cukes!

GARLIC - fully cured now, so store in a cool-ish spot in kitchen out of direct sun.

GREEN &/or PURPLE BEANS - This is our last planting of green and purple beans, so enjoy them while they are here. I know that you've been getting them a lot, but they freeze well, so if you're sick of 'em, stick 'em in the freezer!

GREEN KALE - green curly kale. Strip the leaves off the stem, chop, & add to soups, sauces, stir-fries, you name it, towards the end of cooking time. Or lightly steam whole & serve with olive oil & lemon juice or shaved aged cheese.

LETTUCE - red or green leaf is back! Late summer lettuces may not be as sweet as early summer ones - sweeten up these August salads with some cukes, cherry tomatoes & sweet peppers!

SUNGOLD OR GRAPE TOMATOES - Both delicious, the sungolds are sweeter & the grapes tomato-eyer. Please never store them in the fridge!

SWEET CORN - Just a couple of ears per box is all our sad patch would give us... One of these years we will learn how to grow plentiful sweet corn.

SWEET PEPPER MIX - Sweet peppers are just so sweet! Keep on counter for a couple of days or fridge for a week or so. Delicious raw on salads, with dip, or on sandwiches. Or you can roast them - it's easiest when you've got the grill going. Place peppers on grate over hot coals, turn until blistered & starting to turn black. Throw roasted peppers in a plastic bag for 5-10 minutes, then place them in bowl of cold water. Rub charred skins off with fingers, remove stem & seeds, & use within a few days as you would canned roasted peppers.

YELLOW ONION - now cured - go ahead & store them on the counter.

CHEROKEE PURPLE TOMATOES - are one of our favorite heirlooms, with their purple tinted skin, smooth beef-steak texture, & sweet smoky flavor. This variety was supposedly grown by the Eastern Band of Cherokees in the

Southeast & shared with a settler family in Tennessee in the late 1800's. That family & their neighbors quietly kept the variety going until 1990 when a prominent seed collector was given a sample pack. Today the Cherokee Purple is one of the most widely grown heirloom tomatoes, with dozens of seed companies offering them. They are superb simply sliced on a plate with salt, pepper, & a drizzle of olive oil (which helps your body utilize the valuable antioxidant lycopene contained in tomatoes), or in salads, sandwiches, gazpacho, or salsa. In addition to lycopene, fresh tomatoes are high in vitamins C, A, & K.

VARIOUS HEIRLOOM TOMATOES - There's a mix of Nebraska Wedding (yellow/orange & round; Plum Lemon - bright yellow and lemon shaped; Green Zebra - small, green and zebra striped (eat when soft and yellowish-green); and maybe even a Brandywine (big, reddish-pink and super tasty).

WATERMELON - Mini-red watermelons!!! This is a sweet treat indeed. Enjoy! (Best when chilled, of course.)

ZUCCHINI & SUMMER SQUASH - zukes/ yellow summer squash are perfect veggies for grilled shish-kabobs! Beautiful on a skewer alternated with red onion & colored peppers - (add some mushrooms & meat if you eat it!).

BONUS: PICKLING CUKES + DILL