

THIS WEEK'S BOX:

- Asian Green Mix
- Banana Peppers
- Cucumbers
- Garlic
- Gold Beets
- Pimiento Peppers
- Red or Green
- Iceberg Lettuce
- Red Onions
- Sage
- Sungold Tomatoes
- Sweet Onions
- Sweet Orange Peppers
- Swiss Chard
- Tomatoes
- Yellow or Dragon
- Tongue Beans



News from the Fields of Driftless Organics

Week #13 Here's for breaking records! With last night's 4 inches (wowsers), we've surpassed the standing figure to make this the wettest summer on record. So there you go.

We've hit September and it is hard to not start thinking about the autumn that looms on the horizon. With planting just about finished (there is one more planting of spinach and salad mix planned), we are focusing all of our energy and time on harvest. Potatoes are on the forefront, as there are about 2 1/2 acres just waiting to come out. If all goes well, you'll start seeing our brown paper potato bags again in many of the Twin Cities' food co-ops. Wooahoo!

In last week's news, I talked about our sunflowers and how we've been making and bottling our very own local sunflower cooking and salad oil. In the

Here's Josh to talk more about our first foray into the world of veggie oil fuel....

"This spring, we installed a straight vegetable oil kit on our John Deere 4440. This tractor (pictured below), is our 'primary tillage' tractor, or in other words, our main workhorse, used to do most of the spring and fall tillage and some of the major cultivating. As we are farming just about 100 acres, you can imagine that this beast guzzles its fair share of fuel. So, in a continuing effort to be more sustainable, we set the tractor up to burn something more easily obtainable than diesel fuel. Basically, the system we installed will allow the tractor to be able to run on any type of waste or virgin vegetable oil.

Whether it be sunflower, flax, canola, camelina, soybean, safflower, corn, or any other oilseed crop you can think of, the 4440

will burn it. For the system, we had to install an extra tank on the front of the tractor for the oil. Then we installed an extra pump to pump the oil to the engine. In between the newly installed tank and pump we mounted a series of filters, lines, wires and a routing valve better known as the "pig" to get both veggie oil

on regular diesel for a while. Then when the engine warms up to a safe operating temperature, it will switch automatically to veggie oil via a temperature sensor switch and "pig" (routing valve) that both the diesel and the veggie oil come through.

Then, about five to ten minutes before you shut the tractor down for the day, you need to manually click a switch to make it switch back to diesel so that you can start on diesel when you go to start it the next time.

The reason for starting and stopping on diesel is because diesel has a lower viscosity and does not need to be warmed up before it can run in a engine; whereas veggie oil needs to be preheated to run efficiently in a diesel engine. So the "pig" (routing valve) actually has engine coolant circulating through it to warm the veggie oil up before it gets burned in the engine.

Yes, I know this all sounds very complicated but at the end of the installation the whole thing actually worked; and we've been using it all season long. Now if you will excuse me, I have to go start plowing field 35, burning, well today it will be soybean oil..."

-- Josh

And with the smell of french fries in his wake, Josh heads down the road. Even though I know we aren't going to save the world by burning vegetable oil in this one tractor, I do feel really good about having this set up. I enjoy talking and teaching people about what we are doing and love the fact that we are burning what would otherwise be a waste product. It isn't THE solution for our country's "oil addiction"; but it is a welcome addition to the farm. If nothing else, when the tractor's running, it gets us mighty hungry for lunch...

--Mike



process of procuring this wonderful oil (the storing, cleaning and pressing of the seeds), there is inevitably a certain amount of waste. Rather than just chuck these wasted seeds into the compost bin, we press them and burn that oil in one of our tractors.

and diesel to the motor.

After all the mounting, plumbing and wiring was complete, we were able to really begin understanding how this whole crazy apparatus was actually going to work. First of all, when you start the tractor it will run

THIS WEEK'S BOX by Dani Lind

Asian Green Mix – mix in with the lettuce for a nice spicy salad, or quick saute it with garlic & oil as an easy side dish.

Carrots – Mid-season carrots like these just don't have that sweetness like the spring of fall ones do. But they make for great dipping or grated onto salads.

Banana Peppers – There will be 2 of these yellow - to orange - to red guys in your box. They are larger and longer than the sweet mini peppers. They are of medium heat and actually seem to get sweeter the redder they are. We've discovered that the majority of their heat is in the seeds. These are great just thrown on the grill and slightly blackened and then chopped up in Mexican or Caribbean foods.

Cucumbers – I can't say often enough how much I love using cucumbers as a healthy cracker substitute with dip or spreads!

Delicata Squash – oh boy - the first squash of the season! Delicata has the softest skin of all the common winter squashes, so it can actually be eaten with the flesh if you wish. Its long, narrow shape means it cooks quicker than most squashes, too - cutting it in half lengthwise, scooping out the seeds, & roasting it cut-side down at 350 degrees on a baking sheet should take less than a half hour (versus up to an hour for others). After its done it's really yummy to flip them over, drizzle with olive or sunflower oil, & melt a bit of Parmesan on top! Or you can slice it really thin & stir-fry it. Or cut into chunks & steam or simmer it. Store on the counter for up to a month or so.

Garlic – while you're baking that delicata squash, you should roast some garlic alongside it: slice the top of the head off to expose the cloves, set upright on the pan with the squash, & drizzle with some olive oil, & roast the same amount of time as the squash, then squeeze that yummy garlic out & smear it on a fresh, hot baguette!

Gold Beets – if you really want to be efficient about things, you could put these beets (whole with skin) on that cookie sheet with the squash & garlic & roast them for a bit longer than the rest (about 45 minutes). Then cool them, slip off skins, slice, & marinate for a delicious salad that will keep for days. See one such recipe, to the right.

Red or Green Iceberg Lettuce – delicious mixed with the Asian greens. Use inner leaves as a pretty cup to serve chicken or egg salad in.

Red Onion – are a little sweeter than yellow onions if you want to caramelize them.

Pimiento Pepper – There will be two of these round red sweet peppers. Use and store as you would a bell pepper.

Sage – fresh sage is delicious in dishes made with white wine (like pastas, cream sauces, savory white beans, potato soups, chicken...). Try it in the yellow bean dish, below.

Sungold Tomatoes – their high sugar content means they don't keep long, so try to use them within a few days. Texture is best if they're not refrigerated.

Sweet Onions – the best onion for sandwiches & salads! Don't keep as long as storage onions, but should be fine on the counter for a couple weeks.

Sweet Orange Mini Peppers – so easy to chop up with how few seeds they have! Try carefully cutting the stem off, stuff with soft cheese & fresh herbs, brush with oil, & stick in the broiler for a couple minutes, turning once. Store in the fridge.

Swiss Chard – Store in a plastic bag in the fridge and use within a week.

Tomatoes – Our second crop is just starting to come on - so we are hoping that this is just a sample of what's to come.

Yellow or Dragon Tongue Beans – are really at their best either eaten raw within a day or two or lightly steamed & drizzled with lemon juice or melted butter. Or try the Garlicky Beans with Tomato & Sage recipe, below. Store in plastic in the fridge & use within several days.

Yellow Potatoes – yummy! If you've got the grill going, try cubing them, tossing with oil, garlic, fresh sage, salt & pepper (& perhaps some halved mini peppers or chopped banana peppers?) & wrapping in a tinfoil packet to grill for about 15-20 minutes (not over the hottest part of the grill), flipping once. Store in a cool, dark place.

Maple Orange Mustard Golden Beet Salad

1 lb. golden beets (about what's in your box)
1 Tbsp. sunflower oil
1 clove garlic, minced
3 Tbsp. orange juice
1 Tbsp. maple syrup
1 tsp. grainy mustard
salt & pepper to taste

Roast beets whole with skins at 350 degrees for 40-50 minutes. Meanwhile, saute garlic in oil in small sauce pan until fragrant & golden. Whisk in remaining ingredients & bring to a boil. Cool. When beets are done (can be easily pierced with a fork), cool them & then slip off skins, slice, & toss with marinade.

Garlicky Beans with Tomato & Sage

1/2 lb. yellow or dragon tongue beans (about what's in your box), stems removed
2 Tbsp. olive oil
4-6 cloves garlic, minced
1/2 banana pepper, seeds removed, minced (medium hot - wear gloves if you have sensitive skin)
1 roma or slicer tomato, diced OR half a pint of sungolds, cut in half
2 Tbsp. fresh sage, chiffonaded (leaves rolled up & cut into thin ribbons)
salt & pepper to taste

Heat oil in large saute pan. Add garlic & banana peppers & saute over medium-high heat for a minute or two. Add beans & saute for another few minutes. Add tomato, sage, salt & pepper & continue to cook for several minutes, until tomato liquid has all but evaporated. Serve immediately.