

FLATBUSH FARM SHARE

NEWS

1.18 / SEPT 30 2009

This week's eats*:

- .5 lb. salad mix
- 1/4 lb arugula
- 1 lb. of carrots
- 1 pepper
- 1 eggplant
- 1 bunch of swiss chard
- 1 stalk of brussel sprouts
- 1 bunch of easter egg radishes
- 1 bunch purple top turnips
- 2 tomatoes (individual fruits)

* Please let us know what you think of the veggies you are receiving! Our farmers want to know and will try to adjust accordingly.



last week's share! courtesy of Amy Dreher

FOOD SAFETY BILL: WHAT COULD IT MEAN FOR OUR FARMERS? (Compiled by FFS member Sarah Falkner)

The Food Safety Enhancement Act of 2009 (HR 2749/S510)—aka the Food Safety Bill—sounds like it could be something beneficial for people who care about food. But it “would absolutely devastate Columbia County,” said Gianni Ortiz, executive director of the Regional Farm and Food Project, a non-profit dedicated to promoting sustainable agriculture and local food systems in the Hudson Valley. “Columbia County’s Home on the Web,” ccSCOOP News, interviewed Ortiz this summer, as well as Eric Ooms, president of the Columbia County Farm Bureau, who said his organization opposes the legislation for several reasons, not the least of which is that “it doesn’t make sense.”

Flatbush Farm Share’s The Farm at Miller’s Crossing is located in the Hudson Valley’s Columbia County, as are many other fine small farms—often owned and operated by families with deep connections to their land, who take great personal pride and care ensuring quality and sustainability in all that they do.

Ortiz said the legislation, if passed by the U.S. Senate, would “put small farms out of business” by mandating cumbersome and expensive actions by the farmers. The legislation was already approved by the U.S. House of Representatives, and a Senate version, sponsored by Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-III) was introduced last month.

Among the requirements of the House legislation are a \$500 per facility registration fee, with an annual cap of \$175,000 for any individual owner, FDA-approved methods by which crops are raised and harvested, removal of all hedgerows, specialized fencing around crops and the creation of a sterilized buffer area around crops.

“This kind of regulation,” said Ortiz, “translates into additional cost and off-field man hours that small farms will not be able to afford or survive.”

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition and the National Organic Council opposes the legislation, saying the \$500 annual fees are too high for small processors. Congressman Scott Murphy (NY-20) approved the house bill, while Congressman Maurice Hinchey (NY-22) voted no. Ortiz said the legislation grew out of a reaction to two E. coli outbreaks in California in 2006 which led to the deaths of several people. The first outbreak was in spinach and the second in lettuce, and both occurred within a three-month period. Ortiz contends that the outbreak was erroneously attributed to wild animals affecting the crops, thus leading to the stringent requirements listed above. More likely, she said, the outbreak was the result of contamination from “factory” farms.

Ooms said the safety concerns boil down to a lack of inspections of the larger facilities and processing facilities and not a lack of precautions by small farmers.

“But you know politicians,” he said. “They always like to pass more laws. Really, they should propose to do the inspections they are supposed to, instead of passing new laws.”

Ooms also questioned the ability of the FDA to oversee food safety, stating the organization doesn’t have a good track record for safety with the products it already oversees.

While there is no specific date for a senate vote on the legislation, Senate experts have stated publicly that they expect a vote as early as this fall.

“My concern is that nobody knows about it, and yet it could destroy a way of life,” Ortiz said.



last week's fruit share! courtesy of Amy Dreher

Soy-braised Kabocha Squash *courtesy by FFS member Lisa Maya Knauer*

Here's another simple (once you've cleaned the squash) and yummy way to prepare squash. You can add other vegetables to the pot -- sweet potatoes, carrots and turnips all make good additions. You'll have to adjust cooking times or how you cut the vegetables: turnips cook much more quickly than any of the other vegetables). Japanese tend to make this dish a little sweet. I think the vegetables are sweet enough but you can add honey or agave as you like.

1-1/2 lbs. kabocha squash, seeds scooped out, lightly peeled (it's fine to leave some skin on) and cut into manageable wedges
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 T. minced ginger
1 T. oil
3 T -1/3 c. soy sauce (depends upon what kind of soy sauce you use and how salty you like things. I use about 1/4 cup of Chinese "superior light soy")
2 T. Chinese or Japanese rice wine (or dry sherry)
1 T honey or agave nectar (optional)
2 scallions, cut into thin slices, or 2 T. chives, minced

Optional: If you want to give this more of a Chinese red-cooked taste, you can add any or all of the following: whole star anise; a cinnamon stick; a few whole cloves; a few black peppercorns. Or you can add 1/2 tsp. of five-spice powder.

Clean squash, peel, and cut into wedges. I cut the squash in half, and then lay each half flat on the cutting board and cut in half again. I slice each quarter into 1" slices and then lay the slices flat on the cutting board and cut again into approx. 1" pieces. Some will be cubes, others wedges because of the curve of the squash. Try to make the wedges or cubes as uniform as possible so that it cooks evenly.

Mix soy and rice wine in a cup, together with honey or agave if you are using it. Add about 1/2 c. water.

Heat oil in a heavy skillet or pot with a lid. Toss in garlic and ginger, stir gently for a minute or two. Add squash cubes/wedges and toss so they are coated with oil and aromatics. Cook for 2-3 minutes. Pour the liquid mixture and stir briskly to dislodge any aromatics or squash that have stuck to the pot. Add additional water if necessary so that the squash is partially covered. Let it come to a boil and then lower heat, cover tightly and simmer, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are tender but not mushy (6-15 minutes usually depending upon how small you cut the squash and how old it is).

You can let the squash cool a bit in the liquid. The squash is served with the liquid. Usually you will want to reduce it somewhat. Place a colander over a bowl and pour the contents of the pot over. Pour the liquid back into the pot and cook over a medium-high flame, stirring until it is reduced to your liking. Taste and add soy or sweetener if you like. Pour the reduced liquid over the squash and garnish with sliced scallion or minced chives.

Note: some people like to cook the scallions or chives with the squash. If you want to prepare it this way, cook the scallions or chives with the garlic and ginger at the beginning, before you add the squash.

This is usually served warm (not hot) or at room temperature.

Quick and Delicious Tatsoi Saute

courtesy FFS member Kristin Morton

This is a great and simple way to cook up tatsoi. The measurements are all approximate, and a little more or less may be needed depending on amount of tatsoi you end up cooking.

Melt a tablespoon of butter and a tablespoon of oil in a pan. Add 1-2 cloves of minced garlic and saute. Add 1/4 cup of white wine and 2 tsps lemon juice. Add several cups of tatsoi and saute until wilted.

You can eat the tatsoi as a side dish, or you can add it to pasta with some parmesan cheese for a simple main course.

End-of-Season Potluck!

As our first season draws to a close, we'd like to organize another potluck gathering to celebrate! This will be a great opportunity to hear about the farm trip, meet other members, give feedback on how we can improve FFS, and -- of course -- share some wonderful food! If you are interested in helping organize the potluck, please write to events@flatbushfarm-share.com. We will be polling members (online and at distribution) see what dates work best.

Eat Out Local!

The Edible family of magazines' "Eat - Drink - Local" annual restaurant event takes place this week from September 27 to October 4. Partner restaurants in Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens and on the East End will showcase the mouthwatering bounty of local food and drink--as a prix fixe, a special entrée, a dessert, or a pairing with a wine, beer, or spirit made in New York State. At the end of the week, they will make voluntary contributions to Greenmarket, a program of the Council on the Environment of New York City, to benefit its Youth Education Project, which works to teach and nurture the eaters of tomorrow.

General information:

<http://www.ediblecommunities.com/manhattan/drink-local-week/drink-local-week.htm>

Brooklyn restaurants participating:

<http://www.ediblecommunities.com/manhattan/edlw-menu/brooklyn-partners-map.htm>