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Cucumbers

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USU STUDENT ORGANIC FARM Newsletter

August 8th, 2011 Volume 2 Issue 13

All the student interns by their handprints. We wanted to leave the legacy of the year 2011.

Conquering the Bounty: Kale

I've decided to write another column on kale and here's why. Many of us, including myself, get greens in the share and sauté them. While most of the time this works deliciously, sautéing does not bring out the true flavor of kale. It's also pretty tough when you sauté it, and I, for one, do not like feeling like I'm eating grass or bark.

I know some people like it sautéed and honestly I wish I was one of them. I don't like being picky but since I am, I've found one way to cook kale that really is to die for. BRAISED. Braising is basically sautéing then adding some liquid (like chicken stock) and covering the pan to let the food cook in the liquid for a bit. If kale is given just a little bit of liquid to boil in just until tender, it is quite something. Make sure you cut out the stems as well. They can be very chewy.

I was sick of not liking kale so I looked online for a recipe that didn't sauté kale and that didn't use the oven (my apartment is already hot in the summers). The recipe I found, tried, and love is attached. As a side note, kale is also really delicious in any type of soup. It keeps its texture really well, even for leftovers. Actually you could just make soup with a really flavorful broth, onions, and kale. It's really that tasty.

Featured Vegetable: Cucumbers

Newsletter by: Brianne Sherwood

There is a reason for the saying, "cool as a cucumber." Cucumbers can be 20 degrees cooler on the inside than the outside temperature. It loves sunshine and is one of the summer's favorite fruits (yes, it is a fruit because it has seeds. Interesting). Cucumbers are a member of the gourd family, which also includes pumpkins, zucchini, watermelon and other squashes. Cucumbers are available year round, but I honestly wouldn't touch a cucumber until summertime, which is about August in Logan. If you think you don't like cucumbers, try a local one. It may change your mind. It certainly changed mine.

Cucumbers are 95% water! Because of this they don't have as many nutrients as other fruits and vegetables and they also don't have as many calories. There is only 13 calories for 1 whole cup of unpeeled cucumbers! Consequently, eating cucumbers is a great way to increase fiber (and water) consumption in your diet without adding weight.

Storing and Preparing "Cukes"

Store bought cucumbers are usually waxed, helping them retain their moisture while traveling those hundreds of miles, so they should always be peeled. Local cucumbers are not waxed so just bite right into it (after washing, of course).

To seed your cucumbers, if you choose to do so, halve the cucumber lengthwise and use a spoon to scrape out the seeds in the middle.

If you want extra crunchy cucumbers such as for a salad or whatever, rinse, peel, and slice them. Put the cucumbers in a colander, sprinkle with salt (about 1 Tbsp for 6 cups) and set aside to drain. After about an hour, rinse, gently squeeze dry and drain. Wring the cucumber dry with a towel for even crunchier cucumbers.

Cucumbers are rarely cooked, but if you're feeling adventurous a very quick sauté could be nice. Otherwise, use cukes in dips or pickle them.

Cucumber Salad with Soy and Ginger

Serves 4. This salad is probably different from other cucumber salads you've had, but it's easy and delicious.

1 to 1½ pounds (about 3 medium) cucumbers
Salt and freshly ground pepper
2 Tbsp rice vinegar, or white vinegar mixed with a little water
A 1 inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and minced or grated
1 tsp sugar
2 Tbsp soy sauce, or to taste
Fine sprigs fresh cilantro for garnish

Slice your fresh, local cucumbers. (If you're using grocery store cucumbers, peel them, cut in half lengthwaise, then scoop out the seeds with a spoon. Slice, salt and put in a colander; let drain for 10-20 minutes. Rinse, drain, and spin or pay dry.) Toss the cucumbers with the salt, pepper, vinegar, ginger, sugar, and soy sauce, then taste and adjust the seasoning. Garnish and serve.

Recipe from: How to Cook Everything from Mark Bittman

ANNOUNCEMENTS

We're still giving out kohlrabi as it grows! We're keeping track of who gets them to be sure everyone gets an equal share.

We'll have elderberries soon! They are good for jams and pies (not so good fresh). If you would like some, let us know via email.

If you would like wildflowers, feel free to pick some when you pick up your share. We would be happy to show you where they are.

Email us your favorite recipes that use the produce you receive in your share! organicfarm@aggiemail.usu.edu

Volunteer hours:
Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 7am-2pm
Wednesday, Saturday: 10am-2pm

Organic Techniques: USU Student Organic Farm's Soil Fertility Plan

The farm has a really great long-term fertility plan that uses very little inputs. As you've probably seen, even though we have a full acre of land, we only use half of it at a time. The reason for this is to develop a nutritious soil. We use one half of our acre for production and keep one half of the acre "fallow". We swap the production and fallow fields every year.

Over the summer we plant different cover crops in the fallow field to build the nutrition in the soil, loosen the soil with the deep plant roots, and compete with weeds. The cover crops also keep the nutrients in our soil from sinking and being washed away. Cover crops we've used include buckwheat and hairy vetch. When the crops in the fallow field are about to go to seed, we till it in to keep all those nutrients in the soil that the plant has taken up and stored, then we plant again.

Because of this fertility plan, we don't have to use any compost on our production field all season! Talk about sustainable.

For more information about the USU Student Organic Farm or CSA shares visit:
www.usu.edu/organicfarms

On the Farm News

The season is really winding down at the farm. The pumpkins are just starting to grow in our extra field and will be ready just in time for our annual U-pick Pumpkin Day on October 8th. All CSA members get at least 1 pumpkin from our pumpkin patch so save the date!

Watermelons and cantaloupes are coming on fabulously. They are slowly growing bigger and bigger. We are about to get an explosion of tomatoes as well. It's only a matter of time. Garlic is about ready as well.

Something the farm does that most of you probably don't know about is we have a lot of international students come to the farm and volunteer as part of their study abroad program. Recently we had six Japanese students leave us. We will miss the extra hands and company!

One fun project all of the student farm interns did this week was we left our mark for future student generations (see pic). We laid cement in front of our herb garden and made handprints and drew names in the wet cement.

Veggies to expect next week: lettuce, chard, kale, spinach, peppers, green onion, cucumbers, tomatoes, green beans, carrots, maybe tatsoi, maybe summer squash, some kohlrabi

Fabulous Flavors: Tips & Techniques

Dips Galore!

Cucumbers are one of my favorite vegetables to eat raw with a dip. Here are a few recipes for simple dips that would go great with many fruits and vegetables. Get creative and make your own!

Salsa Yogurt Dip
Mix two parts plain yogurt with one part salsa (ex: 1 cup plain yogurt and ½ cup salsa)

Creamy Peanut Dip
- ¼ cup creamy peanut butter
- 2 Tbsp orange juice
- ½ cup yogurt, lowfat vanilla

Mix the peanut butter and orange juice until smooth. Stir in the vamilla. Cover and put in fridge until chilled (an hour or longer).

Honey Yogurt Fruit Dip
- 1 cup nonfat or lowfat yogurt
- 1 tsp vanilla
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- 2 to 3 Tbsp honey

Mix yogurt with vanilla and cinnamon. Add honey to taste, until desired sweetness is obtained.

Tuna Veggie Dip

- 1 can (approx. 6 oz) water-packed tuna, drained
- 1 stalk celery
- 1 medium carrot, chopped fine
- 4-6 Tbsp mayonnaise (or Miracle Whip or Vegannaise)
- 1 tsp Italian seasoning tr to taste
- Dash of black pepper

Mix ingredients until well blended with sufficient mayonnaise until desired consistency is obtained. Tip: This recipe can also be a sandwich spread.

Source: University of Nebraska Extension

Boiled Kale with a Fried Egg and Toast
Adapted from *The Zuni Café Cookbook*

About 8 ounces kale
5 Tbsp. olive oil
1 medium yellow onion, diced
A pinch of dried red pepper flakes
2 large garlic cloves, thinly sliced
3 to 4 cups mild chicken stock, or water, or a combination of the two

To serve:
Thick slices of country bread
Eggs
Olive oil
Prosciutto, torn into bite-sized bits (optional)
Parmigiano Reggiano or Pecorino Romano

First, prepare the kale: trim away any discolored spots, and then remove and discard the ribs and stems, if they are thick or woody. Stack a few leaves at a time; then slice them into ¼-inch-thick ribbons. Dump the sliced kale into a salad spinner, and add plenty of cold water. Swish the kale around to free any trapped dirt. Let stand for a minute or two – this lets the dirt fall to the bottom – and then lift the basket from the spinner. Pour out the dirty water. Replace the basket, add fresh water, and repeat. Spin dry.

In a large (4-quart) saucepan, warm the oil over medium-low heat. Add the onions, and cook, stirring occasionally, until they are translucent but still firm. Add the red pepper flakes and garlic and the kale, and stir until the kale is fully wilted. Add stock to cover by about ½ inch. Bring to a simmer. Cover, and continue to simmer until the kale is tender but not mushy, about 30 minutes. Taste, and salt as needed. This dish needs quite a bit of salt, so don't be shy.

To serve, toast one slice of bread per person. While still hot, lightly rub both sides of the toast with raw garlic. Place the toast in the bottom of a wide soup bowl. Now, fry some eggs – one per person, probably – in olive oil. Pile some kale onto the toast in each bowl, drizzle with a little bit of olive oil, and top with a fried egg. Strew with prosciutto, if you want. Grate some cheese over the whole thing, and serve.

Yield: about 4 servings

Recipe from: http://orangette.blogspot.com/