USU Student Organic Farm

July 3, 2012
Volume 3, Issue 11

Newsletter

A cute but pesky grasshopper hanging out on the eggplant leaves on the farm.

Macerating Eggplant

Now, with a description like this, you must be beyond curious about what exactly I'm going to be telling you to do with your eggplant. To macerate eggplant simply means to draw out the bitterness of the vegetable using salt. Sometimes eggplant can get a little watery and bitter tasting, especially when it's grilled or sautéed. Macerating is a technique to use to help eliminate both of those issues.

-Slice the eggplant into rounds. Place a bowl under a colander that's large enough to cover most of the holes.
-Line colander with one layer of eggplant. Then liberally salt it (don't worry, you won't be eating all that salt).
-Keep repeating with more layers until the eggplant is gone. Allow the eggplant to sit for at least 2 hours, pressing on it to squeeze out as much moisture as possible, which is where that bitter flavor comes from. After 2 hours, rinse off any excess salt and use the eggplant as the recipe indicates or just throw it on the grill.

Article by: Jillian Cartwright

Veggie Feature: Eggplant

Article by Amanda Spackman

To me, eggplant is like the mystery of all mystery vegetables. What is this strange, purple, plump, and squooshy vegetable? Seriously, have you ever cut one open? I think it would work well to scrub my bathroom sink. I had never eaten or cooked an eggplant until this year, and thank goodness I learned how, because otherwise I might not be able to come up with a use for it aside from scrubbing out my bathroom sink. Because eggplant is such an unfamiliar commodity, I thought I'd give some cooking tips, as well as a modge podge of wonderful ideas to make sure this mystery vegetable gets some credit. Eggplant, like most vegetables, can be cooked a variety of ways. Examples include steaming, frying, baking, stir-frying, and even stuffing. Eggplant is a very watery vegetable, which can pose a challenge when cooking. See the sidebar for tips on dealing with both moisture and bitterness. The peel of eggplant is edible, but can be bitter. Large eggplants tend to be more bitter, so it may be best to peel them. Some of my favorite ideas for using eggplant include, making ratatouille while watching the movie ratatouille, enjoying a plate of eggplant parmigiano in the moonlight (a handsome Italian man would be a plus) or simply fry it up using this recipe and dip it in something delicious, put it on a sandwich, or chomp on it plain! As the ratatouille chef would say...bon appetit!

Panfried Breaded Eggplant
(Adapted from Mark Bittman)

1 large or two small eggplant
1 egg
1/2 C all- purpose flour
1 1/2 C Panko Breadcrumbs
Vegetable/Olive oil
Salt/Pepper tt

1. Trim off stem and cut into slices. Sprinkle with 1 tbsp of salt and let rest for 20 minutes to an hour
2. Rinse and dry eggplant. Beat egg with salt and pepper. Coat eggplant in flour, dip it in the egg mixture, and then in the breadcrumbs.
3. Spread the coated eggplant in a single layer on a baking sheet. Chill for 10 minutes-3hours.
4. Fill a large skillet with enough oil to come 1/2 inch up the sides. Heat oil.
5. Fry breaded slices for 2-3 minutes on each side, adjusting the heat to keep oil sputtering without smoking to avid burning.
6. Drain on paper towels.

On the Farm News

Announcements

The final payment for CSA shares is August 1 which is coming up soon! Make sure you're all caught up.

As the season progresses, we are now giving out produce on a rotational basis. What this means is that if you see someone else's basket has some beautiful ripe tomatoes, and yours doesn't, don't panic. Yours are coming, it just may not be at the same time!

Article by: Amanda Hawks

It's coming to the point in the season where the temperatures are warm, the plants are all growing well, everything's planted, and days are slower- but full of harvest! In order to get everything harvested on time, we have to harvest pretty much every day as there is so much ready each day. The zucchini, tomatoes, green beans, and cucumbers grow at their own pace and have to be harvested when they're ready, otherwise they over-ripen.

This week we went on another educational outing and visited First Frost Farms. They sell a lot of garlic at the farmer's market- plus a bunch of produce. Again, it was really enjoyable to see someone else's farm; to see how they go about basic gardening. We were a little envious of their produce; somehow they've managed to avoid some of the pest problems that we have and their veggies aren't eaten up! Part of the reason for this is they provide bird feeders and have large trees in their farm area and this provides habitats for birds. The birds do a good job of eating the insects that would otherwise plague their veggies. It was interesting for me to see this use of biology in a farm situation.

Meet your Farmers

Name: Amanda Spackman
Major: Dietetics
Hometown: West Point, UT
Role on the Farm: Food Literacy Intern and Newsletter Writer

Why did you choose to spend your summer on the farm? I chose to work on the farm because I think farming and gardening are really good avenues for low income families to increase their access to healthy food, so I wanted to learn personally how to do that so I can share that knowledge with people.
What is your favorite vegetable and why? It's a tie between tomatoes and onions and avocados. Tomatoes because everything has tomatoes in it, like ketchup and marina sauce and everything. Onions just add flavor to everything . And avocados just taste good on everything.
What form of transportation best describes your personality? I think a cruiser bike. They are cute and fun.
If you were a superhero, what would be your superpower, and how would you use it to better the farm? I would say that I would be like Fro-Zone on the Incredibles just so that I could keep my own body temperature cool and last longer working on the farm.

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

How is our Farm Organic?

Article by: Amanda Hawks

Through these articles, I have focused on what our farm does to maintain our organic certification. The discussion has considered organic farming versus more conventional methods, especially considering pest control and fertility methods. A culminating effort that acts to help in both these areas is the crop rotation. It helps control disease, insects/pests, and weeds. Crop rotation has several levels to it. The largest level occurs in the two halves of the acre that we farm each season. As some of you may know, during each growing season, half of the acre is covered in a cover crop; it is first planted herring vetch (a legume which fixes nitrogen), and then it is mowed down and tilled in to make way for planting buckwheat (which catches the nutrients in the top levels of the soil, so they don't leach, and it adds sulfur to the

The next level of crop rotations occurs in the half acre where we farm. Using records and maps from previous years, during the planning process for the farm, we consider where rooting, fruiting, and leafy vegetables were grown in the past, and then plan to have a different type of vegetable grow in a row from what was grown in the past. For example, if potatoes were grown in row 8 during 2010, then in 2012 we'll move them to row 10 where leafy greens were growing in 2010; and we'll grow eggplant, a fruiting vegetable, in row 8. Having this circulation helps to improve soil fertility, so that the same levels of nutrients aren't being sucked out of the soil. It also aids in disease prevention, as the variety of plants growing decreases the risk of pathogens living in a particular area. Interestingly, pests are controlled in this way as well; so that the food they ate in the past is no longer available in that area. The crop rotation is an important part of not only the organic