Tatsoi

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Hello CSA members! We are so excited to get the season started and happy you have chosen to support your community agriculture. Welcome to the farm! We really want you to feel like you are a part of the farm. In reality it's your farm too! Please come out anytime we are there to meet us, hang out, weed a bit, pick-up some herbs from the herb garden, whatever. Our days begin at 6:00am and we finish by 12:30pm. We are anticipating a very fun year. Thank you all so very much for your support and for sharing with us the USU student organic farm. You can't imagine our enthusiasm as we wait to see all your faces here with us on the farm.

The Season of Greens

Unless you've spent the last two months cooped up inside, you may have noticed that Cache Valley has freshened up with the lush colors of late Spring. It's not even that hard to imagine that Summer is within sight; the extra warm days put a sweat on the brow and a hustle to our activities as we make sure that the plants at the student farm are up and making the most of the weather.

As always, we are at the mercy of Mother Nature, and our produce will always reflect the changing of the seasons--whether we have a hot summer perfect for full-flavored tomatoes, or an extra warm spring that punishes the poor spinach. But thankfully, our early crops are looking great. At the moment, they consist mostly of greens. Lots of greens. That includes spinach, lettuce, kale, maché, arugula, green onions, pakchoi, tatsoi, and other such things. Where's the tomatoes and squash, or the carrots and beans? Or maybe you might be interested in the cucumbers, melons, or peas.

The seasons rule as always, and most of the later maturing crops have to perform an extra step: they need to produce flowers first. Flowers give way to fruits, which, botanically speaking, can include anything from pea pods to pumpkins, to the fruits we usually identify as fruit--raspberries and strawberries for example. The act of flowering, and for some, the ripening process, takes more time and energy than simply producing the lush green growth that's so abundant this time of year.

So the other crops may be a bit further off, but this is the time of year when our greens are at their most vibrant, diverse, and productive. Call it a curse or a blessing; perhaps some will find that the transient nature of each veggie makes it that much more special when its reached its due time. And with greens, there's much more versatility than meets the eye. They may look somewhat similar in their humble greenery, but the diversity of flavors and textures is what makes them exciting for the creative cook. Soft, earthy spinach, tender maché, crisp lettuce, sweet kale, spicy arugula... the possibilities can extend far beyond the salad bowl. Whip up a stir fry with crispy pakchoi, or maybe try replacing the basil in a pesto recipe with nutty arugula instead. Creativity is the key. So let's enjoy 'em while we got 'em!

-By Andrew Craft

Eric, Nate, Chloe, Amanda and 2 volunteers harvesting greens
Tatsoi, pak choi
Translation: Asian Greens
Tatsoi is a member of the mustard family and grows spoon-shaped leaves that form a thick rosette. A buttery, tender and succulent flavor with a mineral finish gives tatsoi versatility in the kitchen. Any other greens you might like such as spinach, arugula, watercress, pea tendrils, mizuna can be combined with tatsoi to create a salad. Tatsoi can even be substituted for any recipe calling for spinach. The tangy peppery notes of tatsoi pair well with citrus, crisp cool ingredients such as apple, fennel and mint along with warm flavors found in chiles, garlic and allspice. Scallops, mushrooms, seaweed and braised meats provide the perfect umami flavors to combine with tatsoi. Fish sauce, soy sauce and vinegars are other ingredients that complement tatsoi. For more information and recipes visit http://www.specialtyproduce.com/produce/Tatsoi_532.php

Pak choi is a leafy green Chinese vegetable that belongs to the cabbage family (though tastes nothing like cabbage!). It has long green, slightly ribbed leaf stalks and soft oval green leaves. The leaves and stems are best suited to brief stir-frying or steaming to retain their mild flavor. Pak choi mixes well with tatsoi to make cold and hot salads (hot salads are easy to make just by sautéing olive oil and garlic with multiple types of greens). For more information and recipes visit http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/pak_choi

Warm Roasted Mushroom Feta Salad
Ingredients
4 cups mushrooms, such as cremini, shiitake, oyster
1/2 red onion, finely diced
4 cups mixed Asian greens, such as mizuna or tatsoi, pak choi, or curly endive
1/3 cup crumbled feta cheese
1/3 cup chopped toasted pecans, walnuts or pine nuts (see note)
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
1 teaspoon Dijon or horseradish mustard
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Directions
To prepare the salad, preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

Line a foil baking sheet or other large rimmed pan with parchment paper or foil, making sure to cover the pan completely and over the rim so it catches all the juices from the mushrooms.

Place the mushrooms in a single layer on the prepared pan, Bake for 15 to 20 minutes, until they have started to soften and lose their juices. Carefully tip the pan to pour the liquid into a bowl; set aside. Let the mushrooms cool slightly, then chop into bite-sized pieces. In a medium bowl, toss the mushrooms with the red onion.

To serve, divide the greens among the plates and top with the warm mushrooms. Scatter the feta and pecans over the mushrooms. Add the olive oil, lemon juice, and mustard to the reserved mushroom juice, mix well, and season to taste, with salt and pepper. Drizzle over the salads and serve immediately.

Note: To toast the nuts, place them in a skillet over medium-high heat. Toss them continuously in the skillet until they begin to turn a light golden color. Transfer the nuts to a plate and spread them out in a single layer to cool.

Recipe from foodnetwork.com

What you might see in your next box
roquette arugula
bloomsdale spinach
dwarf siberian kale
cilantro
black seeded simpson lettuce
parade green onion