



SUNSHINE IN A BOX



SOLAR FRESH

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CSA Week 3

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Farming as Activism

The current surge in activism in our state and world (along with the global pandemic) has been reminding me of why I started this farming adventure in the first place. I still remember the look of shock on my boss's face when I resigned from my corporate job for a life as a farmer-activist (which was one of the most amazing days). I was finally going to do what I had been talking/thinking about for several years at that point! She assured me that I have a good "corporate IQ" and would be able to come back to the office whenever I was ready. That was in 2014.

Fast forward to 2020—I have access to 3 acres of farmland with a house, modest but adequate infrastructure, wonderful customers, a supportive family, and one of the best growing seasons (so far) in recent memory. But now that I'm starting to feel a little comfortable I'm reminded that 'comfort' isn't the point. Maybe just being a farmer isn't activism enough. (cont.)

Farm Updates

The much needed rain on Thursday was a nice extra boost going into the summer solstice and the plants are growing quickly. More dry days this spring (which has been most days) means more good planting windows and it is nice to see the fields almost at capacity and with weeds mostly under control. Even though nothing lasts forever, it's nice to enjoy this moment where there is an illusion of control. Dry weather has been helpful so far but I am vigilant for the possibility of pest pressure increasing and drought otherwise stressing out the plants. As we move further from the solstice, I will be doing less nudging of the garden into productive chaos and more harvesting the bounty to keep up on produce at its peak readiness. Fingers crossed that the garden will pass the threshold into miraculous abundance!



Week 3 Veggies

Baby Beets: Small spring beets are tender and sweet. Beets can be steamed, roasted, sautéed, pureed, or eaten raw in small amounts. Greens are also edible (remove greens for storage). See recipe below for suggested cooking directions for roasting. Beets are good for building blood and correspond with the planet Saturn.

Arugula: Spice up your life with this buttery green that almost acts as an herb. Arugula is a closer relative to wild ancestors of lettuce.

Spring Mix: Lettuce is best in the spring when temperatures are cool. Summer lettuce is coming but enjoy the more tender sweet spring greens while they last.

Peas: An abundant crop! More peas will be coming. Enjoy these pods fresh for snacking or sautéed/ stir fried.

Summer Squash: Just the beginning of this vitamin and mineral rich fruit! Summer squash is great on the grill. Try grilling and then tossing with the Maple Balsamic vinaigrette below.

Romaine Lettuce (Full Shares): Another head of this tasty lettuce.

Recipes

Beet and Arugula Salad

For the dressing:

2 Tablespoons Maple Syrup

2 Tablespoons Balsamic Vinegar

1 teaspoon mustard

¾ cup olive oil

Salt and pepper to taste

1 Bunch of beets, tops removed just above base of root

To make dressing, combine vinegar, salt, pepper, maple syrup, and mustard in a mason jar with lid. Cover and shake until emulsified.

To prepare the beets, remove stems by cutting just above the top of the root. Leaving this top and roots intact, place beets in an oven proof baking dish and drizzle with vegetable oil, salt and pepper. Cover with foil and roast at 400 degrees for 30-45 minutes until beets are fork tender. Allow to cool before trying to peel beets. Once cooled enough, remove top and root ends and peel. Dice beets into ¾ inch cubes. Return to baking dish and drizzle with maple syrup. Add a handful of nuts if desired (walnut, sunflower seeds, or pecans) and roast in the oven for about 10 more minutes until slightly caramelized but not burnt. Set Aside nut and beet mixture.

Chop dill finely and make a chiffonade of basil by stacking leaves on top of each other and rolling into a cigar shape and then thinly slicing.

Maple Syrup: Enjoy this miraculous gift from the Earth! Made with care by my boyfriend Travis at his sugar bush in Loretto. Native people would use maple syrup for special purposes like going into battle or the hunt (Sherman & Dooley, 2017)

Dill: Another week of this flavorful herb to pair with peas, beets, and basil. The plants are creating a wonderful swallowtail butterfly habitat and it was fun to see so many caterpillars on the plants today.

Basil: An herb to help manifest abundance! Basil is great for digestion as well. To make a chiffonade, stack leaves on top of each other and roll into a cigar shape. Slice thin strips and then sprinkle on food to create a ribbon like garnish.

Calendula: This orange flower is known for its soothing properties but its spicy aroma makes it great to add to a beverage. Try plucking individual petals from the flowers for a salad garnish (see recipe below) or float flower heads in a cocktail or glass of water. Eating flowers is great for your physical and spiritual health.

Arugula and Spring Mix combined

Basil, Dill and Calendula petals

Nuts (sunflower seeds, walnuts, or pecans) (optional)

To prepare salad, toss together a mixture of spring mix and arugula with salad dressing and half of each of the chopped basil and dill until just coated. Reserve remaining salad dressing for another use.

To serve salad, plate greens in a bowl and sprinkle with beet and nut mixture. Sprinkle with remaining herbs and calendula petals and fresh black pepper.



Calendula Basil Infusion

2-3 basil leaves
1 calendula flower head

Place herbs and fresh water in a 12 oz glass jar or drinking glass and put the container in a sunny window for 3-5 hours. Strain out herbs if desired and enjoy after a meal as a digestive aid.

(Farming as Activism from p. 1) When I'm in the mud or don't feel like heading out to the chicken coop one more time for the day I remember how many would-be farmers can only dream of the deluxe chicken coop or a patch of soil to dig their hands into. The reality is that not everyone who wants to farm is able to do so. One of the number one issues for emerging farmers is land access. The high costs to entry, lack of access to land and capital, student loan debt, discriminatory practices in lending, and red tape and regulation all create barriers to entry that disproportionately affect people of color, women, and minorities (Bailey & Kagan, 2019). And unfortunately these are the voices that we need right now more than ever. These groups generally farm in more conservation minded ways and are forced to innovate unlike their corporate agriculture counterparts. When farming, one cannot ignore the spirit and energy that runs through everything, and if you create a chemical or physical disruption to the soil ecosystem you are killing this vital life force in the food and land. We can no longer afford to miss out of the talents, knowledge, and innovation of these emerging farmers who will lead us to a new way of farming that we desperately need to save ourselves and our planet.

When I witness corporate farmers spraying their corn and soybeans recently I can't help but wonder if they ever feel moved to pay respect to the land. If they ever visit their farm fields for a reason other than

applying noxious chemicals or synthetic fertilizer. Who gave them a loan to buy that tractor with the sole function of polluting our land? The most highly subsidized agricultural crops are not food, but fodder or fuel. The food crops that are subsidized are made into soybean oil and high fructose corn syrup. "Specialty Crops" which includes all fruits and vegetables receives only a small fraction of the subsidies from the USDA. And in the food apartheid that exists in our country, people of color are more likely to consume higher amounts of these subsidized crops leading to poor health outcomes and continued cycles of poverty (Penniman, 2018). The connection between racial injustices and how we farm and treat the land are connected in more ways even than discussed here.

As I confront my complacency and consider the connections between movements, it's clear that Solar Fresh Produce needs to do more than "just farm." As a CSA member I value your input on what we can do as a community. The Member Fund has been a good start and I hope to expand that program for next season. I am also working within my networks to bring these discussions to the table and take these ideas into the next phases of action. This increased activism is a marathon effort, and I hope we can work together as a CSA to bring more justice into the food system and the world. Are you activating in your networks right now? I would love to hear about it.

(Farm Update cont.) Cilantro had poor germination but I will try again. Carrots and cucumbers are behind schedule but coming along. Many more veggies are growing and will be coming in the next weeks!

For an update on the new caterpillar tunnel, check out the report on the SFA website: <https://www.sfa-mn.org/caterpillar-tunnels-soil-health/>

You can also check out the Sustainable Farming Association's new Podcast, Dirt Rich, where I will be occasionally contributing: <https://www.sfa-mn.org/podcast/> and am featured most recently in the installment, "La Vie en Rows."

References

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- Sherman, S., & Dooley, B. (2017). *The Sioux Chef's Indigenous Kitchen*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.