



Stone Soup

Stearns Farm CSA • Community Supported Agriculture
862 Edmands Road, Framingham, MA 01701 - www.stearnsfarmcsa.org
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Photo by Lisa Mattei

OUR INHERITED RASPBERRY PATCH

By Kathy Huckins

Once the blueberry netting came down and the plants were at rest, we turned our attention to the raspberries and oh, what a sight we found. We could not walk between the rows, so it was clear that time needed to be spent in order to reach the juicy fruit that was growing for us.

Raspberries are one of the first jobs the Work-for-Shares tackle in late April. The spent canes are cut out, the remaining canes thinned and the tops cut to around four or five feet. We had fertilized the entire crop with compost the previous spring and put heavy leaf mulch on them the last work day of the 2007 season. But when I really looked at them last week, I shuttered. It was a jungle. All season long I would walk by them and WATCH the bindweed grow. There was always something else more pressing to do, so I could never make it a priority. I just watched it grow. It had bent over about half of the producing canes with its mass. Clearly the raspberries needed to be liberated.

We started by crawling along the canes and pulling the bindweed by the root. That's 600 feet of crawling. The next day we saw the vines begin to wither and brown on

ON THE STAND THIS WEEK

(dependent on mother nature)

ON THE STAND: Head lettuce, salad greens, celery, carrots, yellow onions, leeks, fennel, Chieftan red potatoes, sweet peppers, mild hungarian peppers, eggplant, tomatoes; some summer squash and cucumbers; pie pumpkins; maybe corn.

PYO: Raspberries, tomatillos, braising greens of collards, kale and chard; culinary and tea herbs; six varieties of hot peppers; Sungold cherry and Juliet plum tomatoes; a bouquet of flowers.

top. Using clippers, we started to snip every part of the vine we could reach. Often several canes were vined together with this prolific grower. It was a challenge to keep the producing fruit tips safe and away from the clippers.

Last year, Brian Holland made a trellis to hold the canes back so we could pick comfortably. After the vines were removed, we tucked them behind the wire, all except the short ones, and now you can make your way through the rows. What a delight.

We had to do this job carefully, not rapidly, because of the thousands of bees active in the crop. Remember that when you pick. You are entering their domain.

When I first came to Stearns, the raspberries had been neglected for at least a few years. They were a clump about four feet wide. I went in one day and started mowing around them to see what was there and promptly hit a yellowjacket nest. About two dozen of them stayed on me halfway up the field as I ran to the sheds to get relief. Thank goodness I did not have a reaction. But it let me know I needed to share this space with our buzzing friends.

Over time I created six rows, bought in some other varieties, transplanted from path to row to fill in, and now we have six full 100 foot rows. The challenge is that all the varieties are mixed together. When you go to pick, you will find red and also champagne-colored berries right next to each other. Most of them ripen in the fall and a few scattered here and there come in the summer. I inherited Penelope's raspberry patch and have made it as fruitful as I can. When you pick, remember her and the gift she gave us by farming this land organically for 45 years. I sure am grateful she did. ☺

TOMATILLOS

TOMATILLOS are an heirloom originally from Mexico. Here in the U.S., they are found mostly in specialty produce sections, and usually for a pretty steep price. But right now we have them at Stearns! They are tart, firm green fruits encased in papery husks, prized for making salsa when their paper splits. They can also be eaten raw for a tangy, nutty taste if allowed to turn slightly yellow. Tomatillos drop their fruit when ripe, so primarily pick them from the ground. ☺



ROASTED TOMATILLO SALSA

Adapted from *epicurious.com*

- 1 ½ lb fresh tomatillos
- 1-2 jalapeno or cayenne peppers
- 3 garlic cloves, unpeeled
- ½ cup fresh cilantro
- 1 large onion, coarsely chopped
- 2 teaspoons coarse salt

Start to finish: 15 minutes. Preheat broiler. Remove husks of tomatillos and rinse under warm water to remove stickiness. Broil whole peppers, garlic, and tomatillos on rack of a broiler pan 1 to 2 inches from heat, turning once, until tomatillos are softened and slightly charred, about 7 minutes.

Peel garlic and pull off tops of peppers. Purée all ingredients in a blender. Makes 3 cups. ☺



GARDEN SHOWCASE: CELERY

By Donna Savastio

Celery is a biennial vegetable plant that belongs to the Umbelliferae family. Other members include carrots, fennel, parsley and dill. The celery that we know today has its origins in wild celery, which had fewer stalks and more leaves. While most people associate celery with its prized stalks, the leaves, roots and seeds can also be used as a food and seasoning as well as a natural medicinal remedy.

Celery makes an appearance in Homer's *Odyssey*, where its medicinal properties are mentioned. Ancient Greeks used the leaves as laurels to decorate celebrated athletes, while the ancient Romans used it as a seasoning. It was during the Middle Ages that celery began to be used widely as a food.

Celery is an excellent source of vitamin C and a very good source of dietary fiber, potassium, folate, manganese and vitamin B6. Celery also contains calcium, vitamin B1, vitamin B2, magnesium, vitamin A, phosphorus and iron. Be sure to use the leaves since they contain the most vitamin C, calcium and potassium, but use them within a day or two, as they do not store as well. Celery should not be kept at room temperature for too long since its high water content will cause it to wilt quickly. If you have celery that has wilted, sprinkle it with a little water and put it back into the fridge to regain its crispness. Try braising our Stearns celery with radicchio and onions, baking it in a gratin, or adding the stalks and leaves to soups, stews, casseroles and healthy stir-fries. ☺

FARM NEWS & REMINDERS



Sharers, don't forget to put in your remaining work hours now that the kids are back in school.



Our movable greenhouse has arrived! We will be spending lots of time assembling this erector set in the next three weeks.



In the flower garden, our vibrant sunflowers are begging for a home so the other flowers can be reached for picking. Take some home in your bouquet.



If you want to be one of the lucky 100 to try out the first annual Stearns Farm **Winter Share**, don't forget the deadline is **September 18**. The registration form can be found on the last page of the August 25 newsletter.

UPCOMING FARM EVENTS

Sunday, September 28th Harvest Festival
Saturday, October 18th Garlic Planting

STEARNS FARM HARVEST FESTIVAL

By Kathy Huckins & Gudrun Baubock

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 28th AT NOON

All season long you have come to the farm and carried away bags and bags of produce from the stand. You have traveled out to the fields and picked loads of crops. It has been a pleasure to see all of you collecting your food and taking it home. Now we are asking you to bring a little of it back. Our **HARVEST FESTIVAL** is a celebration of our bounty and harvest. It is an opportunity to bring a dish to share that acknowledges the abundance of our year.



POTLUCK 101

You can bring a hot dish, an appetizer, a salad, a dessert, or anything in-between. There are lots of recipes to choose from thanks to Sarah Shonbrun, who faithfully collects recipes for each newsletter. I'm sure you have some favorites of your own. Share them with us. We all love to eat.

DISHWARE

Please bring your own plates, utensils and cups to the Festival. Avoid anything disposable, such as paper plates, paper or plastic cups or plastic utensils, please. Basically, bring items you can use and then bring home to wash. This has worked well in the past for everyone and also keeps the amount of waste to a minimum. Remember—reduce, reuse, recycle.....



ROOT CELLAR DEDICATION & ENTERTAINMENT

After the pot luck, we will have a short ceremony to dedicate our new root cellar, followed by nature crafts, kids' activities and hay rides, a herb garden walk and tea tasting, live music, good conversation, and farm popcorn.



Watch for more details in coming newsletters!





WHY STEARNS?

By Sara Sullivan

Only a few weeks remain to put in our sharer work hours before the season ends. As sharers in the farm, our work hours are part of our responsibility. But they can also be seen as a wonderful opportunity. This week's benefit of being involved with a farm like Stearns comes courtesy of noted medical expert Dr. Andrew Weil, who gives us three important benefits of farm work or gardening:

1. *Gardening is therapeutic.* There is even an emerging medical art known as horticultural therapy. People with all types of health conditions, schoolchildren, and even prison inmates, are encouraged to learn about new plants and envision creative ways to arrange them in the ground as a way to provide a sense of accomplishment and improve self-image.
2. *Gardening is spiritual.* Aside from delighting your senses with color, texture and scents, gardening enables you to connect with nature. Digging your hands through the soil and handling delicate plants can feed the soul.
3. *Gardening is exercise.* It is a low-impact activity that improves flexibility through bending and stretching, and has been shown to lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

Why Stearns? For the opportunity to enjoy the therapeutic, spiritual, and physical benefits of farm work.

The gardener who braves the rain to do his weeding, and the cold to plant his seeds, who digs in the cracked dry summer soil—anyone, in short, who regularly works in the dirt—knows that physical labor is, in itself, a meditative exercise that engenders calm.

From "Paradise Regained," *Ode Magazine* July/August 2008

PUTTING IT BY

If you're receiving more food in your pickup each week than you can eat, don't forget now is a great time to put some by in order to enjoy the tastes of the season later on. Some tips:



This is your last chance to make pesto to enjoy over the winter! Soon that ultimate summer herb—basil—will be gone. Puree basil leaves, pine nuts, olive oil, grated parmesan, salt & pepper in a food processor to taste. Freeze in ice cube trays, then pop into bags. Take a few cubes out whenever you want to make a pasta or pizza dinner or perfume your winter soup.



Our Stearns celery can be easily frozen to add to soups and stews throughout the coming months. Cut in 1" lengths and package in small batches in freezer bags.



Use your pie pumpkins for delicious desserts now or later. Bake your pumpkin whole at 375 for 1 ½ hours or until tender (see if you can poke a skewer through). When cool, cut in half and scoop out flesh, puree in food processor or blender. To save for later, measure out 1-cup portions in freezer bags to use in pies, cakes, muffins, or homemade gnocchi all winter long.

Other ideas? Please email to: sarasull@verizon.net.

MISSION STATEMENT

To preserve the historic Stearns farm as a sustainable all-natural garden, providing locally grown food in partnership between the land, the farmer, and the community.

- by using the CSA model
- by providing fair compensation, adequate working conditions, and support to the farmer
- by practicing good stewardship
- by donating excess food to the needy
- by encouraging the community to actively participate in the farming process
- by providing learning opportunities
- by fostering relationships between the CSA and the wider community and
- by providing a beautiful place that is nourishing to body and soul

YUKON GOLD POTATOES

Most potatoes can be divided into two broad categories: “baking potatoes” with mealy or floury flesh and “boiling potatoes” with smoother, waxy flesh. Developed by crossing a white-fleshed potato with a wild, yellow-fleshed South American variety, Yukon Golds have some of the characteristics of each type, making them suitable for baking, frying, mashing, and boiling. They have a golden, buttery look and, some say, a natural buttery flavor as well. Try boiling them with a few cloves of garlic, then mashing cooked garlic and potatoes together with a little milk and potato cooking liquid for creamy mashed potatoes with less fat. Top roasted Yukon Gold rounds with lightly fried fresh sage leaves to accompany poultry or fish.

YUKON GOLD “FRIES.” Baked Yukon Gold wedges are an easy, crunchy replacement for French fries.

Try the basic recipe, then mix it up with different flavor combinations. Confession: We could eat these every day.

2 lbs large Yukon Gold potatoes

Coarse sea salt or kosher salt to taste

¼ cup olive or other vegetable oil (more as needed)

ketchup or malt vinegar (optional)

Options: smoked paprika, cumin, fresh or dried rosemary, fried onions, garlic, chili or curry powder, chives

Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Wash potatoes and cut away any eyes, bruises, or other damaged areas. If you like the skins (as we do), leave them on; otherwise, peel them. Cut each potato in half lengthwise, or, if potatoes are very large, cut lengthwise into three thick slices. Cut each piece lengthwise again into 3–5 slices. You should get about 6–10 pieces approximately ½-inch thick from each potato. Dry potato slices with paper towels or a clean dishcloth, place them in a large bowl, add oil and toss until all pieces are completely coated, drizzling in a little more oil if necessary. At this point, you can add any dried herbs and spices you like, tossing again to coat the potatoes with the flavorings. If you are using fresh herbs or garlic powder, wait to add them until the end of the cooking time. Arrange potatoes in a single layer on a cookie sheet or jelly roll pan. Place in the oven and bake for 20–30 minutes, until potatoes are cooked through, golden brown, and slightly crispy on the outside. If you like, you can turn the pieces halfway through the cooking time for even browning. When potatoes are almost done, add garlic, onion, or fresh herbs. Remove potatoes from oven, sprinkle with coarse salt, and pass ketchup or malt vinegar on the side. Serves 4–6.

YUKON GOLD SOUP. If you love baked potatoes topped with sour cream and chives, this soup will make you smile. Add bread and salad for lunch or a light supper. Adapted from *Bon Appétit*, March 1997.

7 cups low-sodium chicken or vegetable stock

⅔ cup half-and-half or light cream

2½ pounds Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled and sliced

½ cup minced fresh chives

3 large garlic cloves, peeled

Salt and pepper to taste

Sour cream for serving

Combine broth, potatoes, and garlic in a large pot. Bring to a boil and reduce heat to medium. Cover and simmer until potatoes are very tender—about 25 minutes. Using a blender, puree potato mixture in batches until smooth. Return to pot, add half-and-half, and bring to a very slow simmer. If soup is too thick, add more broth. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Soup can be prepared in advance up to this point and stored, covered, in the refrigerator for up to a day. Just before serving, rewarm over low heat, stirring frequently, then stir in chives. Ladle soup into bowls and top with a dollop of sour cream. Serves 6–8.

YUKON GOLD POTATO SALAD. This elegant twist on “plain” potato salad takes no more time to make.

Adapted from *Cooking in New York City* by Daniel Boulud.

1½ lbs Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled, cut into ¼-inch cubes

1 Tbs sherry or red wine vinegar

2 small leeks, white part only,

2 Tbs minced chives

cleaned and cut into ¼-inch pieces

Salt and white pepper to taste

⅓ cup crème fraîche*

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add potatoes and cook about 2 minutes, until barely tender. Add leeks and cook about 2–3 minutes more, until both leeks and potatoes are tender, but still intact. Drain and cool under running water, then drain again and dry thoroughly with paper towels or a clean dishcloth. In a large bowl, whisk crème fraîche with vinegar and chives. Season with salt and pepper. Gently fold in potatoes and leeks. Salad can be refrigerated for up to a day. Return to room temperature before serving. Serves 6. *Variation: Replace crème fraîche with sour cream or Greek yogurt.

Storage: Mature potatoes keep for months in a dark, cool place (around 50 degrees is ideal). If you don’t have a cellar, keep them loosely wrapped in the bottom of the refrigerator. Before use, remove eyes, sprouts, and any greenish areas, which can be toxic.

If you have a favorite way of using Stearns Farm veggies, please share it. Send recipes, tips on storage or food preservation, or other suggestions to sarah@cornmuffin.com. Thanks.