



Stewarding the Land for Future Generations
Local, Sustainable, Organic

Community Supported Agriculture Newsletter

August 10th, 2006- Week 10

Featured Vegetable of the Week: Cucumbers

The cucumber is the edible fruit of the cucumber plant *Cucumis sativus*, which belongs to the gourd family - a family of herbaceous vines including cucumber, melon, squash and pumpkin. The plant has been cultivated for 3000 years and is widely grown today. The cucumber is believed native to India, and evidence indicates that it has been cultivated in western Asia for 3,000 years. From India it spread to Greece and Italy (where the Romans were especially fond of the crop) and later into China. It was probably introduced into other parts of Europe by the Romans. Records of cucumber cultivation appear in France in the 9th century, England in the 14th century, and in North America by the mid-16th century.

The cucumber plant has large leaves that form a canopy over the fruit. The vine is grown on the ground or on trellises, often in greenhouses. The fruit, which is a vegetable in the culinary sense, is commonly harvested while still green and is eaten raw or cooked or is made into pickles. Cucumbers have only small amounts of nutrients. Pickles are more nutritious than fresh cucumbers because of the ingredients, especially dill, added during pickling.

Cucumbers are usually green-skinned, roughly cylindrical, elongated, with tapered ends, and may be as large as 30 cm long and 5 cm in diameter. Cucumbers grown to be eaten fresh (called slicers) and those intended for pickling (called picklers) are similar. Slicers are smaller and have a thinner, more delicate skin. Picklers are generally shorter and thicker.

A few varieties of cucumber are parthenocarpic, the blossoms creating seedless fruit without pollination. Pollination for these varieties degrades the quality. Most cuke varieties however, are seeded and require pollination. Thousands of hives of bees are annually carried to cucumber fields just before bloom for the purpose. Symptoms of inadequate pollination include fruit abortion and misshapen fruit.

Several varieties of *Cucumis melo*, which are technically melons, are commonly called "cucumbers", notably the so-called Armenian types (in some boxes today).

Cucumbers are highly sensitive to frost. Most farmers do not transplant starts out until two or three weeks after the threat of frost has past. Cucumbers grow best in full sun in well-drained soils. They are delicious to eat sliced up with a pinch of salt.

Announcements

* If you are interested in preserving peaches, call 899-9668 or email siskiyoucoop@aol.com to order boxes of #2 peaches from Rolling Hills Farm for a discount. A box of 20 peaches costs \$10.

*Thrive (The Rogue Initiative for a Vital Economy) is sponsoring an Eat Local Week September 9th-17th. Check out the exciting events at their website http://www.thriveoregon.org/thrive_events.htm. Eat Local events include cooking classes, films, taste-offs, culinary demonstrations and lectures.

Ask the Farmers...

CSA member Amy Johnson asks “When did you know you wanted to become an Organic Farmer? What was your inspiration?”



Trever Jones, Wolf Gulch Farm

I knew that I wanted to be a farmer when I was three or four years old and was spending a lot of time with my Uncle who was a farmer in Central Iowa. He raised chickens, pigs and cows, and grew corn and soy for market, as well as a large family garden. I thought he looked really cool on his tractor, and I loved chasing chickens and pigs around his farm. There was always a mountain of corn for chicken feed that I loved to climb. My sister and I spent hours sitting on top of the grain silos. Everyone in my life in Iowa was somehow connected to farming. If they weren't farmers themselves, they got seasonal work in agriculture at some point each year. I love living in a connected way with the seasons.

Before I wanted to farm, I blew glass for five years. I was always aware that I wanted to transition to something that was healthier. I was fortunate to have friends in the Little Applegate Valley where there is a thriving farming community. When I decided to move to this area, the path of farming became apparent to me. I had a good friend who was farming up Yale Creek in the Little Applegate and he was a big inspiration. The prospect of farming with him was very exciting. Besides the great community of farmers in this area, the land here also inspires me.



Michael Phlox, Wolf Gulch Farm



Dave, Rolling Hills Farm

I knew that I wanted to be a farmer when I was five years old. My parents were city folks, but we had a gardener named George who I loved. He and I grew a garden together and he became my inspiration. I used to love it when he would come over and I would give him things from our garden. I just loved dirt and would get filthy playing in it.

I had a mid-life crisis that opened my eyes to a variety of options.. I had been an activist in the 60's and then later decided to change my lifestyle to reflect my beliefs in regard to the environment and health. One thing led to another , and we ended up purchasing our farm in Williams. I learned large scale organic techniques. I am trying to help spread the message a little at a time by selling organic products and taking care of our land using sustainable practices.



Steve Florin, Dancing Bear Farm



Maud Powell, Wolf Gulch Farm

I never considered living rurally, let alone farming, until I travelled to India in my mid- twenties and worked on a farm in northern India for three months. My first experience of farming was in an ancient agricultural community that is currently being undermined by global economic forces. I am inspired by farmers all over the world who are intimately connected with their own piece of earth. I am also inspired by my children who have lived their entire lives at Wolf Gulch and demonstrate a remarkable connection to place and an intuitive understanding of natural cycles.