

Cobble Hill CSA

community supported agriculture 

Newsletter

www.cobblehillcsa.org

June 3, 2008

With temperatures retreating to the 50s and 60s up until last week, I wasn't convinced that spring was really here. But now that the weather is acting in concert with the season, New York City's GreenMarkets are filling up with vendors and fresh produce, and especially with today's CSA start, I'm finally convinced that spring is here to stay.

I'm thrilled about the start of the CSA season. I'm looking forward to all the fantastic locally-grown, organic vegetables and fruit from Green Thumb and Hepworth Farms (the fruit share starts June 24), as well as pasture-raised meats from Dines Farm. It's been a long winter.

Core Group members went out to visit Farmer Bill in April. It was a great opportunity to see the work being done to prepare for the season. The farm was pretty quiet, with most of the action happening in the greenhouses. Farmer Bill was starting crops from seed trays

Notes From Green Thumb Farm

Welcome back! Our CSA season is beginning. Our crops in the field are in full swing. We have had a cold May. It's been very rainy with many cold nights so our plantings have been delayed somewhat. This will affect crops all summer as harvest will be delayed one or two weeks. Our early lettuce is ready with about 15 varieties planted--we'll have plenty of these. Radishes--red, french breakfast, purple, and easter egg mix are all planted. Pepper cress, a spicy salad herb, broccoli raab, and many herbs will be on our first weeks' menu.

We've got strawberries as well! Our strawberry crop looks wonderful at this time--as long as there is no extended rainy weather, it should be a good year for them and us.

Our spring farm tour/strawberry picking is happening Saturday, June 21st with several walking tours planned throughout the day. More on this next time.



Organically Yours,

Farmer Bill

and some seedlings were just beginning to be transferred to the fields.

If you haven't been out to the farm yet, try to take advantage of the summer strawberry picking and fall pumpkin picking events. It's a great way to learn more about the people who grow your food and how they do it!

The Core Group is excited about the start of the new season. We've got a few administrative announcements for the start of the season:

Please sign up for your volunteer slot as soon as possible and be sure to put it in your calendar. It's vital to the smooth operation of the CSA that all members complete their volunteer requirement. If scheduling conflicts arise, contact Carey Johnson at carey@donatoart.com as soon as possible so that we can ensure ample volunteer support.

By not pre-packaging all share items, Farmer Bill is able to keep costs under control. Please be sure to pay attention and honor posted share allotments. If you're unsure, please be sure to ask the site coordinator or site volunteers. If a friend is picking up your share for you, please make sure that they understand the basics of how the system works.

If you haven't already done so, please be sure to contribute your \$30 fuel surcharge as soon as possible. Payment can be made by cash or check made out to the Cobble Hill CSA. Thanks for your cooperation.

And finally, on behalf of the entire Core Group, I'd like to welcome new and returning members. This is going to be a great season! Throughout the year I'll share veggie and fruit recipes and tips on storage and preparation. In addition, I plan to introduce you to our core group members (and if I can catch them, our farmers), as well as keep you up to date on events, news, resources and legislation related to community supported agriculture. If you have questions or topics you'd like to see covered in the newsletter, please contact me at ablankstein@verizon.net.

—Amy Blankstein

Curly Pepper Cress

The Latin name for cress is nasturtium--meaning twisted nose, in reference to the reaction provoked by its definitively hot and pepper taste. As its name implies, the Curly Pepper Cress packs a wallop of taste. It's best used as an accent to a dish, rather than the base. The hot flavor adds kick to salads, sauces, and sandwiches.

In addition to making a pretty garnish, Curly Pepper Cress is a great seasoning to add to mayonnaise, dips, potato salad, pasta dishes, and tofu. Cook and prepare it like spinach, then puree it and add it to spice up sauces and soups or combine it with pureed potatoes for a potage soup with a kick.

To prepare Curly Pepper Cress, remove the roots and any yellowing leaves. Wash the cress thoroughly to get rid of any remaining sand or soil. Wash the cress gently: place the leaves in a large bowl with enough water to cover them, then swirl them around gently. Change the water as many times as is necessary. Don't let the cress soak. Wash it just before serving or preparing to keep the leaves crisp.

Cress is very perishable and should be used as soon as possible. Wrap its roots in a damp paper towel and place the plant in a perforated plastic bag in the refrigerator. It will keep 1 or 2 days at most. If you have the room, it's best to keep it standing with its stalks in a bowl of water, which must be changed every day.

Curly Pepper Cress on Whole Wheat

While most recipes call for curly pepper cress as an accent, this refreshing sandwich idea makes it the spicy centerpiece.

- 1 piece of hearty whole wheat toast
- a spread of mashed avocado
- a dribble of lime juice
- fresh cracked pepper
- sea salt
- a huge pile of curly pepper cress

Watercress soup (Potage de cresson)

You can serve this soup hot, as directed by this recipe from www.frenchgardening.com or chill it before serving as an appetizer or main dish.

- 1 lb. watercress, fresh and dark green
- 1 small leek, white part only
- 1 lb. potatoes (not waxy) such as Yukon Gold
- 5 T. unsalted butter
- 1 qt. chicken or vegetable broth
- 2/3 cup crème fraîche or substitute non-ultra-pasteurized heavy cream, but do not use sour cream
- Salt and freshly ground pepper

Reserve 28 extra-perfect watercress leaves, wash them, and reserve them in the refrigerator.

Remove the remaining leaves from the stalks, discarding any leaves that are the least bit yellow or slimy. Reserve the top 2/3 of the stalks and discard the rest. Wash and drain everything thoroughly. Chop the reserved stem tips. Clean the white portion of the leek and chop it finely. Peel the potatoes and cut them in 1/2" cubes.

Blanch the watercress leaves in boiling, lightly salted water just until they have collapsed. Drain and refresh under cold water; drain and press out all moisture.

Melt 3 T. butter in a heavy saucepan over medium-low heat and soften the leeks and the chopped cress stems over low heat without letting them color (this is called "sweating"). Add the homemade chicken broth, bring to a gentle boil, and add the potato cubes. Cook gently 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, bring the crème fraîche or heavy cream to a gentle boil in a small saucepan, and add the blanched cress leaves. Lower the heat and simmer 2 minutes. Add to the soup, then puree the entire mixture in a food processor. Do it in batches and be careful because of the heat of the mixture. Return to the saucepan and heat gently without boiling. Adjust the seasoning. Stir in the remaining 2 T. butter.

Divide the reserved perfect cress leaves among 4 soup plates. Pour the very hot soup over them and serve immediately.

Cobble Hill CSA Core Group

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