

Cobble Hill CSA

community supported agriculture 

Newsletter

June 5, 2007

Notes From Green Thumb Farm

Another season is upon us and our first deliveries are happening. Because of our cold spring, our strawberries are arriving later than expected, but with the heat of last week they are finally ripening. Our first weeks we will be bringing in lettuces, salad and culinary herbs, radishes and some asparagus. Swiss chards and our different types types of peas should arrive by mid month, with beets and carrots soon thereafter.

Most herbs can be preserved by either drying--in a dark, airy area--or by freezing. Our culinary herbs, oregano, sage, and thyme, will probably only be brought in at this time of year and again in the fall.

Our summer strawberry picking farm tour is happening Saturday, June 23rd at 10:30 am and 1:00 pm. It's a walking tour open to all members and their families. We will see parts of the farm and each pick a quart of strawberries. No charge for this--hope to see you all there!

Organically yours,
Farmer Bill

Upcoming Farm Legislation

Congress re-evaluates the United States' main farm and food policies every five to seven years. The "Farm Bill" which is under consideration once again this year, addresses such critical issues as agricultural production, food and nutrition assistance, rural development, renewable energy, equity, and conservation policies. However, many of these policies do not adequately cover all of our nation's farmers, nor do they provide accessible, healthy foods for many Americans. The upcoming farm bill is an opportunity for these public policies to result in better management of a farm and food system that serves us all.

More than 400 organizations, including Just Food, have signed on to the declaration "Seeking Balance in U.S. Farm and Food Policy," drafted by the Farm and Food Policy Project (www.farmandfoodproject.org/seeking_balance.asp). The report outlines innovations that would make real progress in addressing these challenges by: increasing opportunities for new and beginning farmers, expanding new agricultural markets and value-added enterprises, helping more farmers move to organic production to meet increasing demand, reducing hunger and soaring rates of obesity, Encouraging local food production and access to healthy food choices, promoting entrepreneurship and economic development in rural communities, providing

incentives for more environmentally-friendly farming systems, fostering community-based conservation solutions, and providing increased support for socially disadvantaged farmers and farmworkers.

Take Action

Deliberations are already underway, but you still have time to make your voice heard. You can support "Seeking Balance" at www.healthyfarmbill.org. For more information about issues and initiatives, check out the following Web sites:

NYC Farm Bill Workgroup

www.nycfarmbill.org/

The Northeast Sustainable Agricultural Working Group

www.nesawg.org/2006/11/navigating_the_farm_bill_lands.html

National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture

www.sustainableagriculture.net

Om Organics

www.omorganics.org/page.php?pageid=73&contentid=52

Storing & Preserving Fresh Herbs

Not sure what to do with the abundance of herbs that have just landed in your kitchen? Proper storage and preservation techniques can buy you plenty of time to use them at your leisure.

Storage

Fresh cut herbs should be kept in the refrigerator. If they are dirty, wait to rinse them until just before using them. Wrapped in a paper towel and placed in a plastic bag, herbs can stay fresh for several days. Herbs that still have their roots can be kept longer—place them in fresh water at room temperature, as you would with cut flowers. You can also wrap the roots in a damp cloth and store the herbs in a plastic bag in the warmest part of the fridge.

Drying

Thyme, oregano, rosemary, bay leaf, and savory withstand drying particularly well. Dry herbs away from direct sun and artificial light. Spread them in a single layer, preferably on a piece of screen or nylon net to ensure sufficient air circulation. Keep only leaves that are completely dry to avoid the growth of mold. If necessary, finish drying the herbs in the oven at 140° for 15 minutes.

Microwave drying also produces good results, especially with harder to dry herbs such as basil, parsley, fennel, cilantro, bay leaf, and juniper. Spread about 1/2 cup of herbs evenly between two sheets of paper

towel and microwave on high for 1.5 to 2.5 minutes or until they crumble. Repeat the process for any leaves not completely dry, checking every 30 seconds.

Dried herbs and spices should be kept in sealed containers in a dry place away from light and heat.

Freezing

Herbs can be frozen, whole or chopped, without blanching. If you wash them, be sure to dry them thoroughly.

Harder to dry herbs such as chives, chervil, fennel, cilantro, and parsley can easily be frozen. Put them in an ice tray and cover them with water or stock. The cubes can be added to soups, sauces and stocks.

Immersion

Another solution is to preserve fresh herbs in vinegar, oil or alcohol. The liquid absorbs the flavor and can be used as a sub for unavailable fresh herbs.

Immersion in oil works for a few weeks, after which much of the flavor has been absorbed by the oil. Herbs preserved in oil should always be kept in the refrigerator, because otherwise it provides a good basis for the growth of botulism bacteria. The bacteria doesn't grow or produce toxins at refrigerator temperature.

Rhubarb Coffee Cake

- 1/2 cup softened butter
- 1 1/2 cups brown sugar
- 1 cup milk
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1/3 cup old-fashioned oats
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 egg
- 2 cups rhubarb, cut into 1/2-inch chunks
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 tsp cinnamon

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Mix butter, sugar, milk, flour, baking powder, oats, vanilla, egg and rhubarb together, adding rhubarb last. Pour into greased and floured 9 x 13-inch baking dish. Mix sugar and cinnamon and sprinkle over top. Bake 35 minutes. Yields 8 servings.

Adapted from Best Recipes from American Country Inns and Bed & Breakfasts, Kitty and Lucian Maynard, Rutledge Hill Press, Rutledge, Tenn, 2004.



Rhubarb plant. Clipart courtesy FCIT.
<http://etc.usf.edu/clipart>