



The Pod

Community Supported Agriculture Newsletter

World PEAS is a program of the New Entry Sustainable Farming Project

Thursday October 1, 2015

Produce Spotlight: Apples

It's officially fall, which means it's time for all things apple! This sweet and tangy fruit is a New England classic, used in many colonial recipes that are still popular today. The apple was introduced to Massachusetts settlers in the 1630's, and quickly became a staple fruit tree on most farms. Surprisingly, apples were not usually consumed raw when first



introduced to North America. The original apple tree varieties cultivated in New England often produced tart fruits of various shapes and sizes. Most colonists preferred using them in cooking, baking, or ground up as livestock feed. More importantly, fermented cider drinks were [obviously] the hottest and most potable drink option on the colonial menu.

Most of the tasty apple varieties we know today are the result of the apple's unique genetic history in the U.S. Apples are heterozygous, a fancy term that means an apple blossom must be cross pollinated to reproduce and yield an apple fruit. This heterozygosity also means that a seed from one apple tree will not produce a fruit tree identical to its parent when planted. Rather, it will yield a new variety, sometimes with unusual and/or desirable characteristics. As missionaries, traders and settlers moved westward across the country, they carried lightweight apple seeds with them to plant on the frontier. The number of apple varieties proliferated as a result. Prior to the 1900's, thousands of apple varieties were grown and consumed throughout the U.S.

Today, only about 100 varieties are still cultivated for consumption because of commercial pressures related to uniform aesthetics, durability, and taste. Instead of planting an apple seed, apple farmers will graft a branch from a pre-existing tree onto rootstock from another tree. This allows the farmer to keep producing very specific apple varieties, and to select for specific traits relating to hardiness and pest resistance.

The popular saying "An apple a day keeps the doctor away" may have some validity. With just 80 calories, this healthy snack packs a big punch of fiber, disease-fighting anti-oxidants and a variety of vitamins and minerals including potassium, folate, niacin and vitamins A, B, C, E and K. Consuming apples on a regular basis has also been associated with lower risk for a variety of cancers, stroke and diabetes.

World PEAS purchases apples from family orchards in the surrounding area that use sustainable growing practices. Apple orchards are a particularly difficult farming venture to sustain in New England due to capital investments, land availability, and pest pressures. We are proud to support the family orchards producing such high quality fruit for you this fall!

Produce this week:

Kale • Lettuce • Winter Squash
Fennel • Hakurei Turnips • Leeks
Cherry tomatoes • Apples
Apple Cider

Crop Information:

Leeks



Leeks are a member of the onion family and have a subtle, sweet flavor and a delightful color. Thought to be native to the Mediterranean area and Asia, leeks have been cultivated for more than 3,000 years and have long been popular in Europe. After the children of Israel left Egypt, leeks were one of the foods mentioned in the book of Numbers in the Bible as being greatly missed. In France, the leek is known as poireau, which interestingly enough is also a derogatory term meaning "simpleton." European chefs call leeks "poor man's asparagus." Asparagus is actually a distant relative of the leek, residing in the same Lily family as onions.

Handling: Leeks must be very well washed before use; they almost always contain a good amount of grit. Trim off the root end and trim any hard green leaves. Make a long vertical slit through the center of the leek, starting about one inch from the root end and cutting all the way to the green end.

Storing: Leeks will last up to 2 weeks if refrigerated with the roots attached and unwashed. Wrap lightly in plastic to avoid spreading aromas.

Freezing: To freeze leeks, cut into slices or whole lengths. Seal in airtight bags, freeze, and use within three months. To preserve flavor, do not thaw before cooking further. Use frozen leeks for soup within three months.

Braised Leeks

Adapted from marthastewart.com

Ingredients:

*4 leeks, [2 1/2 to 3 pounds]
4 cups reduced-sodium canned chicken broth
2 tablespoons cold butter
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley
Coarse salt and ground pepper*

Preparation:

Remove outer leaves; cut dark-green ends from leeks. Trim roots, keeping leaves attached. Halve lengthwise; rinse to remove grit.

Bring broth to a boil in a large skillet. Add leeks; cover, and cook over medium-low heat, turning once, until easily pierced with the tip of a paring knife, 15 to 25 minutes. Using tongs, transfer leeks to a platter.

Boil broth until reduced to 1/2 cup, 10 minutes. Remove from heat. Add butter; swirl to melt. Add parsley; season with salt and pepper. Spoon over leeks.

Baked Fennel with Parmesan & Thyme

From marthastewart.com

Ingredients:

*1 fennel bulb
1 tablespoon softened butter
Coarse salt and ground pepper
1/3 cup grated Parmesan
2 sprigs thyme*

Preparation:

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Boil fennel bulb, trimmed and chopped into slivers 1 inch thick, until tender, about 15 minutes. Drain fennel, cut side down, on paper towels, 5 minutes. Place fennel, cut side up, in a buttered 8-inch square baking dish and brush with 1 tablespoon softened butter. Season with coarse salt and ground pepper and top with 1/3 cup grated Parmesan and 2 sprigs thyme. Bake until cheese is golden brown, about 20 minutes.

Butternut Squash Soup

Adapted from foodnetwork.com

Ingredients:

*1 [2 to 3 pound] butternut squash, peeled and seeded
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
1 medium onion, chopped
6 cups chicken stock
Nutmeg
Salt and freshly ground black pepper*

Preparation:

Cut squash into 1-inch chunks. In large pot melt butter. Add onion and cook until translucent, about 8 minutes. Add squash and stock. Bring to a simmer and cook until squash is tender, about 15 to 20 minutes. Remove squash chunks with slotted spoon and place in a blender and puree. Return blended squash to pot. Stir and season with nutmeg, salt, and pepper. Serve.