



The Pod

Community Supported Agriculture Newsletter

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

Thursday June 25, 2015

Meet Your Farmer, Phalla Nol

On any given Friday during market season, follow the crowd, and you'll be led directly to Phalla - a longtime vendor of the Lowell farmers' market. A sweet woman with a contagious laugh, Phalla is a New Entry farmer who comes to us from Battambang, a western province of Cambodia. While still very young, Phalla recalls accompanying her father - the mayor of their city at the time - to his potato farm.



She admits that her career in farming did not directly grow out of these early experiences, but what she knows about growing good food she learned from her father.

Phalla first got involved with New Entry about five years ago, because of her father. She says while she didn't feel farming was always in her blood, it was her father who inspired her to dig deeper. After he passed, Phalla honored his legacy by continuing to farm. Being a principled farmer is hard work, but Phalla says she's lucky to have the help of immediate and extended family. "My mother is my best helper!" she expresses with enthusiasm. Phalla is the grower and the saleswoman, while her mother is the organizational backbone of the whole operation.

Cultural food traditions are the heart of any community, and Phalla helps keep these alive by growing and selling popular Asian vegetables. Market goers are naturally drawn to her stand, for she is a farmer of uncommon delights: from bitter melon to pumpkin vines to amaranth leaves. If you're looking for something adventurous, try some luffa - also called Chinese okra but very different from the variety typical to the southern United States. This, she explains, take a long time to grow but is worth the wait. Whether sautéed, put in soup, or dipped in fish sauce, this is one of Phalla's favorites.

While farming may slow down in the winter, Phalla doesn't indulge in an off season. As a side business, you can find her making custom Chinese playing cards. With such an entrepreneurial spirit, there is no doubt that Phalla will see great successes with all her future endeavors.

Produce this week:

Garlic Chives • Chinese Broccoli
Snow Peas • Arugula
Radishes • Green Onions
Cilantro • Strawberries

Also in Large Shares

Baby Salad Greens

Crop Information:

Garlic Chives



Also known as Chinese chives, nira, or ku chair, garlic chives are a fantastic addition to any stir fry or soup, or can be used on their own for a tasty dish. Flat narrow leaves and a decidedly garlic flavor identify this herb commonly used in Asian cooking. Garlic chives do not taste or look like what we call chives, and are cooked as a vegetable in the areas in Asia where they are most commonly grown. There are three forms: green leaf, yellow or blanched, and flowering. Garlic chives are commonly steamed whole, simmered in broths, stirred into thick soups, or cooked gently with vegetables. Both the stalk and leaves of this mild garlicky-flavored vegetable can be used as you would onions, chives, or green onions. These tender leaves become sweet and plump when cooked with a liquid.

Handling: Garlic chives are usually best added to a dish at the last minute. Remove any wilting leaves, wash, and chop.

Storing: Refrigerate in a plastic bag to keep for about a week. These delicate leaves do not freeze well.

Crp Information

Chinese Broccoli



Chinese broccoli, also known as Gai Lan, is similar to broccoli raab but is sweeter, less bitter and leafier. Chinese broccoli has broad blue-green leaves with long, crisp, thick stems and a small head. The long stems and dull green leaves are the main parts eaten, as opposed to the un-bloomed flower of Western broccoli. The full leaves are quite bitter with a sometimes spicy flavor. Chinese broccoli is suited to roles somewhere between broccoli and broccoli raab and can be exchanged in recipes. It is best when blanched and then stir-fried briefly, as it retains its nice green color. It is one of the world's most nutritious vegetables, with one of the highest calcium contents of any other vegetable. It's also rich in iron, vitamin A, and vitamin C.

Handling: Clean it as you would other greens, removing the bottom portion of the stems which appear tough and washing thoroughly. Trim off the tough stem ends. If the stems are extra thick, use a vegetable peeler to remove the skin, and then halve the stems lengthwise before cooking.

Storing: Chinese broccoli will last 3-5 days stored in plastic bag in hydrator drawer of fridge.

Freezing: Wash thoroughly and cut off woody stems. Blanch (plunge into boiling water) for three minutes. Chill in ice water, drain off excess water, place in freezer bags and freeze immediately.

Scallion Pancakes

Adapted from "How to Cook Everything" by Mark Bittman

Ingredients:

2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon salt
1 cup boiling water, plus a little more as needed
1 cup finely chopped scallions
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
coarse salt
Optional: Substitute scallions w/ sautéed garlic chives, chopped 2" pieces

Preparation:

Place the flour and salt in the container of a food processor, turn on the machine, add the water until the dough forms a ball. Add a little more water if necessary. Knead by hand for about 1 minute, until the dough is smooth. Place in a bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and let rest for about 1 hour (or longer, refrigerated). On a lightly floured surface, divide the dough in two, keep 1 ball covered. Use a rolling pin to shape the dough into a large, ¼ inch thick circle, adding flour as necessary. When the circle is about ¼ inch thick, press half the scallions into it. Repeat with the remaining dough. Place half the oil in a large, deep skillet and turn the heat to medium-low. When the oil is hot, place one of the pancakes in the skillet. Cook until lightly browned, 3-5 minutes, then turn and brown the other side. Repeat with the other pancake. Sprinkle with salt and serve warm.

Snow Pea, Scallion and Radish Salad

Adapted from foodnetwork.com

Ingredients:

1 pint snap peas, ends trimmed
4 radishes, sliced paper-thin
3 scallions
1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
Coarse salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
Optional: Handful of washed arugula

Directions

Place snow peas in a bowl and cover with boiling hot water. After 2 minutes, strain and shock in an ice bath. When cool, strain. Cut snow peas on the diagonal into 1/2-inch diamond shapes, discarding end pieces. Place snow peas, radishes, scallions, lemon zest, lemon juice, and oil in a serving bowl. Toss well. Season with salt and pepper, and serve immediately.

Chinese Broccoli with Chile and Garlic

Adapted from goodlifeeats.com

Ingredients:

1 tablespoon vegetable oil
3 garlic cloves, thinly sliced or 3 garlic scapes, finely chopped
1 bunch Chinese broccoli, chopped stems and leaves separated
1/4 to 1/2 teaspoon red-pepper flakes
1/2 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
Soy sauce

Preparation:

In a large skillet, heat vegetable oil over medium-high. Add garlic and stir until fragrant, 10 seconds. Add Chinese broccoli stems and cook, stirring frequently. After 3 minutes, add leaves until leaves are wilted. Add red-pepper flakes and sesame oil. Season to taste with soy sauce and toss to combine. Note: Add trimmed snap or snow peas when adding Chinese broccoli for a hearty stir fry.