



# The Pod

## Community Supported Agriculture Newsletter

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

Thursday August 27, 2015

### Meet Your Farmer: Bessie Tsimba

Before Bessie moved from Zimbabwe to Lowell some 20 years ago, she and her family, like 73% of rural Africans, grew most of the food that they ate, including maize, carrots, onions, cabbage, pumpkin. A few years ago, after moving from New Hampshire to Lowell, Bessie began to assist Sinikiwe Makarutsa [Niki], another New Entry farmer [also from Zimbabwe] with her farming. After helping Niki a number of times, Bessie decided she wanted to focus on farming in a more systematic way, and enrolled in the New Entry Farm Business Planning Course in 2009. After graduating from this course in 2010, Bessie also enrolled in our Incubator Farm Training Program.



For three growing seasons Bessie received one-on-one technical assistance from the New Entry staff while renting land at the Smith Farm in Dracut, MA—one of three New Entry training farm sites. In 2013, New Entry's Farmland Matching Service helped Bessie transition off the incubator site and onto a small farm in Harvard, MA. Bessie has now been renting and farming this land for three growing seasons. Some of your beautiful heirloom tomatoes may have come from Bessie's farm!

Bessie explains that her farming in Zimbabwe was more physical than it is in the States. Since they didn't have tractors or rototillers, everything had to be dug and cultivated by hand. In addition, without modern pumps and drip-irrigation, crop yields were entirely dependent on rain-fall. After Bessie left, there were years without sufficient rain-fall, during which her extended family in Zimbabwe were not able to grow enough food for their own consumption.

Bessie's capacity to simultaneously manage her job, professional development, family and farm business, is truly impressive. Bessie works for the State Mental Health Department, and is finishing a PhD in public health. She was one of the highest grossing New Entry farmers from sales of vegetables into the World PEAS CSA for 2010.

In addition to the CSA, Bessie has established her own markets in the congregations of Lowell and Worcester African churches. She connects with customers after church services, and sells her collard green, tomatoes, onions, cabbage, broccoli raab and maize. What Bessie enjoys best is the manual labor, and viewing the full growth cycle - from hoop house seedling to mature plant. Bessie says that it's easy to underestimate farm work. She feels that it can be overwhelming. At the same time, she says, farming can be addictive. No doubt, anyone who visits Bessie's fields would concur, addiction or no addiction, it takes an attentive person to create such a gorgeous palette of produce.

### Produce this week:

Kale • Garlic • Storage Onions  
Sweet Corn • Tomatillos • Slicing &  
Heirloom Tomatoes • Cantaloupe

#### Also in Large Shares:

Arugula • Carrots • Summer Squash

#### Crop Information:

Storage Onions



Onions are a kitchen staple. Strongly flavored, onions have a spicy bite that decreases as they are cooked. Storage onions have been cured for a period of time in a cool, dry place. This means that they do not necessarily need to be refrigerated. Storage onions—as their name indicates—will keep for several weeks (up to 3 months) in the proper environment. See below for storing instructions.

Onions are referenced in some of the oldest Vedic writings from India. In Egypt, onions can be traced back to 3500 B.C. By the Middle Ages, the three main vegetables of European cuisine were beans, cabbage and onions. In addition to serving as a food for both the poor and the wealthy, onions were prescribed to alleviate headaches, snakebites and hair loss.

**Handling:** To peel, cut a thin slice off both ends, then make a shallow cut from one end to the other, just through the skin and top layer of flesh; peel off both together.

**Storing:** Onions should be stored in a cool, dry and ventilated place. Warmth and moisture will cause sprouting. Store cut onion in air tight container in fridge and use quickly. Onions and potatoes should be stored separately in a dry, dark place in paper bags, boxes, or baskets.

# Caramelized Onion Recipe

*Adapted from simplyrecipes.com*

## Ingredients:

*Several medium or large onions*

*Olive oil*

*Butter (optional)*

*Salt*

*Sugar (Optional)*

*Balsamic vinegar (optional)*

## Preparation:

Chop onions into medium sized slivers, about 1-2 inches long. Coat the bottom of a wide, thick-bottomed pan with olive oil or a mixture of olive oil and butter [about 1 tbsp. per onion]. Heat the pan over medium high heat until the oil/butter is warm and about to start bubbling. Add the onion slices and stir to coat with oil/butter. Spread onions out evenly over the pan and let cook, stirring occasionally. Sprinkle a pinch of salt and/or sugar over onions as desired after about 10 minutes. For sweeter caramelized onions, add 1 tsp. sugar per onion. Let cook for 30 minutes to an hour over medium heat, stirring every few minutes. Add a small amount of water to the pan if onions begin to dry out. After 20-30 minutes, the onions may begin to stick to the pan. Allow them to stick for a few seconds before scraping off, but not allowing them to burn. You may need to scrape them every minute as they cook down. Once onions are a deep, golden brown color, stir in a small amount of balsamic vinegar if desired and remove from heat. Use to top anything from meat and fish to pasta dishes and sandwiches.

# Garlic Butter Sautéed Corn

*Adapted from amuse-your-bouche.com*

## Ingredients:

*2 tbsp. butter*

*2 cups corn kernels (2-3 ears)*

*3 garlic cloves, minced*

*3 tbsp. fresh parsley, chopped*

*¼ cup crumbled feta cheese*

*Salt*

*Black pepper*

## Directions

Boil 2-3 ears of corn in a large covered pot of water for about 10 minutes. Cut corn kernels off the cob. Melt butter in a frying pan, add the minced garlic and corn. Cook over medium heat, stirring every minute or so, for about 5 minutes. Remove from heat, add parsley and feta cheese. Season to taste.



# Salsa Verde

*Adapted from marthastewart.com*

## Ingredients:

*1 pint tomatillos (husks removed)*

*½ medium or small onion, chopped*

*1 jalapeno chile (ribs and seeds removed for less heat), coarsely chopped*

*½ cup fresh cilantro, roughly chopped*

*3 tbsp. fresh lime juice*

*Coarse salt*

## Preparation:

In a food processor, combine tomatillos, onion, jalapeno, and cilantro with lime juice. Pulse until finely chopped; season with salt. Serve with chips, over seared fish, or with eggs.

