



The Pod

Community Supported Agriculture Newsletter

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

Thursday September 23, 2015

Meet Your Farmer: JoAnn Robichaud

Like many others who attend our Explore Farming workshop, JoAnn Robichaud came to New Entry in 2010 as a gardener who wanted to farm. With many years of community gardening under her belt, JoAnn knew how to grow vegetables; but when she graduated from the Farm Business Planning Course in 2011 and began her first season on a quarter-acre plot at one of New Entry's incubator training farms in Dracut, Mass., JoAnn quickly discovered how different farming can be from gardening. Her plot was immaculate and her yields were good, but she was working very, very long hours to keep it that way.



That sounds like a description of the type of new farmer who might have easily burned out after year one. As you might've guessed, JoAnn didn't. Gaining new skills and figuring out labor efficiencies, and with the help of her partner Kamal Jain, JoAnn kept scaling up throughout her three years on New Entry's incubator farms and continued the trend as she moved Bobbin Farm to its current location, two acres leased from the Brooks School in North Andover. She might finally be ready to slow down – if you could call it that.

Working with Ashley Davies, New Entry's farmland matching coordinator at the time, JoAnn worked out a lease agreement last year with the private school, which was a farm at one time. JoAnn pays for her land by devoting a percentage of what she grows to the school cafeteria.

JoAnn gushes about her arrangement with the Brooks School. After starting the year strong, JoAnn was hit hard when late blight wiped out all of her heirloom tomatoes, most of her cherry tomatoes, and close to half of her fingerling potatoes – some of the crops she grows best, and which she has often sold through New Entry's World PEAS CSA. But the school stood by JoAnn during her tough first season on the property.

The transition from New Entry's incubator training sites to this new land has presented plenty of challenges. JoAnn expected big things from the land because of its favorable sandy loam soil type, but found the pH to be much lower than most vegetables would like, which impacted her yields. Mostly, though, she says she has just learned how much an independent farmer has to do to stay on top of things throughout the whole growing season.

Produce this week:

Swiss Chard or Mustard Greens
Sugar Pumpkin • Beets • Storage Onions • Sweet Corn • Eggplant
Green Pepper • Red Pepper • Hot Pepper • Ground Cherries

Also in Large Shares

Green Onion • Butternut or Kabocha Squash

Crop Information: Sugar Pumpkin



The round orange squash usually carved at Halloween, pumpkins also make wonderful soups, breads, and pie. In our CSA shares, we provide sugar pumpkins, which are much better for cooking and baking than their carving counterparts. Try baking it filled halfway with milk and a few spoonfuls of sugar for an instant pudding. Native Americans dried strips of pumpkin and wove them into mats. They also roasted long strips of pumpkin on the open fire and ate them. The origin of pumpkin pie occurred when the colonists sliced off the pumpkin top, removed the seeds, and filled the insides with milk, spices and honey. The pumpkin was then baked in hot ashes.

Handling: Use a cleaver or a very large knife to split the pumpkin in half or wedges. Scoop out the seeds and strings and discard.

Storing: Pumpkins should be stored in a cool, dry place. It will last at room temp for weeks and at 40-50 degrees for several months. If cut open, put in fridge.

Cathy's Pumpkin Ginger Bread

Adapted from "The New American Cooking" by Joan Nathan, 2005

Ingredients:

2 1/2 cups sugar
1 cup vegetable oil
4 large eggs
grated zest of 1 lemon
2 1/2 cups fresh-cooked pureed pumpkin
3 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon nutmeg
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon ginger
1 teaspoon cloves
1/2 cup chopped candied ginger
1 1/2 cup walnut, dried cranberries,
or raisins (optional)

Preparation:

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees and grease two 8 1/2-inch loaf pans.

Mix the sugar and oil in the bowl of a standing mixer, using the paddle. Beat in the eggs one at a time, then add the lemon zest and pumpkin. Stir to combine thoroughly.

Add the flour, salt, baking soda, nutmeg, cinnamon, ground ginger, and cloves and beat on low speed until well mixed. Add the candied ginger and the walnuts, cranberries, and or/raisins. Gradually add the dry ingredients to the pumpkin mixture, blending thoroughly. Pour the batter into the loaf pans and bake for about 70 minutes. Allow the breads to cool on a rack before removing them from their pans.

Swiss Chard with Beets & Goat Cheese

Adapted from epicurious.com

Ingredients:

3-4 medium red or golden beets
1 bunch Swiss chard
1/4 cup olive oil
1 small onion, halved lengthwise, cut thinly crosswise
3/4 cup sliced green onions (optional)
3 garlic cloves, chopped
1 jalapeño chiles, thinly sliced crosswise with seeds
1/4 cup fresh lime juice
1 5 1/2-ounce log soft fresh goat cheese, crumbled
2 tablespoons pine nuts

Directions

Preheat oven to 400°F. Wrap beets individually in foil. Roast until beets are tender, about 1 hour. Cool. Peel beets, then cut into 1/2-inch cubes. [Can be prepared 2 days ahead. Cover; chill.]

Fold Swiss chard leaves in half lengthwise and cut stalks away from leaves. Cut leaves coarsely into 1-inch pieces. Slice stalks thinly crosswise. Reserve stalks and leaves separately. Cook chopped leaves in large pot of boiling salted water until just tender, about 1 minute. Drain and reserve.

Heat oil in heavy large pot over high heat. Add sliced stalks; sauté until starting to soften, about 8 minutes.

Add onion, green onion, garlic cloves, and chiles; sauté 3 minutes. Reduce heat to medium and simmer until vegetables are soft, stirring occasionally, about 15 minutes.

Add chard leaves to pot; stir to heat through. Remove from heat; add lime juice and stir to blend. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Transfer chard mixture to large platter. Sprinkle with beets, goat cheese, pine nuts, and remaining 2 tablespoons raisins. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Ground Cherry Salsa

Adapted from cooklocal.com

Ingredients:

1 cup ground cherries, husked and chopped
1 medium cucumber, peeled, seeded, and chopped
1 mild to medium red pepper, seeded and chopped
1 green pepper, seeded and chopped
1 Tbsp white wine vinegar
1/4 cup chopped cilantro
Salt to taste

Preparation:

1. Mix all of the ingredients in a bowl.
2. Season with salt to taste.
3. Serve over fish, chicken, or with chips.