



# The Pod

## Senior Farmer's Market Newsletter

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

Tuesday June 23, 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. This week, most of our garlic scapes come from Phalla!

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:

Pea Tendrils • Kale • Basil  
Summer Squash • Garlic Scapes  
Strawberries

### Also in Large Shares

Lettuce • Snap Peas

### Crop Information:

#### Garlic Scapes



The garlic scape is the stem from which the seed head of the hardneck garlic bulb is formed. As the bulb begins to grow and mature, the garlic stalks lengthen and the scape begins to curve. The scape has a great deal of flavor, although the stalk never reaches the same level of intense garlic flavor as the bulb. Garlic scapes are very tender when young and should be harvested before they start to harden. Crushed garlic scapes can be used in place of garlic in most recipes, providing more of a fresh, green, taste with less bite than regular garlic cloves.

**Handling:** Chop the tender stalks and use like you would garlic on in any recipes. While you can eat the whole scape, some people remove the stalk tip and pod, because they are more fibrous than the stalk.

**Storing:** Scapes will last in refrigerator for about 3 weeks

**Freezing:** Store chopped garlic scapes (no need to blanch) in an airtight container in the freezer to enjoy this seasonal treat all year long.

# Crop Information

## Summer Squash



Summer squash refers to squash varieties that are harvested while the outer rind is still tender. This means summer squash has a shorter shelf life than their cousins in the winter squash family (such as butternut or acorn squash). However, it also makes summer squash a very versatile veggie; it can be grilled, steamed, sautéed, stir-fried, or used in baking. Native to the Americas, squash remains have been found in Central America and Mexico dating back as far as 7000 BC. From its southern origin, squash spread throughout North America and was a staple crop for many Native American tribes. Squash, corn, and beans were often referred to as the “three sisters” by southern tribes because they when planted together, these three crops flourished by sharing nutrients. Squash eventually found its way to Europe when early explorers returned home.

**Health Benefits:** Summer squash is rich in the carotenoids beta carotene and lutein. Carotenoids are integral to eye health, and not only improve night vision, but also decrease the risk of macular degeneration and cataracts. Summer squash is also full of fiber, which improves colon health and decreases the risk of certain cancers.

**Handling:** Summer squash skins are easily cut - be careful what you place it next to. Follow your recipes' directions and don't cook it too long, or it will become soggy.

**Storing:** Summer squash dehydrates quickly, so store it in a plastic bag in the fridge. Damaged ones will deteriorate quickly. Use them within a week.

**Freezing:** Only young summer squash with small seeds can freeze. Cut off blossom and stem ends. Wash and cut in slices. Blanch 3 minutes. Cool and drain. Leave ½ inch headroom. Seal and freeze.

# Kale Dip with Pita

*Adapted from Whole Living*

## Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 garlic clove, thinly sliced
- 3 cups thinly sliced kale leaves (or any other leafy green)
- Coarse salt
- 1 cup low-fat cottage cheese
- Pinch red-pepper flakes
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- Pita chips

## Preparation:

Heat oil in a pan over medium heat. Add garlic and kale and season with salt. Cook, covered, stirring occasionally, until tender, 3 to 4 minutes. Let cool. Transfer to a food processor. Add cottage cheese and puree until smooth. Season with pepper flakes and lemon juice. Bring a pot of well-salted water to a boil and cook peas until bright green and tender, 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer to an ice-water bath; drain. Serve pita chips with dip.

# Smothered Summer Squash with Basil

*Adapted from eipcurious.com*

## Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 1/2 lb medium summer squash, halved lengthwise and cut crosswise into 1/8-inch-thick slices
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 cup finely chopped fresh basil

## Directions

Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a 12-inch heavy skillet over moderately high heat until hot but not smoking, then add half of squash and sauté, stirring occasionally, until browned, about 5 minutes. Transfer browned squash to a bowl, then heat remaining tablespoon oil and sauté remaining squash in same manner. Return squash in bowl to skillet. Add garlic and sauté, stirring occasionally, 1 minute. Add water, salt, and pepper and simmer briskly, covered, until squash is tender and most of liquid is evaporated, 6 to 7 minutes. Stir in basil.

# Pea Tendril Pesto

*Adapted from loveandlemons.com*

## Ingredients:

- ½ cup chopped pistachios
- A few big handfuls of pea tendrils (or any mild, soft leafy green)
- Zest & juice of 1 small lemon
- 1 small garlic clove or 2 garlic scapes
- Salt & pepper
- Olive oil (a few tablespoons to ¼ cup)
- Optional: handful of fresh basil or mint
- Optional: grated parmesan cheese

## Preparation:

In a food processor, pulse together everything except for the olive oil. Drizzle the oil in slowly while the blade is running. Add as much or little olive oil as you want. Less oil will make a chunkier pesto, more olive oil will make it more smooth. Taste and adjust seasonings.