

The Pod

Community Supported Agriculture Newsletter

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

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Meet Your Farmer: Seona Ban Ngufor



Immigrating to a completely foreign country and culture is a challenge that offers no easy solutions. Trying to take with you a hobby as strenuous and demanding as farming is an even greater challenge. For Seona Ban however, she has not only become a successful immigrant from Cameroon, but a successful farmer as well. Although farming in New England was much different from the year round growing weather in her native country, Seona, thanks to the help of New Entry, planted a seed of ambition in her new home soil.

"I just chanced [upon] seeing a [New Entry] sign in downtown Lowell," Seona said, grateful for the lucky encounter which enabled her to pursue her farming interests in earnest. Now, six years later, Seona has become a successful farmer. She currently is renting land in Groton and looking for a plot somewhere a little bit closer to Lowell where she can establish herself permanently.

Seona credits New Entry with helping her in many aspects of the farming process, especially crop planning, business planning, and finding a market in which to sell her produce. She began her farming endeavors on a starter plot provided through the New Entry program.

"They helped with so many things," says Seona, who has definitely benefitted from the help.

Over the past couple years, she has had great success growing a variety of produce, but her greatest success has come with tomatoes, eggplants, collard greens, and cabbage. For next year's upcoming growing season, Seona would like to continue building on her success with her group of staple crops, as well as expand into growing varieties of peppers and even bok choy.

Outside of the growing and planting process itself, Seona participates in the World PEAS food hub. She enjoys being a part of this food hub because she is able to spread her wealth of healthy, organic and locally grown produce to the immediate community, and also doesn't have to bring any vegetables back home with her (like she does at farmers' markets)! Seona believes it truly is "a great idea."

Over the past six years, Seona has not lost her desire or passion for farming in the slightest. She believes it truly is vital for communities close by and across the country to buy and consume fresh, organic produce. As for herself, Seona says that her favorite part of farming, besides the memories it brings back of Cameroon, has been the process of working in the field and harvesting her plants.

Produce this week:

Collard greens • Potatoes
Sweet Corn • Eggplant • Tomatillo
Hot Pepper • Slicing or Heirloom
Tomatoes • Cantaloupe

Also in Large Shares:

Baby Salad Greens • Carrots

Crop Information:

Tomatillos



Tomatillos are a member of the nightshade [Solanaceae] family, related to tomatoes, and are an important ingredient in Mexican cuisine. Tomatillos have been cultivated in Mexico and Guatemala for several centuries, where they were important staples for Mayan and Aztec cultures. Tomatillos most closely resemble ground cherries, but are slightly larger and are typically used as a savory ingredient, especially in salsa and 'green sauce' found in Latin America. Tomatillos are a savory vegetable used in salsas, salads, soups, other raw or cooked dishes and are the secret ingredient of salsa verde. Similar to husk cherries, tomatillos have an outer husk that must be removed before eating. At times, tomatillos have a naturally sticky coating, which can be washed off with water before eating.

Handling: Remove the husks and rinse the tomatillo. Tomatillos are generally eaten with the seeds in.

Storing: Tomatillos will last up to 2 weeks stored at room temperature. Refrigerate in husks beyond 2 weeks.

Eggplant & Tofu Stir Fry with Hot Peppers

Adapted from "Real Simple"

Ingredients:

1 cup long-grain white rice
1/2 cup hoisin sauce
3 tablespoons rice vinegar
1 teaspoon cornstarch
4 tablespoons canola oil
1 pound firm tofu—drained, patted dry,
and cut into 1-inch cubes
1 small eggplant (about 1 3/4 pounds),
cut into 1/2-inch pieces
4 scallions, sliced, white and green parts separated
2 cloves garlic, chopped
1 red serrano or jalapeño peppers, sliced
kosher salt
1/4 cup fresh basil leaves, torn

Preparation:

Cook the rice according to the package directions. In a small bowl, whisk together the hoisin, vinegar, and cornstarch.

Meanwhile, heat 1 tablespoon of the oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add the tofu; cook, turning occasionally, until browned, 8 to 10 minutes. Transfer to a plate. Add the remaining 3 tablespoons of oil to the skillet. Add the eggplant, scallion whites, garlic, chili, and 1/4 teaspoon salt. Cook, tossing frequently, until the eggplant is tender, 8 to 10 minutes. Add the hoisin mixture, tofu, and scallion greens and cook, tossing gently, until the sauce is thickened, 1 to 2 minutes. Serve with the rice and sprinkle with basil.

Mashed Garlic Potatoes & Corn

Adapted from epicurious.com

Ingredients:

1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil
3/4 cup chopped onion
1 cup fresh corn kernels (about 1-2 ears of corn)
3 garlic cloves, minced
3/4 cup whipping cream
2 tablespoons (1/4 stick) butter
1 3/4 pounds russet potatoes, peeled, cut into 1-inch pieces

Directions

Heat oil in heavy medium skillet over medium heat. Add onion; sauté 5 minutes. Add corn and garlic; sauté until onion is golden and corn is tender, about 5 minutes longer. Add cream and butter. Bring to boil. Remove from heat. Cover; let stand 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, cook potatoes in large pot of boiling salted water until tender, about 20 minutes. Drain well. Transfer to large bowl. Mash until smooth. Stir in corn mixture. Season with salt and pepper

Tomato-Melon Gazpacho

Adapted from Mark Bittman for NYTimes.com

Ingredients:

4 tomatoes, about 1 1/2 pounds
1, 3 lb pound cantaloupe
5 tablespoons olive oil
10 leaves basil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
Juice of a lemon

Preparation:

Core, peel and seed tomatoes; cut flesh into 1-inch chunks. Seed melon, and remove flesh from rind; cut into chunks. Place a tablespoon of olive oil in each of two 10- or 12-inch skillets and turn heat under both to high. Add melon to one and tomatoes to the other, and cook, stirring, until they become juicy, no longer than 2 minutes.

In a blender or food processor, puree melon with tomatoes, 1 1/2 cups water and basil, along with some salt and pepper. Stir in remaining olive oil. Chill, add lemon juice to taste and adjust seasoning. Serve.

