



# The Pod

## Community Supported Agriculture Newsletter

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

Tuesday August 25, 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, at Niki's farm. After helping Niki a number of times, Bessie decided to pursue farming on her own and followed Niki's lead by enrolling 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 greens, 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:

Swiss Chard • Lettuce • Green Onions • Green Peppers  
Cherry Tomatoes • Heirloom Tomatoes • Lemon Grass  
Pears

### Also in Large Shares:

Arugula

### Crop Information:

#### Lemongrass



Lemongrass is a stalky plant with a lemony scent that grows in many tropical climates, most notably in Southeast-Asia. A common ingredient in Southeast Asian cooking, lemongrass provides a zesty lemon flavor and aroma to many dishes. The stalk is very fibrous and sometimes stringy, so either mash pieces of the stalk in a mortar and pestle, chop finely and allow to simmer in broth or sauce, or just add a few stalks that you bruise with the side of your knife to a soup or stir fry to add flavor (then remove the stalk before serving).

**Handling:** Cut off the lower bulb and remove tough, outer leaves. The main stalk (the yellow section) is what is used most often used in Southeast Asian cooking, although you can use the upper green "stem" and add it to soups and curries for extra flavor.

**Storing:** Store cut lemongrass in the refrigerator, tightly wrapped, for up to 2 weeks. Buy extra and freeze it indefinitely or snip stalks into small pieces and dry them. Store in airtight jars, then use as is, or grind to a powder before incorporating into a dish

# Baked Quinoa & Oatmeal with Pears

*Adapted from Food & Wine magazine*

## Ingredients:

1 cup quinoa, rinsed  
1 cup steel-cut oats  
4 cups water  
Kosher salt  
1 cup brown sugar, plus 2 tablespoons  
1 1/2 tablespoons cinnamon  
2 eggs, lightly beaten  
1 tablespoon baking powder  
2 pears with skin on, cut into 1/2-inch cubes  
1 cup [4 ounces] walnut pieces  
1 teaspoon unsalted butter

## Preparation:

Bring the quinoa, oats, 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt and water to a rolling boil in a large pot. Reduce heat, add the cinnamon and 1 cup brown sugar, and stir. Let the mixture simmer for 10 to 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Once the water is absorbed into the grains, remove from heat, and let cool for 10 minutes. Preheat oven to 350°. Butter an 8-by-8-inch or 11-by-7-inch baking dish and set aside. Lightly beat 2 eggs, then slowly add them to quinoa and oats mixture, stirring constantly. Add the baking powder and pear pieces and mix well. Transfer the mixture to the baking dish, and sprinkle 2 tablespoons brown sugar on top. Bake, uncovered, 25 to 35 minutes or until bubbly and brown on top. Let sit for 5 to 10 minutes then serve.

**MAKE AHEAD:** The quinoa and steel-cut oats can be made a day ahead and refrigerated. Add eggs, baking powder, walnuts and freshly cut pears before baking.

# Lemon Rice with Scallions & Green Pepper

*Adapted from kalynskitchen.com*

## Ingredients:

1/4 cup sliced green onions  
1 tbsp + 1 tbsp olive oil  
1 cup rice  
2 cups chicken stock or broth  
Zest from one lemon (about 2 tsp. lemon zest)  
1 stalk lemongrass  
1/3 cup chopped cilantro or parsley  
1/2 cup finely diced bell pepper  
salt and fresh ground black pepper to taste  
1/3 cup toasted pine nuts or slivered almonds

## Preparation:

Heat 1 tbsp. oil in a large heavy pot. Add the scallions and sauté 2-3 minutes, or until they are starting to soften. Then add the rice and sauté 2-3 minutes more. Crush lemongrass bulb with the flat side of a knife until it splits open slightly. Add the lemongrass and chicken stock to the pot and bring to a boil, then reduce to a low simmer, cover pan, and cook 16 minutes. While rice cooks, zest the lemon (grate off the yellow part of the peel). Finely dice 1/2 cup bell pepper, and chop the cilantro. After 16 minutes, check rice to be sure the stock is mostly absorbed, then turn off heat and let the rice sit covered for 5 minutes.

Then uncover rice, remove lemongrass stalk, fluff with a fork and let it cool for 20 minutes (to serve as a lukewarm side dish) or 40 minutes (to serve as a rice salad.) When rice has cooled to your preference, combine the lemon zest, chopped bell pepper, chopped cilantro, and second tablespoon of olive oil in a small bowl, then stir into the rice. Season to taste with salt and fresh ground black pepper. Toast pine nuts in a dry pan for about 1 minute (until they barely start to brown, be careful not to burn!) Toss pine nuts into the rice and stir again, saving a few pine nuts to garnish the top of the serving bowl if desired. Serve immediately.

# Roasted Cherry Tomatoes

*Adapted from foodnetwork.com*

## Ingredients:

1 pint cherry tomatoes  
Good olive oil  
Kosher salt  
Freshly ground black pepper  
10 fresh basil leaves, chopped or julienned  
Sea salt

## Preparation:

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F.

Cut tomatoes in half if desired. Toss lightly with olive oil and place on a sheet pan. Spread them out into one layer and sprinkle generously with kosher salt and pepper. Roast for 15 to 20 minutes, until the tomatoes are soft. Transfer the tomatoes to a serving platter and sprinkle with basil leaves and sea salt. Serve hot or at room temperature.

*Tip: Add sliced heirloom tomatoes to the mix if you desire!*

