



# The Pod

## Community Supported Agriculture Newsletter

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

Tuesday September 29, 2015

### Produce Spotlight: Apples

It's officially fall, which means it's time for all things apple! This sweet and tangy fruit is a New England classic, used in many colonial recipes that are still popular today. The apple was introduced to Massachusetts settlers in the 1630's, and quickly became a staple fruit tree on most farms. Surprisingly, apples were not usually consumed raw when first



introduced to North America. The original apple tree varieties cultivated in New England often produced tart fruits of various shapes and sizes. Most colonists preferred using them in cooking, baking, or ground up as livestock feed. More importantly, fermented cider drinks were [obviously] the hottest and most potable drink option on the colonial menu.

Most of the tasty apple varieties we know today are the result of the apple's unique genetic history in the U.S. Apples are heterozygous, a fancy term that means an apple blossom must be cross pollinated to reproduce and yield an apple fruit. This heterozygosity also means that a seed from one apple tree will not produce a fruit tree identical to its parent when planted. Rather, it will yield a new variety, sometimes with unusual and/or desirable characteristics. As missionaries, traders and settlers moved westward across the country, they carried lightweight apple seeds with them to plant on the frontier. The number of apple varieties proliferated as a result. Prior to the 1900's, thousands of apple varieties were grown and consumed throughout the U.S.

Today, only about 100 varieties are still cultivated for consumption because of commercial pressures related to uniform aesthetics, durability, and taste. Instead of planting an apple seed, apple farmers will graft a branch from a pre-existing tree onto rootstock from another tree. This allows the farmer to keep producing very specific apple varieties, and to select for specific traits relating to hardiness and pest resistance.

The popular saying "An apple a day keeps the doctor away" may have some validity. With just 80 calories, this healthy snack packs a big punch of fiber, disease-fighting anti-oxidants and a variety of vitamins and minerals including potassium, folate, niacin and vitamins A, B, C, E and K. Consuming apples on a regular basis has also been associated with lower risk for a variety of cancers, stroke and diabetes.

World PEAS purchases apples from family orchards in the surrounding area that use sustainable growing practices. Apple orchards are a particularly difficult farming venture to sustain in New England due to capital investments, land availability, and pest pressures. We are proud to support the family orchards producing such high quality fruit for you this fall!

### Produce this week:

Swiss Chard • Winter Squash  
Beets • Green Onions or Leeks  
Green Pepper • Lemongrass  
Apples • Apple Cider  
**Also in Large Shares**  
Turnips • Peaches • Tomatillos  
Corn

### Crop Information:

#### Beets



The beet is a plant in the amaranth family. The most well known is the vegetable known as the garden beet. However, other cultivated varieties include the spinach beet, as well as the sugar beet, which is important in the production of table sugar. The deep-red roots of popular red garden beet are often eaten boiled, either as a cooked vegetable, or cold as a salad after cooking and adding oil and vinegar. A large proportion of the commercial production is processed into boiled and canned beets or into pickles. In Eastern Europe beet soup, such as cold borscht, is a popular dish. Many farmers grow a several different beet varieties, including golden beets and Chioggia [or candy cane] striped beets.

**Handling:** Scrub well before cooking, but leave an inch or so of the green tops on to minimize bleeding.

**Storing:** Beets and greens will last several weeks in the refrigerator if wrapped in damp cloth or in plastic in drawer of fridge.

**Freezing:** Wash and sort for size; maximum 3 inches in size as small are best. Leave on tails and ½ inch of stem so the juice won't bleed out while boiling. Boil until tender, about 25-30 minutes for small ones and 45-50 minutes for medium. Cool quickly. Slip off skins, trim and cut in slices or cubes. Seal in plastic bags/containers and freeze.

# 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  
1 cup plus 2 tablespoons golden raisins (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



## Preparation:

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.

# Salsa Verde

*Adapted from marthastewart.com*

## Ingredients:

1 pint tomatillos, husks removed  
½ cup diced white onion  
1 garlic clove  
½ jalapeño, quartered (seeded if desired)  
1 cup water  
Coarse salt and ground pepper  
1 tablespoon vegetable oil  
1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro  
1 teaspoon white vinegar  
Pinch of sugar

## Preparation:

In a medium pot of boiling salted water, cook tomatillos until tender, 10 to 15 minutes. Drain tomatillos and transfer to a blender; add onion, clove, jalapeño, and water. Puree until smooth. (Use caution when blending hot liquids: Remove cap from lid and cover opening with a dish towel.) Season with salt and pepper. In pot, heat oil over high until shimmering. Add tomatillo mixture and simmer, stirring occasionally, until thickened, 5 to 10 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in cilantro, vinegar, and sugar. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

# Lemongrass, Lime & Basil Lemonade or Mojito

*Adapted from thekitchn.com*

## Ingredients:

2 stalks lemongrass  
1/4 cup + 2 teaspoons sugar  
2 limes, sliced into 8 lime wedges  
Large handful fresh basil  
8 ounces white rum (optional)  
Club soda, as required to top up (optional)  
Ice, to serve  
Lemongrass stalks, trimmed (optional, to use as stir sticks)

## Preparation:

First, make the lemongrass simple syrup. Chop the lemongrass stalks into 1-inch pieces, and bruise using a mortar and pestle. Place them in a pot with 1 cup of water and 1/4 cup sugar. Bring to a boil, then reduce the heat and simmer for 2 minutes. Turn off the heat and let the syrup infuse for about 2 hours, or allow to cool and refrigerate for 24 hours.

Strain the syrup, pressing down on the lemongrass stalks to extract maximum flavor. Chill until ready to use. Once the syrup is strained, it will also keep in your fridge for a couple of weeks.

*If making mojitos:* To build each cocktail, arrange 4 cocktail glasses on a work surface and place 1/2 teaspoon sugar in each glass. Add 1 lime slice into each glass along with a handful of Thai basil, and muddle together. Pour in 2 ounces rum and 2 ounces lemongrass syrup. Top with ice and club soda. Stir and serve.

*If making lemonade:* Pour lemongrass syrup into a large pitcher. Muddle a handful of basil with a mortar and pestle and add to syrup. Add sparkling water to taste and more sugar if desired. Top with ice and several slices of lime.