

# Journey School Food Community CSA Newsletter

## Week 29: August 4, 2007

Hooray! The tomatoes are here! We're not sure why but the large tomatoes, Oregon Spring, Oregon Star, and Amish Paste, all beat the cherry tomatoes to red. How are your Peacevines doing? We've got lots of vine and lots of green tomatoes but very few red yet.

Also in your share this week is celery. We've never planted celery, nor seen it growing before. I was pretty skeptical about the plant from the beginning. We had to use a special seedling box as the roots grow to over a foot long before transplanting. And then, they were such wimpy little things, so lacy and fragile. I'd imagined something like what you get in the store. Our celery may indeed size up as the Summer progresses to Fall. Until then, the stems are awesome chopped in 1/2 inch pieces in salads, pasta, or eggs. As celery is closely related to parsley, use the leafy tops for any recipe that calls for parsley.

Historical documents show that celery was used medicinally long before it was considered food. In fact, one of my favorite "nurturing" memories is my grandmother making me celery leaf tea, bundling me up, and totally spoiling me when I had my first bout of severe cramps. The Whole Foods website backs up grandma with this:

"The seeds of celery's wild ancestors, which originated around the Mediterranean, were widely used as a diuretic. Today, we understand how celery, which is rich in both potassium and sodium, the minerals most important for regulating fluid balance, stimulates urine production, thus helping to rid the body of excess fluid."

<http://www.whfoods.org/genpage.php?tname=foodspice&dbid=14>

On a more serious note, this is the last week we will have eggs on the share list. We spent three days just last week moving our chickens around. Because we don't have room for the chicken pasture here at Plain Old Farm, we have had to find other property on which to keep the flock. We've paid outrageous rent, provided extended services for the landowners, and kept a pretty low profile. Unfortunately, every time, we've had to move our entire operation when the landowner deems their use of the land a higher priority than ours. We are now getting 15 eggs a day from 42 hens. Our chickens, and our family, have been stressed to the breaking point. As we cannot secure a reliable home for the flock, we cannot continue to offer the eggs as a weekly harvest item. It will be some time before we are able to find a new owner for the chickens and so will continue getting some eggs. If you are especially appreciative of the hens' work, please let us know and we will share these eggs with you.

The story that goes with the great lemon basil recipe I found was too good to leave behind. Hope you all have a lovely week, Lisa, Jeff, Zoe, and Rae

### Lemon Basil Aioli

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<http://inadvertentgardener.wordpress.com/2006/07/16/lemon-basil-aioli/>

We harvested more green tomatoes off the struggling Big Beef plant, which meant more opportunities for fried green tomatoes. This time, though, I wanted a little bit of a change from the first round.

The Joy of Cooking had suggested serving the tomatoes with a garlic aioli, and also recommended using them in sandwiches. I mentioned this to Steve, who perked up immediately. "What about a bacon-lettuce-fried-green-tomato sandwich?" he said. Brilliant.

But I wanted truly outstanding sandwiches. So, on the Fourth of July, I figured I'd celebrate by, you know, making some French mayonnaise to spread on the sandwich bread. Just consider it my early effort in honor of Bastille Day. Let me say that I always thought it would be easy to make aioli. I've read dozens of recipes that say things like, "Once you make your own mayonnaise, you'll never go back to the jarred stuff." And, of course, chefs and home cooks have been making this stuff for years.

I'm good at cooking, but it took me three tries to get this right. Please learn from my mistakes: let everything get to room temperature first, and go slowly. Really, really slowly. Even if, like me, you are not a patient person.

The first time through, I put garlic, salt and ice cold egg yolks in the food processor, whirled them up, and then started adding olive oil. What I didn't realize is that by "a drop at a time," recipes really mean a drop at a time. This isn't like baking cookies, where you can kind of fudge on that part where they tell you to add the dry ingredients slowly to the wet ingredients. All the recipes, in this case, really mean to go a drop at a time.

So, I decided to dump the mess of olive oil and cold yolks into a bowl and start whisking, in case that would work better. Two minutes later, my arm was exhausted, and nothing was getting any thicker, so I poured everything in the blender. Still no thickening, and I gave up on Batch #1.

Just before I started Batch #2, I did more research to see what I was doing wrong. This was when I learned that I'd added the oil far too quickly, and so, on attempt number two, I tried going with the blender from the start, but just adding oil a drop at a time. I also learned that this works better if all ingredients are at room temperature. As I started this round, Steve asked if there was anything he could do to help.

"Well, if you know how to make mayonnaise, then sure," I said. "I have no idea what I'm doing, and this is supposed to be easy."

Steve stuck it out at his laptop, typing away while I began whirling up a room-temperature egg (I gave up on the yolks-only proposition for Batches #2 and #3) and the next round of garlic in the blender. I started adding olive oil a drop at a time, trying to be patient, letting the blender run in between, just barely peeking in to see what was happening. The answer? Absolutely nothing. Everything just kept whirling around, liquid as ever. Worse? Whenever I peeked, I got a splash of garlicky, eggy oil in my eye, which burned.

Just as I started to get really annoyed, disaster struck. The clear plastic top of the blender, which fits perfectly into the rubber lid, dropped through its center hole and into the whirling mess. Steve leapt to his feet as I hollered and punched blender buttons. "Oh no!" he yelled. "What happened?"

A piece of blender flew past my shoulder and across the room. "Aahh! Aahh! Aahh!" I yelled, as little droplets of oily egg flew everywhere.

I managed to get it stopped, and we hunted for the pieces of plastic that had shot all over the place. "I'll buy you a new blender," I said.

Unwilling to be defeated, I went for Batch #3, this time back to the food processor. "French women have been doing this for years," I said. "But if this doesn't work this time, I'm not ever doing this again." Miraculously, this time, I must have worked slowly enough. First the eggs and garlic and kosher salt whirled together, then I began feeding in olive oil a drop at a time. For awhile, it looked like it wasn't going to work, but suddenly, the texture changed. "Oh my God," I crowed. "It's magic!" I began drizzling the rest of the oil in, as instructed, and Steve came over to peek in the feed tube. "Look," I said. "Aioli!"

I had my fresh basil chopped and waiting in a small silicone muffin cup that I find works as well for prep work as for baking. As I started to dump the basil into the tube, Steve pointed at the little silicone cup and said, "Don't drop that in there."

I added lemon juice and let it run about another five seconds before scraping out the bowl. The aioli served as a perfect spread for the oatmeal bread I picked up at the coop. I fried up some Amana Colonies pepper bacon, and layered it on the sandwich with the fried green tomatoes and some spinach (the lettuce we had in the house was questionable, and nothing ruins a sandwich faster than bad lettuce...).

## Lemon basil aioli

1 raw egg  
4-6 cloves garlic, chopped  
1/2 Tbsp. kosher salt  
1 c. extra virgin olive oil  
2 tsp. fresh lemon juice  
3 Tbsp. chopped fresh lemon basil

Let all ingredients come to room temperature before beginning. Add the egg, garlic and salt to the bowl of a food processor. Pulse until mixed. Begin adding the olive oil through the feed tube a drop at a time. Let the food processor run while you do this, and give it time. Eventually, you'll notice the mixture getting thicker, and when that happens, start adding the olive oil a little faster. As it gets even thicker, you can start adding the olive oil in a thin stream, steadily, while the food processor continues to run. Add the lemon juice and basil and let the processor run about five more seconds. Scrape into a bowl, cover and chill.

The aioli will keep in the refrigerator, tightly covered, for about two days. It's great in potato salad, with fish, on sandwiches or in wraps, or, if you've got the Euro-fever, with French fries.