

Journey School Food Community CSA Newsletter

Week Thirty-Six: September 22, 2007

The garlic is harvested, cured and stored. The first of the winter squash have been cut, rinsed, and are now curing. The corn and pole beans from the Three Sisters field have been harvested for this week's share. The last of the 370 pounds of keeper onions have been pulled, cured, and cleaned. The potatoes are dug, dried, and stored safely. Jeff and Andy cover cropped about 1/2 of the garden with a mix of oats and vetch. Next week, we'll pull the zucchini plants and cover crop that field as well. The last of the Winter salad green beds will be planted next week and the Three Sisters field will be undersown with the same oat and vetch cover crop. And I've finally stopped hoping that Summer is just around the corner.

We planted the Journey School Three Sisters field as an experiment in companion planting after having read about the traditional grouping for years. Also, we didn't like the plastic trellis system used last year - the beans were so intertwined into the plastic that it just had to sit balled up in its own compost heap through the winter until the vines broke down and could be shaken from the plastic. So the search was on for a better trellis system.

First, squash transplants were planted on 4-5 foot centers with corn transplanted between them about 1 foot apart. We didn't plant in the traditional mound method as rows better complement our drip irrigation. Each corn plant was circled with 3-4 bean seeds. Transplants were used so that the squash and corn had a head start on the faster growing beans. Growth rates relative to each other seemed about right. The squash grew as intended to act as a living mulch keeping down the weeds, but we think it was shaded enough by the corn and beans to reduce the number and size of fruits. The corn grew and produced small but fully pollinated ears even though the plants were spaced farther apart than recommended for growing corn. Since corn is wind pollinated rather than insect pollinated, it is usually grown in dense squares instead of long scant rows. The beans did find the corn to trellis yet some of the corn yielded to the weight of the beans and began to topple over.

All in all, it was a good experiment. Next time we'll grow squash in its own field for a higher yield even though we'll have to wheel hoe the corn and beans. We think the trade off will be well worth it as picking the corn and beans will be easier without the prickly squash underfoot. We'll find a taller and stronger corn variety for the bean trellis. We do acknowledge that this traditional grouping was not grown in our temperate maritime climate but in the hotter, dryer southwest. The squash could indeed benefit from the shade and with a longer growing season, the corn stalks may grow more slowly and thus, more sturdy.

Our other grand experiment, the Melon Hoophouse is bearing its first mature fruit. Boy, the weather sure made us eat our words this year. Perhaps we shouldn't have boasted quite so loudly about being able to grow cantaloupe here! We have a few watermelons in there that have sized up nicely and now just need a bit more heat to sweeten fully. If we haven't picked them before our end-of-season feast, we will cut into the lovely green orbs then. At the moment of truth, I hope to be eating sweet melon instead of crow! Have a great week, Jeff, Lisa, Zoe, and Rae

Gazpacho

2 lbs. Tomatoes chopped

2 Bell Peppers chopped
1 Onion chopped
1 Cucumber peeled and chopped
1 Cup Tomato juice or ice water
2 Slices white bread with the crust removed
2 Cloves Garlic Crushed
1/2 Cup Red Wine Vinegar
1/3 Cup Extra Virgin Olive Oil
Salt and pepper to taste

Croutons and chopped hard boiled eggs are traditional garnishes

Put ingredients into a food processor and process to a medium consistency, you want to see small chunks of the vegetables. You may have to do this in two batches depending on the capacity of your food processor. Put in the refrigerator for two hours, or overnight is even better. This is a soup you want to be very cold.

Baked Onions

2 large yellow or white onions, peeled
2 TBSP Tomato Juice
1 1/2 TBSP Honey
1 TBSP butter or margarine
1/2 tsp salt
1/8 tsp paprika

Cut onions in half crosswise and place, cut side up, in a baking dish. Combine remaining ingredients in saucepan on low until butter is melted; stir well. Pour over center of each onion half and bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour.

Tomato Quiche

1 cup chopped onion
2 tablespoons butter or margarine
4 large tomatoes, peeled, chopped, seeded and drained
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1/4 teaspoon dried thyme
2 cups (8 oz.) shredded Monterey Jack cheese, DIVIDED
1 unbaked pastry shell (10 inches)
4 eggs
1-1/2 cups light cream

In a skillet, saute onion in butter until tender. Add tomatoes, salt, pepper and thyme. Cook over medium-high heat until liquid is almost evaporated, about 10-15 minutes. Remove from heat. Sprinkle 1 cup cheese into bottom of pie shell. Cover with tomato mixture; sprinkle with remaining cheese. In a mixing bowl, beat eggs until foamy. Stir in cream; mix well. Pour into pie shell. Bake at 425 degrees F. for 10 minutes. Reduce heat to 325 degrees F., bake 40 minutes more or until top begins to brown and a knife inserted near the center comes out clean. Let stand 10 minutes before cutting.