

Otter Hook Farms

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Traditional Family Farming



Week of September 1, 2009, Harvest Week 13

This week's share includes: Sweet Onions, Summer or Spaghetti Squash, Eggplant, Potatoes, Swiss Chard, Garlic, and Sweet Basil

Next week should have: Spaghetti Squash, Onions, Potatoes, Garlic, Sweet Basil, Parsley, and Greens

We've been thinking and talking a lot this week about food security. This past week, Chris and several others met with the Glynwood Center to talk about the future of farming in New Baltimore. The Glynwood Center is an organization that helps communities meet their agriculture-preserving goals; they worked with Chatham on their "Chatham Keep Farming" project, and they are currently bringing some farming back to Rockland County. Hopefully they will help our town come up with some ideas for reviving farming in our town, too. I bring up this meeting, however, not to talk about how to save our farms, but because of a small piece of the conversation Chris told me about – where he brought up the fact that a very important reason to keep farms...and get them producing human-consumable products...is a matter of food security.

Food security is a multi-faceted issue. First of all, there are the issues of peak oil and climate change. Peak oil tells us that the days of cheap fuel are soon to be over. Which means that food will become more expensive at every level – more expensive for farmers to raise (not just the fuel for tractors, either; synthetic fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides are all petro-chemicals, as is the black plastic many growers use) and more expensive to transport. Climate change is what is already giving us this crazy weather where entire crops can be wiped out in one fell swoop. We can live without our tomatoes, but could we live without wheat if something were to happen to that crop in the Midwest?

There are also food safety issues. Rampant recalls of contaminated food over the last several years has our legislators scrambling for some way to make the industrial ag system "safer" – all the while pushing small farms out of business with their new regulations. And, in all reality, those regulations do not make us any safer at all.

The real solution to these issues is to have a regional food system. For communities, counties and states to look at their open space and figure out how to get more small farms working that land. Food is not something that should be produced by a factory model; that is man's ego trying to control nature.

We must start raising all food closer to a natural model; one that flows with nature. Food should be about a Place, a Face and about Taste. This is why we love the CSA model; building community, we are your farmers and the veggies taste great!

Vegetarian Moussaka

1 cup lentils
3 large potatoes
1 large eggplant
4 tablespoons olive oil
2 medium onions
6 cloves garlic
1 red bell pepper
12 oz baby bellas
1 14 oz can diced tomatoes
1 teaspoon oregano
1 teaspoon cinnamon
Dash cayenne pepper
6 tablespoons butter
1/2 cup flour
2 cups milk
1/2 cup parmesan cheese

Preheat oven to 400.

Rinse lentils well and add to large sauce pot. Add water to cover and boil 20-30 minutes, until soft, adding additional water if needed. Drain lentils.

While lentils are cooking slice eggplant into 1/2 inch thick discs. Place on oiled baking sheet and cook 15 minutes, or until soft. Remove from oven.

Also while lentils are cooking, scrub potatoes clean under running water. Slice into thin discs. In large sauce pan, cover with water and bring to boil. Add a little salt and simmer about 15-20 minutes, or until soft. Drain and rinse with cold water.

Dice onion and mince garlic. Heat up olive oil in large saute pan over medium high heat. Add garlic and onion, turning heat down to medium. Saute about 5-7 minutes.

Chop mushrooms and the red bell pepper and add to the saute pan. Cook, stirring occasionally, about 10 minutes. Add the tomatoes, oregano, cinnamon and cayenne, and cook at a simmer until the mixture thickens, seasoning to taste with salt and pepper.

In large bowl, mix 1/2 of saute pan mixture with lentils.

In 9 by 13 pan, spread out lentil mixture. Cover the lentils with overlapping potato slices. Spread 1/2 of remaining mushroom-tomato sauce over potatoes. Cover with eggplant slices, using the remaining sauce to cover eggplant.

Melt butter in saucepan over medium heat. Whisk in flour. Cook for a couple of minutes until golden, then whisk in milk. Whisk constantly until the roux boils and begins to thicken. Remove from heat and stir in the Parmesan cheese. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Pour the white sauce over the pan, smoothing so that the entire top is covered with white sauce. Bake on middle rack of oven for about 45 minutes. The top should be turning golden brown when finished. Remove from oven. Let sit about 10-20 minutes to let moussaka firm up before serving.