

Welcome to Fall & Winter 2008!

While many organic fruits and vegetables are available year-round, we enjoy some only briefly and eagerly anticipate their return from year to year. At Off the Vine, eating seasonally means enjoying the ripest and freshest food at the height of its natural harvest time. It means supporting local organic farmers who transport their goods the shortest distance to your plate. It also means experimenting with delicious foods you might not otherwise consider adding to a meal! Eat fresh and enjoy!

A few tips & recipes for Fall and Winter produce from Off the Vine



Winter Squash - The thin-skinned varieties (acorn, butternut, delicata and sweet dumpling) can be peeled with a paring knife or vegetable peeler. Most recipes using these varieties call for cutting the squash in half. Position the squash on a cutting board, stem end facing you. Place the blade of a heavy chef's knife horizontally along the length of the squash. With a hammer or mallet, repeatedly hit the back of the blade near the handle to drive it into the squash until it breaks in half. With a spoon, scoop out the seeds and strings and discard, or set aside if you plan to roast the seeds.

To cook winter squash, place unpeeled pieces cut sides down on a shallow baking dish and bake in a 350°F oven for 30 minutes or longer. Check for doneness by piercing with a fork or skewer. When tender, remove from the oven and allow the pieces to cool. Spoon out the soft flesh and mash with a fork or process in a blender or food processor. Peeled pieces can be cut into cubes and boiled until tender. Use with any recipe calling for cooked mashed or pureed squash. Or microwave the squash pieces on high for 15 minutes or longer.

Small acorn squash and spaghetti squash can be pierced in several places with a long-tined fork or metal skewer and baked whole. Piercing prevents the shell from bursting during cooking. Place the squash on a baking dish and bake for 1 1/2 to 2 hours at 325°F. Test for doneness by squeezing the shell. When it gives a bit with pressure, it is done.

Home Preservation

Store whole winter squash in an area where temperatures range from 45 to 50°F for three to six months. At room temperature reduce storage time to one and a half to three months depending on variety. Cooked squash freezes well. Pack into freezer containers or freezer bags leaving 1/2 inch head space and freeze for up to one year.

Butternut Squash & Pear Soup

Serves 6-8

INGREDIENTS:

1 large butternut squash (about 4 pounds)
4 quarts vegetarian bouillon or stock
2 medium yellow onions, peeled and sliced
2 tablespoons butter
3 pears (must be ripe and flavorful), peeled and sliced

1 apple, peeled and sliced
3 tablespoons curry powder
Salt and pepper, to taste
Crème Fraîche (optional)
Chives, chopped (optional)



PREPARATION:

1. Peel the squash, remove seeds and chop into chunks. In a pot large enough to hold all of the ingredients, cook the squash in the bouillon or stock over medium heat.
2. Meanwhile, sauté the onions in butter until translucent. Add the pear and apple slices and sauté until soft (about 5 minutes); add curry powder. Combine the onion mixture into the squash and simmer for approximately 30 minutes. When squash is tender, add salt and pepper to taste.
3. Working in batches, purée the soup in a blender. Add more stock or water if necessary to reach a thick creamy soup consistency. Divide soup among bowls and serve hot, topping with Crème Fraîche and chives, if using.

Avocado Salsa

INGREDIENTS:

1 1/2 cups tomatillos (about 1/2 pound)
2 small or 1 large avocado, peeled and pitted
1/2 jalapeno chile

1 clove garlic
1/4 bunch cilantro, stemmed
About 1 teaspoon kosher salt

PREPARATION:

1. To prepare the salsa, soak the tomatillos in cold water for a few minutes, then peel off and discard the husks.
2. Place the tomatillos in a blender with the avocados, jalapeño, garlic, cilantro and salt.
3. Blend on high speed until smooth and vibrant in color; it should be thicker than gravy but thinner than guacamole.
4. Adjust the seasoning with salt as necessary.



Squash Fritters with Tart Tomato Chutney

Yields 1-3 dozen depending on size

Winter Squash Fritters

INGREDIENTS:

1½ cups white whole wheat flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
2 teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon Kosher salt
2 large eggs
¾ cup milk

3 tablespoons olive oil, plus some for frying
2 cups fresh winter squash, peeled, seeded and cubed or sliced
2 tablespoons parsley, chopped
2 tablespoons basil, chopped

PREPARATION:

1. Mix flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt in a bowl.
2. Make a well in the center of the bowl and add eggs, milk and oil. Whisk together and add squash and herbs.
3. Put enough oil in a frying pan to grease it well.
4. Drop the batter into the pan and fry a few fritters at a time, until golden on each side.

Tart Tomato Chutney

INGREDIENTS:

2 pounds of assorted heirloom tomatoes, seeded and cut into chunks
1 bunch green onions, sliced thin
2 tablespoons fresh cilantro, chopped
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 ½ teaspoon spice mixture (recipe follows)

or
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground cumin
2 tablespoons honey
¼ cup of seasoned rice vinegar
1 teaspoon Kosher salt

PREPARATION:

1. Put tomatoes, green onions and cilantro in a bowl and set aside.
2. Heat olive oil in a sauce pan. Add spice mixture and heat until bubbly, about 2 minutes.
3. Slowly add honey and rice vinegar. Cook for three minutes or until slightly thick and goey.
4. Pour mixture over tomatoes, cilantro and green onions. Season with salt and let sit for about 5 minutes before using.



Four Apple Treats for One!

Combine: 1 medium apple with...
2 teaspoons organic peanut butter, 2 teaspoons organic raisins
1 tablespoon honey, 1 tablespoon chopped dry roasted peanuts
1 tablespoon honey, ½ ounce crushed pretzels
1 ½ tablespoons real maple syrup, 1 tablespoon toasted sesame seeds

Champagne Citrus Compote

Serves 6 to 8

This is a very simple recipe showing off the best citrus that the winter farmers market has to offer. You can make a smaller version of this in the morning for breakfast, omitting the sugar and the champagne. You can serve this compote for dessert by itself, with cookies, ice cream, pound cake or almond torte.

INGREDIENTS:

8-10 pieces of citrus; grapefruit, oranges, minneolas, blood oranges etc.
1/2 cup organic sugar
1/4 cup juice from assorted citrus
1 cup Champagne or Prosecco

PREPARATION:

Peel and section citrus by first cutting off both ends. Then with a sharp knife remove the peel, being careful to remove all the pith but not cutting off too much fruit. Holding the fruit in your hand over your serving bowl, slice into one section along the membrane. Upon reaching the center of the fruit, using the sharp edge of the knife, push the section out into your bowl. When you have removed all the sections, squeeze the juice over the sections in your bowl.

After all the fruit has been sectioned and the juice squeezed from it, remove ¼ cup of the juice and in a small saucepan stir together the sugar and the juice. Cook over medium heat just until the sugar has dissolved. Let cool, and then gently stir into your compote without breaking down the sections. Then add the champagne or prosecco, (you can add more than 1 cup if you like!). Serve in glass bowls with cookies.

Urban Citrus and Raisin Collards

Serves 4 - 6

INGREDIENTS:

2 large bunches collard greens	1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
Course sea salt, to taste	2 garlic cloves, minced
1/3 cup fresh orange juice	2/3 cup raisins

PREPARATION:

1. Wash the greens: remove the stems. Stack four or five leaves on top of one another. Roll them into a tight cylinder and slice crosswise with a sharp knife, cutting the leaves into thin strips. Rinse the leaves in cold water, drain in a colander and spin in a salad spinner.
2. In a large pot over high heat, bring 3 quarts of water to a boil and add 1 teaspoon salt. Add the collards and cook, uncovered, for 8 to 10 minutes, until softened.
3. Prepare a large bowl of ice water to cool the collards.
4. Remove the collards from the heat, drain and plunge them into the bowl of cold water to stop the cooking and set the color of the greens. Drain.
5. In a medium sauté pan over medium heat, warm the oil. Add the garlic and sauté for 1 minute. Add the collards, raisins and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Sauté for 3 minutes, stirring frequently.
6. Add orange juice and cook for an additional 15 seconds. Do not overcook (collards should be bright green). Season with additional salt to taste if needed and serve immediately.

Smooth Acorn and Pumpkin Soup

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS:

3 tablespoons butter	1 teaspoon fresh tarragon
½ pound pumpkin; peeled, seeded and cut into two inch cubes	1 cup heavy cream
½ pound acorn squash; peeled, seeded and cut into two inch cubes	4 tablespoon maple-cinnamon crème fraîche
1 pound tart apples; peeled, cored, and roughly chopped	salt and pepper to taste
1 large onion, roughly chopped	snipped chives for garnish
2 navel oranges, juiced	
4 cups chicken stock	
½ cup Riesling wine	



PREPARATION:

1. Place butter in large, deep sauce pan on medium heat.
2. Add pumpkin, squash, apples and onion to the pan; sauté for 5-10 minutes.
3. Add chicken stock, orange juice, wine, tarragon. Turn heat to medium high, and simmer for 30 minutes, cool and puree.
4. Slowly warm the bisque with the cream.
5. Once warmed, strain the bisque through cheesecloth or a fine mesh strainer. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Garnish with chives and crème fraîche and serve.

HEIRLOOMS

As we move into the cool season, some of the most eye-catching and tasty vegetables - sweet red carrots, black turnips, bright green Romanesco, gigantic radishes and red greens - all have something in common. They're heirlooms!

Plant cultivars can be grouped into two general categories: modern and heirloom varieties. Modern varieties are those developed through a formal system of breeding and selection, usually by plant breeders. These varieties tend to be high yielding and genetically uniform.

Heirloom varieties, also called farmers' varieties, traditional varieties or landraces, have been selected and developed by farmers through years of cultivation and seed saving for the next season. Farmers hand them down through generations. These varieties are often specifically suited to a certain climate and soil type, and have been selected for flavor, pest resistance, productivity, and even beauty. Heirlooms are typically very genetically diverse and variable.

Since the industrialization of agriculture, a staggering number of traditional varieties have disappeared. Over 95% of the vegetable cultivars one could find in 1903 are now extinct. With the loss of these farmer-developed varieties comes the loss of the genetic diversity they contain, which is crucial in the development of modern varieties. Without a diverse genetic pool from which to pull to create modern cultivars, world agriculture is in trouble. Several organizations and many farmers and gardeners work to preserve genetic diversity by keeping heirloom varieties under cultivation. Some farms grow heirlooms, and these varieties, rare to find in a conventional supermarket, are part of what make produce from the local areas so different.

GUIDE TO ROOT VEGETABLES

The term “root vegetable” specifically refers to edible plant roots, though it is sometimes used to include anything that grows underground (tubers and enlarged stems, such as potatoes, taro, ginger and sunchokes). Roots store energy for plants in the form of carbohydrates and vary widely in their content of starches and sugars.

Beets – typically red and globe-shaped; also available in white, golden, and Chioggia (candy cane) varieties. Beets have the highest sugar content of any vegetable, but are low in calories. Do not peel or cut before cooking. Red beets can stain your hands and clothing. *Serving suggestions:* Add wedges to salad with green beans and goat cheese; toss with herb butter and enjoy.

Carrots – available in white, purple and gold, in addition to orange. High in beta-carotene, which is converted in the body to Vitamin A. Store carrots away from apples or pears because they release ethylene gas, which can turn carrots bitter. Carrots are commonly used for both savory and sweet dishes. *Serving suggestions:* Shred raw carrots and mix with olive oil, lemon juice, and rosemary to make a salad. Add carrots to stew, tomato sauce, vegetable soup, or stir-fries. Make carrot cake or carrot pudding.

Daikon – long, dense cucumber-shaped roots also known as Oriental radish or mooli; often included in stir-fries, or pickled (as in Korean kimchi). *Serving suggestion:* Steam daikon with shredded carrots, then dress with vinaigrette made with rice wine vinegar, sesame oil, and chopped cilantro.

Parsnips – resemble ivory-colored carrots. Pleasantly sweet, with earthy herbal notes. In ancient times, parsnips were used as a sweetener. *Serving suggestions:* Boil with potatoes and mash together. Or toss roasted parsnips with nutmeg, ginger, cinnamon, or allspice and a little brown sugar or maple syrup.

Radishes – usually round but sometimes elongated; typically red-skinned with white interior; peppery flavor. Radishes are typically eaten raw in salads, as an appetizer, or as a garnish.

Rutabagas – usually yellow- or purple- fleshed and round, larger than turnips. Rutabagas are a cross between a cabbage and a turnip. In Europe, they're often called “swedes.” *Serving suggestions:* Add diced rutabagas to chicken pot pie. Use julienned raw rutabagas on a crudité tray.

Sweet potatoes – not related to potatoes or to true yams, which grow in tropical climates, though sweet potatoes are commonly called yams in the United States. Sweet potatoes have been cultivated in the Americas for over 2000 years. Dozens of varieties exist, but two are most familiar: orange-fleshed and squash-like (like Garnets) and pale-fleshed and fluffy when cooked (like Jersey Yellows). *Serving suggestions:* Cut into sticks and fry like French fries. Mash and combine with crème fraîche and minced chipotles.

Turnips – usually white-fleshed and round, with purple-tinged skin. In Japanese and Arab cuisines, turnips are often pickled; in China, they are sun-dried and salted or preserved in soy sauce. *Serving suggestions:* Dress shredded raw turnips, cabbage, and carrots with sharp mustard vinaigrette and poppy seeds to make a slaw. Make a gratin of paper-thin turnip slices, cream, and Parmigiano and Reggiano cheese.

Cruciferous Crops

Brassicaceae has made a substantial contribution to humans' food choices: the enormous cabbage family includes turnips, kohlrabi, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, cauliflower, rapini, romanesco, mustard seed, mustard greens, collards, kale, bok choy, canola, rutabaga, radish, watercress, and arugula, among others. Broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, kale, collard greens, and kohlrabi, different as they look, are all cultivar groups of the species *Brassica oleracea*.

Carrots

Wild carrots originated about 5,000 years ago in what is now Afghanistan. Both Egyptians and Greeks used the wild green, purple, white, yellow and black-rooted plants medicinally. In the winter months, root vegetables are at their absolute sweetest because cold air and soil temperatures have encouraged the conversion of starches to sugars. Crops harvested from cooler regions of the state are mostly “clip-tops” because their delicate above-ground parts have frozen off, while carrots grown in more temperate coastal regions might still be connected to their stems and leaves. The culinary directions that you can take these lovely roots are as many as their shades – soup, salad, cake, bread, juice, braises, stews, and more.

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