



green string farm news

Farm News

What's in the Store

- onions
- leeks
- celery
- chard
- collard greens
- cabbage
- broccoli
- kale
- Chinese cabbage
- lettuce
- chickweed
- dandelion greens
- cardoons
- brussel sprouts
- garlic
- oranges
- mandarine oranges
- rough lemons

We've still got 'em!

- beets
- Jerusalem artichokes
- dried hot peppers

Welcome to the first issue of the Green String Farm newsletter! We've started this monthly publication so that you, our customers and members of our community, can know more about the goings-on in our little corner of Petaluma. In addition to news items, we're including spotlights on some of our farming practices (this month the focus is on starting plants in a greenhouse), and a few much-requested recipes, straight from the farm interns' test kitchen.

In January we welcomed Allie Iacocca to our staff. The former intern of Bob Cannard's and recent graduate of UC Santa Cruz has returned to coordinate our internship program. At the end of this month, four of our interns will graduate from the program and go out into the world to find their fortunes and their farms! Though Melissa, Jeff, Julia, and Andrea will be sorely missed, their absence will make room for a new batch of interns on March 1.

If, on recent visits to the farm, you've noticed white, fluffy specks up on our hills, you've spotted some of the goats and sheep that kindly mow down our grass and weeds. The wooly weeders are moved frequently to prevent overgrazing.

Hope you enjoy this first issue, and many more to come!

Getting an Early Start on Seeds

Strange weather patterns notwithstanding, we've entered another spring growing season. Much of the job of successfully growing food is in preparation: every seed sown is the product of hours of consideration and observation. As Bob says, "If you want to know if it's too early to plant, look around. What is budding and growing independently around where you live?"

Besides observation of the flora around you there are many other preparations to be made before planting. Here at Green String we plant many seeds in the greenhouse around this time of year. (Another option is to germinate seeds indoors to allow them to grow large enough to withstand the cold nights still ahead.) In order to provide adequate warmth in greenhouse germination, prepare a bed of active (heat producing) compost to lay beneath your potting mix - the compost can be reused later to nourish seedlings or to slow weeds around more mature plants.

Finally there is the job of selecting seeds for use. There are many books and online resources which aid in selecting which seeds to plant when, but again, attention must be paid to what your local plants are doing. As for the potting mix, the most important thing is to strike a balance between water-holding material (like peat moss or finished compost - not hot) and air-holding material (like sand or perlite). Then, in the words of Bob Cannard, "just watch the babies."

Easy Cardoons

The cardoon is a member of the thistle family, related to the artichoke. The long, thick stem is fibrous like celery, but has a delicate, artichoke flavor. Serves 4

- * 2 large cardoon stems, peeled and chopped into bite-size pieces
- water to cover
- 2 teaspoons salt
- ¼ cup butter
- * 10 sage leaves, dried or fresh

1. Place cardoons in a saucepan and add enough water just to cover. Add salt.
2. Bring to a boil, cover, and simmer until slightly tender, usually at least 20 minutes.
3. When cardoons are nearly done, melt butter in a small pan. Add sage leaves and gently fry until sage is slightly crispy.
4. Drain cardoons and dress with sage and butter. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Chard Casserole

Intern Melissa's mom made a spinach casserole that was, we're told, to die for. It was so good, in fact, that Melissa requested it in place of a cake for her 13th birthday. In this adaptation, the spinach is replaced with chard for a heartier, but no less delicious, dish. Serves 4-6

- * 1 lb chard
- 4 tablespoons butter
- ¼ cup flour
- * 1 cayenne pepper, cut very fine
- 1 ½ cups milk
- 2 cups bread crumbs
- * 2 hard-boiled eggs, peeled and thinly sliced
- * 1 cup sharp cheddar cheese, shredded

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Boil or steam chard for 10 minutes. Drain and chop.
3. Melt butter in saucepan. Add flour, salt, and cayenne. Add milk slowly. Heat until thickened and boiling, about 3 minutes. Remove from heat and set aside.
4. Butter a medium casserole or cake pan.
5. Evenly spread half of the breadcrumbs, followed by half of the chard, half of the eggs, half of the sauce, and all of the cheese. Layer on the remaining chard, eggs, sauce, and spread the breadcrumbs on top.
6. Bake, uncovered, for 40 minutes

Preserved Peach Muffins

These moist muffins are great for an unusually wholesome dessert. Makes 12 muffins

- 2 cups whole wheat flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon sugar, plus extra for topping
- * 1 pint preserved summer peaches
- * 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons oil or melted butter

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. Combine the flour, baking powder, and salt in a large bowl.
3. In a separate bowl, combine the peaches (along with syrup), egg, oil or butter, and sugar. If there are large pieces of peach, break them up. Whisk or stir until well combined.
4. Pour the peach mixture on top of the flour mixture. Stir together until just combined.
5. Spoon into greased muffin tins. Top with sugar for a crunchy, sweet top, and bake until springy, 15-20 minutes.