

Tuv HaShavua - Best of the Week

Weekly news from Tuv Ha'Aretz

The Hazon Community-Supported Agriculture Project at Congregation Shearith Israel

Volume 1, Issue 4

21 May 2007 / 4 Sivan 5767



In Praise of Dinner Parties -by Leah Koenig

Last night I threw a dinner party. Not a Shabbat meal, which I've grown happily accustomed to attending or occasionally hosting on Friday nights. I picked a random Monday, invited some friends over, asked the friends to bring spicy red wine and caramel ice cream, baked and prepped most of Sunday afternoon, and came home from work to finish cooking, set out plates, and answer the door as my guests arrived.

There is a Hasidic folktale that says rebbes should be buried in a coffin made from the wood of their dining table. The connection is that one's hospitality at the table will carry them into the World to Come. I think there is a lot of wisdom in this idea - hosting, after all, is both a vulnerable and enjoyable experience, and I think we reveal much more about our true selves through inviting people into our homes, than we do in most other social contexts.

As a host, I tend to channel my mother's desire for things to be "just so," - the food has to be simple but divine, the lighting should be comforting and cozy, the house should be tidy but not austere, a snack should be set out before guests arrive to tide them over until the meal is ready, and no serving plate or glass should ever be allowed to empty.

Once the guests come (especially if they don't all know each other), I often take on the role of social conductor, introducing people, leading "opening circle" questions around the table, and attempting to bridge potential gaps between guests.

I feel at my most selfless and most organized at dinner parties. I am responsible for my guests' happiness, and determined to nourish them. It's exhausting and exhilarating. <http://jcarrot.org/in-praise-of-dinner-parties/>

New Routines

By now, the CSA has become a part of our family's weekly routine. We talk about getting food from the farmer and anticipate what vegetables will be coming into season (we are looking forward to the tomatoes). We enjoy going through the line to pick out our share. Once home, the strawberries rarely make it though the night, and I am becoming an experienced braiser of spring greens. I am still searching for variations and ways to incorporate these leafy delights into the young and discriminating palates of the kids. Anything with cheese has been recommended.

The education programs are shaping up and dates will be announced soon. Be on the look out for Minyan, Movie, and Munchies- a screening of a film regarding current issues in agriculture and the environment. Snacks will be provided. Come early for Minyan. Also, we are planning our first member trip to Neil's farm.

Thanks to Naomi Rabkin and Debbie Tress for sending in recipes this week. In a previous issue, Dan mentioned an interest in watching the formation and growth of our community. I am curious about how the CSA-pick up and fresh vegetables have become a part of your weekly routine. Please send in your thoughts and recipes. -Jeff

What to Expect...

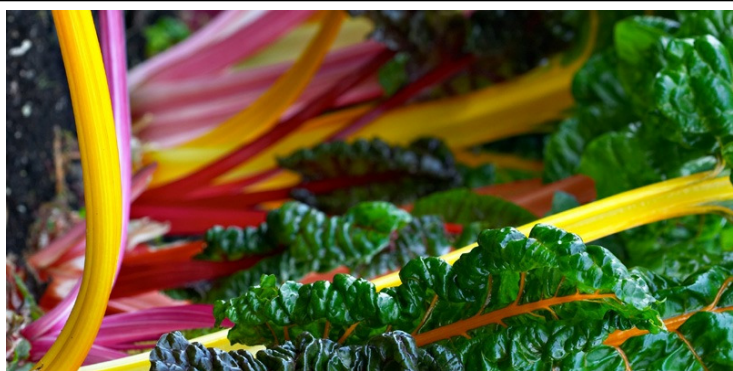
Lettuce, kohlrabi, escarole, spring onions, pac choy, Swiss chard, kale, Strawberries

Upcoming Events

- Minyan, Movie and Munchies
- Marinating and Grilling
- Trip to the farm



"The Torah is a commentary on the world and the world is a commentary on the Torah"



Focus on Swiss Chard

Swiss chard or chard is actually a beet. Botanists distinguish among three major beet types: *Beta vulgaris* ssp includes the familiar beet we eat as well as the sugar beet; *Beta* ssp Maritime is the wild sea-beet, which may be the original beet; and *Beta vulgaris* ssp. *cicla* is Swiss chard, possibly the oldest of the cultivated beets. Chard is also variously known as white beet, strawberry spinach, Sicilian beet, spinach beet, Chilean beet, seakale beet, leaf beet, Roman kale, perpetual spinach, and silver beet.

Swiss Chard Gratin serves 6

- 2 pounds (12-16 stems with leaves) ruby, green, or rainbow chard, stems sliced and leaves cut into 1-inch ribbons
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 1 onion, halved and sliced
- ¼ cup unbleached all-purpose flour
- 2 cups milk
- 1 cup grated Gruyere
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ cup dried bread crumbs

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to boil. Add the chard stems and cook for 2 minutes. Add the leaves and continue to cook for another minute. Drain well.

2. Preheat the oven to 350F. Grease a 1 ½ -quart casserole or 9 X 13 inch baking dish with butter.

3. Melt the butter over medium heat in a medium saucepan. Add the onion and sauté until soft, about 3 minutes. Whisk in the flour to form a paste. Whisk in the milk and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and stir in the cheese. Season with salt and pepper and remove from the heat. Fold in the chard.

4. Transfer the chard mixture to the prepared casserole dish. Sprinkle the breadcrumbs on top.

5. Bake for 25 to 35 minutes, until the sauce is bubbling and the top is browned. Serve hot

from *The Garden-Fresh Vegetable Cookbook* by Andrea Chesman

Banana-berry smoothie muffins

Although it is hard to get those beautiful strawberries we've been enjoying home, let alone have any left over at the end of the week - this recipe will make great use of a handful of strawberries and/or blueberries that aren't pretty enough to serve, but too precious to toss, and for that matter, all those browning bananas!

Ingredients

- 3 very ripe bananas
- ½ cup blueberry (or other berry) yogurt (optional *)
- 1/4 cup honey *
- 3 tablespoons expeller-pressed canola oil, plus a little more for oiling the loaf pan
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 ½ cups whole-wheat pastry flour (can also use regular all purpose flour or spelt flour but not regular whole wheat flour)
- 1 ½ teaspoons baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 tsp grated orange (or lemon) rind
- 1 cup sliced strawberries, blueberries or other berries

Instructions

1. Heat the oven to 350° F. Lightly oil muffin pan
2. Mash the bananas and mix with the honey, canola oil and vanilla extract.
3. Stir together the whole-wheat pastry flour, baking soda and salt. Add rind and berries.
4. Blend the two mixtures and spoon into a lightly oiled muffin pan. Bake for 25-30 minutes, or until center is set.

* Can also be made vegan. Leave out yogurt, and substitute agave nectar or brown rice or maple syrup for the honey and increase amount by a few tablespoons.



A Foundation of Jewish Community



Contact Us!

shearith.organic@gmail.com
<http://shearithcsa.googlepages.com>
www.hazon.org