

"IN THE BAG"

PFV West | CSA Week 12: Aug. 21, 2012

We anticipate the following choices at today's CSA pick-up (choices may differ depending on today's harvest):

- Dill or Basil -
- Chard or Fennel -
- Celery -
- Green Beans -
- Sweet Peppers -
- Hot Peppers -
- Onion (cured) -
- Garlic (cured) -
- Squash/Cucumbers -
- Tomatoes -
- Watermelons* -

*This week, we're offering some fabulous watermelons from [Next Step Produce](#), grown by Heinz Thomet, a PVF relative and master farmer!

Storage & Prep:

- **Basil** - unlike most, basil is fussy and will turn black in protest if it's too cold. Therefore, you'll want to snip the stems of the basil, then put it in a vase or glass with water. Leave it on the countertop, or the warmest part of the refrigerator (the door). For best flavor, use this herb within 2-5 days.
- **Celery** - this crunchy bad boy is happiest in the coldest part of the fridge. Leaves love life if they're kept dry and in a bag; meanwhile, the stems prefer to be loose in a bag.
- **Chard** - unlike other leafy greens, don't wash chard before storing it, as exposure to water will encourage it to go off. Place chard in a plastic storage bag (or reusable bag), wrap the bag tightly around the chard, squeezing as much air from the bag as possible, then place it in the fridge. Once in the fridge, the chard should last 5-7 days.
- **Cucumbers** - although they're fickle to grow, they're easy to store! Just toss them in a crisper drawer in your fridge and they'll keep for 3-10 days.
- **Dill** (see fresh herbs)
- **Fennel** - consider this licorice-tasting wonder the polar bears of the vegetable world, as they like to live in the coldest part of the fridge. Although the entire vegetable is edible, different parts like to be stored differently: leaves like to be dry in a bag; stems like to be loose in a bag. Fennel will last between 1-3 weeks in the fridge.

- **Fresh Herbs** - avoid putting any fresh herbs in the back of the fridge, as well as the crisper. Herbs are happiest cool, but not cold, so the best place for them is in the fridge door. If you have paper towels on hand, you can always lightly dampen one, wrap it around the herbs and store them in an airtight container inside the fridge.
- **Garlic (cured)** - at this point, all garlic we're giving you has been cured, so it will last up to 4 months in a pantry. We recommend feasting on it within 6 weeks.
- **Hot Peppers** - hot peppers will keep forever and a day in the fridge, or at least for several weeks. Store them loose and dry. For long term storage, cut the peppers into rings and simmer them in a dash of plain oil over medium heat until soft, about 5 minutes. Then, spoon the rings into ice cube trays and plop them in the freezer. Once frozen, you may transfer the cubes into a storage bag and keep them in the freezer until ready for use.
- **Onions (cured)** - these dried kitchen staples are happiest in a pantry and consumed within 2-10 weeks.
- **Summer Squash** (includes zucchini) - these guys are happiest cool, but not too cold. Store them in the fridge for 3-10 days.
- **Sweet Peppers** - these flavorful mamas enjoy life in the fridge, if they're loose and dry, and are best enjoyed if eaten within 3-10 days.
- **Tomatoes** - delicate as the day, you'll want to take great care when it comes to storing tomatoes. Because of their thin skins, especially the heirloom varieties, avoid stacking anything on top of these beautiful summer beauties. If your countertop allows, it's best to keep them loose and separated on a plate/platter until just soft on the shoulders. At this point they're ready to be eaten, otherwise place them in the fridge to extend their life by a few days. Tomatoes really don't like the fridge, as they'll soften in texture and taste, so you're best off eating them as soon as possible.

New (To Some) Items This Week:

- **Celery** - Although it's rarely cooked on its own, celery's distinctive flavor and wonderful crunch is irreplaceable in dishes. Celery is a member of the Umbelliferae family, as are carrots, fennel, parsley and dill. Many stick to eating the stalks; however, celery's leaves can also be added as seasoning -- **celery leaves are a great substitute for those who don't like cilantro** -- as well as eaten for natural remedies. Celery was first used for its medicinal purposes, dating back until the 9th century, and popularized in cooking in the Middle Ages. Prized for being rich in vitamin K, celery is also great for reducing high blood pressure and cholesterol.
- **Fennel** - commonly associated with Mediterranean cooking. Both the bulbs and the feathery fronds can be eaten raw and cooked. It has a slightly sweet, crunchy, anise or licorice flavor. It's high in vitamin C, fiber, potassium, and manganese. Try it raw in salads, or paired with fish to bring out the fish flavors.

Use it in a stew to add a new depth to the flavors, or whiz some up with your favorite oil and vinegar for a zippy dressing.

- **Greens Beans** - no stranger to most, fresh green beans are so naturally sweet that they require minimal cooking. They can be steamed or blanched for a minute or two, which is just enough to turn them bright green. Don't worry about shelling these little guys, they're best enjoyed whole.
- **Hot Peppers** - it seems like these are a polarized group that's either beloved or loathed. To most safely handle hot peppers, consider wearing protective gloves to prevent any hot-pepper-meets-eyeball situations.
- **Sweet Peppers** - back in the spring, we told you Hakurei Turnips were most similar to nature's candy, and that may be true for the spring, but we're here to say that sweet peppers are nature's summer candy! Sweet as can be, we love eating these in the fields---straight off the plant! So naturally, these taste delightful raw, but are also lovely stuffed, roasted or baked. As far as cooking goes, to roast and peel peppers -- carefully blacken skin under an oven broil or over an open flame. When they are blackened all over, then remove from heat. Either place the pepper(s) into a bowl and cover it with a damp cloth, or you can also place it into a brown paper bag. Let cool and then the skin will easily peel right off. These can be stored packed in olive oil in the freezer indefinitely, or in the fridge.

Sweet Pepper Recipes

Preserving Peppers

- **Freezing:** SO EASY! Halve peppers, remove the core and seeds, and then slice the peppers into julienne strips or small 1/4" chunks. Pack them into a freezer bag, squeeze out the air and throw them in the freezer.
- **Easy Pickling:** Prepare peppers as above. Wear gloves if you are chopping hot peppers. Fill a clean pint or quart jar to within an inch of the top with the chopped peppers. Pour in white vinegar to cover all peppers. Cover with a plastic lid if possible, as the vinegar will gradually corrode metal lids. Store the jar in the back of your refrigerator for up to 12 months. The peppers will stay crunchy for a few months but will gradually soften. Spoon them out of the jar as you need them. The vinegar is flavorful, too. My favorite pickled peppers are a colorful mix of yellow, orange and red Hungarian hot wax peppers. They're great on sandwiches or mixed into pasta and bean salads (source: Gardeners.com).
- **Roast them and keep them in the fridge** ([idea here](#))
- **Canning:**
 - [A variety of canned pickled pepper recipes](#)
 - [Red Pepper Relish](#)
 - [Green & Red Pepper Relish](#)
 - [Red Pepper Jelly](#)
 - [Marinated Roasted Red Bell Peppers](#)
 - [Pickled Bell Peppers](#)

Fresh Pepper Recipes (roasting peppers is really popular - here are roasting how-to's: [using the oven](#), [using the stove](#), or even [using the grill!](#))

- [Saveur.com's 14 Crunchy, Sweet Bell Pepper Recipes](#)
- Lunch: [Roasted Red Pepper Soup](#) (uses **onion**, **tomato**, **celery**; omit the carrot)
- Lunch: [Nicoise Salad Sandwich](#) (Pan Bagnat w/ Grilled Peppers & Basil Vinaigrette)
- Lunch: [Mediterranean Pepper Salad](#) (uses onion, peppers & cucumber)
- Lunch: [Green Bean Salad w/ Cucumber, Cubanelle Pepper & Tomato](#)
- Dinner: [Couscous & Feta Stuffed Peppers](#) (uses **squash**, **onions** & **tomato**)
- Dinner: [Stuffed Poblano Pepper Cornmeal Cassarole](#) (uses **hot peppers**, **onion**, **garlic** & **tomato**) *use any sweet or mild pepper here, not just poblanos.*
- Dinner: [Roasted Pepper & Bacon Risotto](#) (uses **onion**, **garlic**, **tomato** & **basil**)
- Dinner: [Red Pepper, Sausage, and Chard Risotto](#) (uses **garlic** & **onion**; substitute **basil** for oregano)
- Dinner: [Savory Bread Pudding w/ Chard & Red Pepper](#)
- Dinner: [Stir-Fried Swiss Chard & Red Peppers](#)
- Dinner: [Pepper & Onion Fajita Wraps](#) (uses **onion**; a great time to make some salsa or hot sauce using your **hot peppers**)
- Dinner: [Basil & Eggplant Curry Vegetables](#) (uses **garlic** & **squash**; can substitute **onion** for shallots, **celery leaves** for the cilantro, and omit the mint leaves) - *we will have eggplant for sale in the farmstand if you're out.*
- Snack/Appetizer: [Polenta Cups w/ Sweet Peppers, Manchego, & Almonds](#)
- Spread: [Red Pepper Relish](#)
- Spread: [Roasted Red Pepper Hummus](#)
- Dip: [Roasted Red Pepper & Onion Dip](#) (supposed to be dipped w/ tortellini, but would be a nice dip with anything)

Other items:

- Lunch: [Fennel & Celery Salad](#)
- Dinner: [Swiss Chard & Fennel Gratin](#) (uses **onion**, **garlic**)
- Dinner: [Chard w/ Lemon, Fennel & Parmigiano](#) (uses **garlic** too)