

"IN THE BAG"

PFV West | CSA Week 11: Aug. 14, 2012

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

- Cilantro or Dill -
 - Lettuce -
- Fennel or Okra -
- Sweet Peppers -
 - Hot Peppers -
 - Green Beans -
- Onion -
- Garlic -
- Squash and/or Cucumbers -
- Tomatoes -

Storage & Prep:

- **Cilantro** (see fresh herbs)
- **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** - 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.

- **Lettuce** - rinse the head lettuce all at once, tear the leaves to a desired size, and then spin them dry in a salad spinner (or dab them with a cloth to wick away the moisture). Store the leaves in a plastic bag to make them fast and easy to eat

To remove grit from really dirty head lettuce: cut off the base and float the leaves in a large bowl or sink filled with cold water (simply rinsing under running water won't do it). The dirt will sink to the bottom while the leaves float at the top—swirl the leaves around with your hands to expedite the process. Remove the leaves by hand lifting them out of the sink. Repeat, if necessary. Tear the leaves to the desired size and spin them in a salad spinner.

- **Okra** - one of those vegetables that is best eaten immediately, we recommend eating okra within 1-3 days of getting it. Refrigerate unwashed, dry okra pods in the vegetable crisper, loosely wrapped in perforated plastic bags. Wet pods will quickly mold and become slimy. When the ridges and tips of the pod start to turn dark, use it or lose it. Once it starts to darken, okra will quickly deteriorate.
- **Onions** (fresh green & scallions) - unlike they're cured counterparts, you'll want to keep these fresh fellas in the fridge to extend their life. If you do so, they should last between 3-14 days. Keep an eye on their ends to determine their health.
- **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:

- **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.
- **Okra** - A celebrated vegetable in Cajun, African, Indian and Mediterranean cooking. Interestingly, okra is praised by health nuts, as it's high in fiber, vitamin C and folate. To boot, it's also highly regarded for being rich in antioxidants, so those watching their waistlines can load up on it's fat and cholesterol-free contents.

An oil is released when the seed pods are cooked, which is surprisingly great for you, as it's a soluble fiber that aids digestion. If you find this oil to be bothersome, you can reduce its effect by keeping the pods intact and cooking them quickly (briefly stir-frying), or cooking the okra with acidic ingredients like citrus, tomatoes or vinegar. Alternatively, the oil will cook out if the okra is cooked for long enough.

- **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.

Related Recipes

Okra:

- Lunch: [Roasted Okra & Tomato Salad](#) (uses garlic; can substitute regular tomatoes for cherries, and feel free to use any seed/nut in place of pine nuts)
- Lunch: [Okra Tacos](#) (use **tomatoes, onion, garlic & cilantro** in the pico de gallo)
- Lunch: [Roasted Okra & Black Beans](#) (uses **onion, tomatoes, sweet peppers & garlic**; omit the carrots and mint -- can try to substitute **dill** or **cilantro**)
- Side: [Grilled Okra](#)
- Side: [Spiced Okra](#)
- Side: [Sauteed Fresh Okra w/ Jalapenos](#) (uses **garlic**) - *a nice, healthy alternative to frying okra*
- Dinner: [Okra Gumbo w/ Chickpeas & Kidney Beans](#) (uses **sweet pepper, tomatoes, onion & garlic**; can substitute **cilantro** for thyme)
- Dinner: [Super Fast Chicken & Okra Gumbo](#) (uses **tomatoes & onion**)
- Dinner: [Vegetarian Gumbo](#) (uses **onion, sweet peppers, tomatoes, garlic & green beans**)
- Dinner: [Okra Curry](#) (uses **onion** -- white will do, **garlic, tomatoes & cilantro**) - *we cannot wait to make this version!*
- Dinner: [Coconut Okra Curry](#) (uses **onion & hot peppers**)

- Dinner: [Bacon, Tomatoes & Okra w/ Cornbread](#) (uses **garlic** & **onion**)
- Dinner: [Okra Cornmeal Cakes w/ Chevre & Roasted Tomatoes](#) (uses **hot peppers** & **garlic**; can use any tomato here, not just cherries)
- Dinner: [Okra Fritters w/ Grilled Corn & Goat Cheese](#)
- Dinner: [Red Lentil & Okra Soup](#) (uses **onion** -- white will do just fine)
- Dinner: [Middle Eastern Okra Stew](#) - looks fast and tasty (uses **garlic**, **onion** & **tomatoes**)
- Sweet: [Okra Pie](#) - *you know you're curious!*
- Sweet: [Oatmeal Okra Cookies](#) - *these look surprisingly fabulous!*
- Snack: [Healthy Baked Okra Fries](#)
- Snack: [Pickled Okra](#) (uses **tomato** & **garlic**)

Other Deliciousness:

- Lunch: [Roasted Green Bean & Fennel Pasta Salad](#) (uses garlic, tomatoes & onion)
- Lunch: [Roasted Tomato & Fennel Soup](#) ([here's another version](#) -- fennel oil is unheard of, at least by us, feel free to use olive oil)
- Lunch: [Fennel, Tomatoes & Capers](#) (uses **onion**)
- Dinner: [Roasted Tomato, Zucchini & Fennel Pasta](#) (any tomato variety will do here)
- Dinner: [Sardine Pate](#) (uses **fennel** & **cilantro**) - looks surprisingly easy and tasty if sardines are your cup of tea
- Side: [Dilled Green Beans w/ Sea Salt](#)
- Side: [Green Beans w/ Dill & Feta](#)
- Sauce: [Tomato-Fennel Pasta Sauce](#) (uses **onion** & **garlic**; don't stress about not having mint)
- Pickles: [Dilly Beans](#) (uses **dill**, **garlic**, **hot peppers** & **green beans**) - *would make for easy overnight pickles, just ask us for a copy if you lost that recipe in a former 'Farm Notes' newsletter*