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A Welcome to the Autumn

by Sarah Waybright

If you eat seasonally (and if you're a CSA member, then I know you do!), you've probably been enjoying the shifts from the greens of spring to the tomatoes of summer, and are hoping that any week now this relentless heat will finally give in to the pumpkin & apple days of fall. This time of year always feels like a fresh start to me – with the sticky heat off our backs, school back in session, and the promise of some more restful nights ahead, it's almost like a whole new year. Consider this your

invitation to join me for a weekend retreat to celebrate the cooler, crisper weather in Virginia! The experience will be both an escape and a practical guide to seasonal autumn foods, cooking in bulk to make weekday meals a snap, home fermentation, and also offer an opportunity to make some autumn-inspired artwork. We'll enjoy produce from PVF and other farmer friends, make pickles and kraut, hike in the fall colors, and relax in the peace and quiet in Loudoun County. The retreat will be hosted at a farmhouse on Mountain View

Farm, and open to 9 participants who want to enrich and invigorate their lives with a weekend of great food, learning, and time in the Virginia countryside in the beautiful autumn!

And to help us transition, the squash family has arrived! My favorite way to prep them is usually roasting (most you can split in half, de-seed, and roast with a sprinkle of salt; then scoop out or cube skin-on) but this year I want to explore some new preparations. Most people aren't aware that you can eat pumpkin raw to enjoy its bright, fresh flavor – and enjoy saving some time in the kitchen! Using a variety that you can leave the skin on (for extra fiber, extra vitamins & minerals!) like delicata, kabocha, butternut, you can puree squash with some seasonings and water or milk can offer an easy soup, applesauce-esque snack, or the

Raw Pumpkin Parfait

Ingredients

- 2 c kabocha squash chunks
- ¼-1/3 cup water
- 1-2 Tbsp agave/honey, to taste
- Dash of cinnamon, to taste
- 1 cup Plain greek yogurt
- 1 diced apple
- ½ cup chopped toasted pecans

Directions

In a high speed blender (I have a Vitamix) or food processor, pulse and then puree the squash, water, agave, and cinnamon until smooth. Layer with greek yogurt, apple, and pecans in a glass serving cup. Garnish with additional cinnamon. Makes 2 servings.



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Early Morning Dew

by Hana Newcomb

I imagine that there are lots of people who never know if there is dew on the grass in the morning. Sometimes there is and sometimes there isn't, and it makes a big difference in my work experience in the earliest moments of the day.

Way back in the olden days when we used to pick corn every morning – just after dawn – we generally expected a heavy dew. This was before the invention of all those waterproof fabrics, and we probably would not have had them anyway. Most of us don't wear waterproof clothing even now. It's too expensive and too hot. Anyway, we wore long sleeved turtlenecks and blue jeans, and sometimes we even wrapped our faces in a bandana. Without dew, that was a lot of clothing. But we were plunging into a field of corn, usually taller than we were, and every leaf was coated with water. We were soaked from head to toe within a few minutes. It kept us cool after the day began to warm up, and

corn picking only took a few hours at the most. By the time we were finished, the leaves were dry and could slice the skin on our cheeks and necks if we didn't keep our heads down and protect our faces by carrying the basket of corn out on our shoulders.

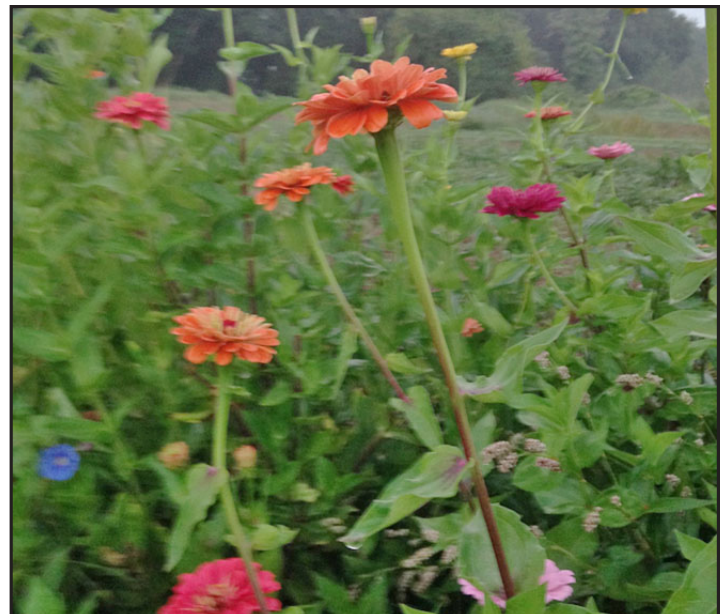
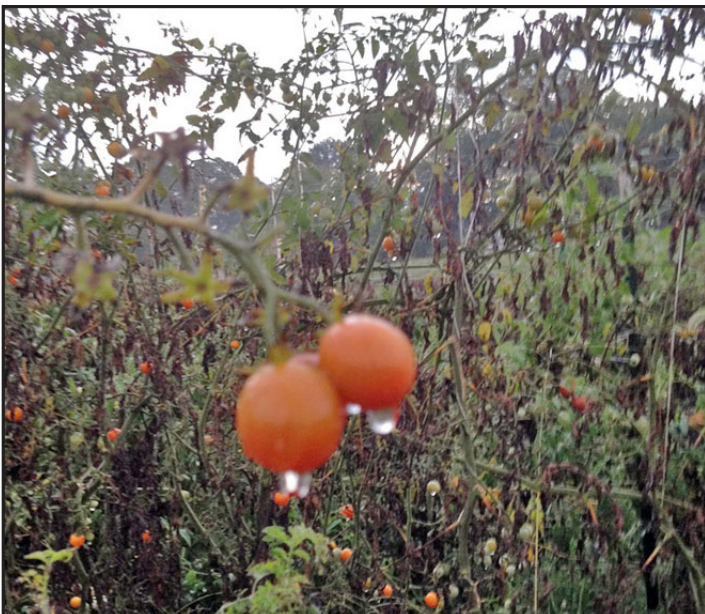
So on the rare day when the temperature did not drop enough in the night to get to the dew point, we would arrive in the field to find a scratchy, unpleasant task ahead of us. We hated those days. Then we had to grit our teeth (holding our bandana in our teeth so it would stay up) and sweat.

Nowadays, there are no full body experiences like that at dawn. I pick flowers once a week just as the colors emerge and it reminds me of those early morning corn picks. The zinnias are as tall as I am, and the dew soaks into my clothes. I used to calculate how much money the flowers were worth per hour, and I think it was competitive with sweet corn. Not as athletic, certainly, and much more solitary, but the tendrils of fog just above the ground and the dripping leaves and the sun

just coming over the trees bring back those soggy first moments, decades ago.

And I still feel cheated when it is dry at 6 AM. Cheated and hot. This morning was one of those dewless dawns when you have about 12 minutes before you start to sweat. I do wonder how many people even know about the range of moisture that is possible in those first minutes. I am guessing the native Americans had about 25 words to describe the various levels of dew. I could certainly use more. Late August and into September – that's when there is the most dew.

We are into real dew season now. It is thick with memories and associations – my father when he was alive and strong, my mother when she had a long black braid and she wore white dress shirts to pick corn, my sisters and brother when they were part of the daily work, the crew in 1980, and so many mornings in the 1990s when I went alone to Loudoun to pick, when I was the only corn picker left.



On a dewy morning you can almost hear the drops coming off the plants.

What CSA Vegetable are You?

by Nora Kipnis

If you chose:

1. Describe your ideal date:
 - a. Doing something I've never done before.
 - b. I'd have to say April 25th. Because it's not too hot, and not too cold. All you need is a light jacket.*
 - c. 5-star restaurant, sunset, champagne.
 - d. Does it have to be a date? I mean, can't we just chill out?
2. What movie character do you most identify with?
 - a. Amelie Poulain from Amelie.
 - b. Dory from Finding Nemo.
 - c. James Bond from the Bond series.
 - d. Jeffrey Lebowski from The Big Lebowski.
3. What's your favorite kind of music?
 - a. Abstract electronic music
 - b. Top 40
 - c. Jazz
 - d. Classic rock
4. If you could add one thing to your community, what would it be?
 - a. A literary salon
 - b. A block party
 - c. A chic cafe
 - d. A park
5. What pet would you want?
 - a. A cat
 - b. A dog
 - c. A snake
 - d. I had a fish once but it died

Mostly a's: You are beets!

Intellectual and mysterious, at first glance people may be unaware of your rich inner life. You operate on extremes, and you can sometimes be a little hyper-analytical and others might see you as a little weird. Often you're deep in thought.

Mostly b's: You are peppers!

You are the life of the party, kind of goofy, and much loved by all. Sure, some may consider you a little simple-minded, but you have your own way of doing things, and you see the world exactly as it is.

Mostly c's: You are eggplant!

You're sophisticated and have excellent taste. Contrary to popular belief, you aren't a natural-born killer. Others may think of you as too smooth and mushy, but they just haven't figured out how to deal with you yet.

Mostly d's: You are garlic!

You're confident and relaxed, and you blend into almost any situation. Others love you because you bring out the best in them. You're down to earth, and you don't think too much. But all that confidence can make you seem to come on too strong to others.

*That was a quote from Miss Congeniality

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perfect orange layer for a breakfast (or dessert!) parfait... try the recipe, below. Orange color is a cue that there's a good amount of carotenoids like Vitamin A present; consume with fat for the best absorption – coincidentally, nuts

and seeds that are high in unsaturated fat pair beautifully with winter squash. Seeds like sunflower or flax are good substitutes for nuts if there are allergy worries; and of course every squash comes loaded with its own seeds... just scoop, rinse, and toast with a dash of salt and olive oil

for 10-15 minutes at 350 for a crunchy snack! Some sort of pumpkin will definitely be on the retreat menu in November... learn more about the retreat and register at www.whyfoodworks.com, and feel free to reach out with questions. Ages 16+.



Notes from the Field:

After a Long, Hot Summer, We Dig for Buried Treasure: The Long and Viney Story of Sweet Potatoes

by Ellen Polishuk

Last week we began the aerobic activity of harvesting sweet potatoes. It's fast moving and fun. It reminds me of the classic I Love Lucy sketch where she is working on an assembly line, and whether she likes it or not, is ready or not, the line just keeps moving and bringing more work.

But let's start at the beginning. We start in January with ordering some well stored lovely sweet potato roots from North Carolina. In March, 250 arrive by UPS. We take them to the greenhouse and make black crates full of soil mix on top of newspaper so the soil doesn't all fall out. We lay out the roots on top of 4 inches of soil and then cover them and set them on the floor of the greenhouse. And then we wait and wait and wait for them to sprout. It seems to take a month before they show any signs of life. Miraculously, they don't rot! They make roots and sprouts instead! Then they just keep growing, filling up the crates with beautiful green leaves.

Once it is absolutely never going to frost again, we prepare the raised beds for planting in the field. Then we bring the crates bursting full of plants to the field. We just rip all those plantlets, called slips, and transplant them into a single row, with 8" between plants. Then we tend them for months, irrigating and weeding. After about two months the vines completely cover the field, no soil is visible. Sweet potatoes are

closely related to bindweed, and morning glory. They are aggressive plants. If we didn't have a terrific deer fence, those critters would demolish the crop completely - they love sweet potatoes!

Finally in mid-September they are ready to harvest. I bushhog the tops so we can see where each plant attaches to the roots underneath. Then we bring in the root digger machine that undercuts below the roots. Two people walk/crawl behind the machine, "birthing" each clump of roots. We grab them by the crown and pull them free of the soil and

lay them behind us. Some loose roots try to drop down into the abyss under the undercutter, and we grab them out before they get forever buried. Once the machine and crew digs, we come through and collect up all the roots into pony baskets.

Then the final step is stacking the ponies in the greenhouse for curing. The sweet potatoes are not sweet right off the bat. They need to sit in a warm dry place for a week or two so the starches turn to sugar inside the root. Then they are ready to eat!



The first step: mowing the thick cover of vines so we can see where the plant really starts. Sweet potato plants cover every inch of the field after just a month of growing.