



Down on the Farm Notes: August 19, 21, & 23, 2008

Hi everyone,

We want to welcome Dawnne back from her vacation up north. She told me it rained the entire week, but she had fun anyway. I wish she could have bottled some of our sunshine to take with her, and then bottled rain and brought it back. Wouldn't that have been great!!!

So by now you have seen what was in your box this week. Some of you received the long narrow peppers. These are Italian peppers, and they're great for cooking and grilling. Some of you also received heirloom tomatoes this week. If you did, you either received a Brandywine, a Yellow Brandywine or a Pineapple. This week you also received a Heart of Gold melon. They were the large melons. Some of you received a Yellow Jewel or a Sunburst. Hope you enjoyed them. The melons have been at their peak and, when they are ripe and ready, Rick has to move them. But this week you may not receive melons because during this week of August he must gear up for the famous Fallon Hearts of Gold Festival—so one week's reprieve of melons!

But we will fill your box with other yummys like fresh corn (the new batch is just coming on), some beautiful eggplant for those of you who like eggplant, and we will begin giving everyone an Armenian cucumber. Look for the strange, pale green long thing. That is the cucumber. Armenian cucumbers keep great and we love them. Pauline wanted to make sure I shared with those of you attending Burning Man that Armenian cucumbers will last the entire week without refrigeration. They are hardy little things!! (oops...not little) You can also look for some Swiss chard and...let's cross our fingers...some new potatoes for next week. I can't wait. I love potatoes.

The *Mother Earth News* had a great article about drying summer vegetables and fruit. I wish I could have copied the entire article but, as it is, I came pretty close. I've included that information here. I also found a new cheese recipe from *Sunset*. This recipe, Fresh Chive Cheese, and that information is also in [recipes](#). It is a simple, hopefully no-fail recipe. I borrowed some

lemons from my mom to try it...but as of now I haven't done it yet. Hopefully sometime this weekend I'll find the time. Looks super easy!

In a couple of days you will be hearing from me again, so good bye for now. Hope you had a great weekend!

Recipes

Fresh Chive Cheese

*Taken from the August 2008 *Sunset Magazine* or go to www.sunset.com/oneblockfeast and find the Fresh Chive Cheese recipe

Ingredients.

1 gal. whole milk (NOT ultra-pasteurized)
1/2c. fresh lemon juice (about 4-5 lemons)
1/2 tsp. sea salt
2 tbl. coarsely chopped chives (optional or use other herbs)

Preparation.

1. In a large heavy pot, heat milk to a gentle boil over medium-high heat, stirring often to prevent scorching (this will take about 30 minutes, so bring a book). As soon as it boils, remove from heat and drizzle in lemon juice, stirring slowly and gently. Keep stirring until solid white curds

separate from greenish white, translucent liquid whey. (If whey is still milky instead of clear, return to heat until whey is clear.) Let sit until curds have settled below the whey, about 15 minutes.

2. Meanwhile, line a large colander with cheesecloth and set in sink. Pour curds into colander and rinse gently with lukewarm water 5 seconds. Gather cheesecloth up over curds and gently twist to squeeze out excess liquid (it will still be dripping) Note: You can collect the whey and use it to make bread or with pancakes.

3. Put a plate on cheesecloth-wrapped curds and top with a 5 lb. weight. Let drain 45 minutes. (At this point it may still be dripping a bit; this is okay.)

4. Unwrap cheese and put in bowl of stand mixer with dough hook attachment with salt and chives. (you can also knead it by hand.) Beat cheese on medium low speed or knead it until silky looking and no longer grainy (similar to cream cheese), 10-12 minutes.

5. Roll cheese into a 2" thick log and wrap in waxed paper and then plastic wrap. Refrigerate until cold and firm, at least 1 hour.

Here is a recipe from one of our subscribers, Eva. It looks good—thanks, Eva!

"A friend sent me this zucchini receipt that I thought was worth sharing."

Zucchini "Crab Cakes"

2 cups grated zucchini
1 tablespoon finely chopped onion
2 eggs
1/4 teaspoon celery seed
1-1/2 teaspoon Old Bay seasoning
1 cup Italian bread crumbs

Mix all ingredients together and fry in oil.

How to Dry Your Over-abundance of Fresh Vegetables in Your Basket...

...or visit your local farmers' market to supply your favorites!

Note: This is information I have pulled from a great article "How to Dry Food" in the August/September 2008 *Mother Earth News Magazine*. Here is a list of ideas to give a try if interested.

Can't A Loupe Candy: chunks of cantaloupe seasoned with ginger and powdered sugar before being dried.

Half-Dried Tomatoes: season tomatoes with basil and thyme

Eggplant strips: cut eggplant into strips, soak them in salt/lemon juice solution and dry them into pasta-like strands.

Marinated zucchini: marinate zucchini before drying them into chips.

Chard and kale greens: remove ribs, dry and store in bag to add to soup.

Onions, garlic, herbs: minced and dried

Apples, pears, peaches: Best to dip in an acidic solution to stop the oxidation process that darkens them. You can use a mixture of one part lemon juice to four parts water. Or use orange, pineapple or cranberry juice to dip fruit in. Cranberry adds a pretty color. This adds extra flavor to fruit.

Blueberries, cherries, cranberries, seedless grapes, figs:

"Check" the fruit by dipping them in rapidly boiling water for two seconds, or pour boiling water over them for a count of four. After the water drains away, spread the fruits on cookie sheets, pat dry, and pop them in the freezer for one to two hours. Then take them out and dry them right away. The boiling water cracks the skins and the brief freezing breaks down cell walls, transforming the fruits into incredibly tasty nuggets for snacks, cereals or baking. Try drying them halfway, to the chewiness of raisins, which will require refrigerated storage because of their high moisture content. Fruit dried until near

crisp can be stored in any cool, dark place. To rehydrate, just soak them in water for an hour before eating.

Broccoli, carrots, beans. These are best to blanch in boiling water (about 3 minutes), or better yet, use a steamer to limit their uptake of water and fix enzymes. Can add to soups or rehydrate and add to stir fry.

THE NEVER-ENDING SUPPLY OF ZUCCHINI.

Slice into thin pieces and dry. You may be tired of them now, but you will sure enjoy them this winter in soups. Besides, you can take lots of zucchini and dry it down into a large Ziploc bag!!

Sweet Corn. Blanch the whole ear (about 3 minutes) Cool quickly in ice water. Then cut kernels off cob and dry. Corn is also great to freeze this way too. Follow same procedure but then scoop all the milk and corn scraped from the cob into a Ziploc bag. This is our favorite way of preserving corn. It tastes like fresh corn in the winter.

Beets, winter squash, pumpkins. Roast until almost done (then peel). Cut into slices or chunks, and dry them. Beets are also great sliced thin and dried. Makes great beet chips.

Potatoes. another great one to dry. Dip in lemon water to keep them from turning dark.

Tomatoes. slice and sprinkle with favorite herbs. We like to dry them until they are crisp. We eat them as tomato chips, crumble them and add them to salads in the winter, or add to soups to add great flavor. Drying tomatoes seems to intensify their flavor.

DRYING TIPS:

Make creative cuts: use an egg cutter or other unusual blades. A mandolin is great for cutting nice thin slices.

Do it outside. When using an electric dehydrator, run it outdoors or in a garage to avoid heating up your kitchen. Or run it at night.

Dry it on a shrub. If you have a dense bush like boxwood, spread an old sheet on bush, then spread fruit out on sheet, cover with cheesecloth (to keep insects and dust out).

Make fruit leathers: combine equal parts of any fruit puree with thick applesauce before drying on lightly oiled sheets. A small amount of gelatin mixed into the fruit mixture helps leathers set up and dry more rapidly.

Powder your culls: Dry onions, garlic, beans and other vegetables. Then grind them into a vegetable powder. Mixed with a little water or oil, vegetable powders work like vegetable bouillon. Use a small coffee mill to chop dried vegetables and herbs into coarse pieces or fine powders.

Get wet. When cooking, add dried vegetables to the moistest part of the dish. For example, sprinkle dried tomatoes and peppers over the sauce layer of pizza rather than on the top.

SIMPLE, SAFE STORAGE:

Many foods that seem to be dried to perfection when you stash them in airtight containers may surprise you by going soft again as moisture levels equalize inside the container. Putting the pieces back into the dehydrator for an hour or two will fix the problem, making it possible to store the food at cool temps. for up to a year.

Keep chewy cherries, half-dried foods that are still slightly moist in your refrigerator or freezer to prevent MOLD.

Drying technique. Obviously the dehydrator is the best and easiest way of drying product. You can find a 3 layer dehydrator fairly cheap in hardware stores. Or you can go fancy and order one that contains 8-12 layers. This is only if you are going into it hard core. Ask around, it is amazing how many people have one tucked away and forgotten in the pantry or garage.

If you don't have a dehydrator you can use your oven set at a low temp. or you can take advantage of our dry arid climate with plenty of sunshine and dry this way. Our only problem at home is the insects and the

dust. So everything needs to be covered with cheesecloth.

A book suggested by the *Mother Earth News* is "Food Drying with An Attitude." The contributing editor for this article was Barbara Pleasant. Her website is www.barbarapleasant.com

Hope this inspires you to try some. I think I am going to experiment with more vegetables. I always do fruit but have never tried the vegetables. I think they would make great additions to soups and stews in the winter which is some of my favorite winter time comfort food!!