

Two Onion Farm

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Week of August 29, 2010

Our long time employee Tasha Cardin finished work at 5:30 on Thursday, August 26th for the last time before she left for her final year of college. She has worked on Two Onion Farm during summer vacations for the last four years. Anyone who has been a member of our farm during those four years has eaten vegetables planted, transplanted, weeded, and harvested by Tasha.

She was the first employee to ever work on Two Onion Farm, on April 15, 2007, when she came to the farm to plant 57 trays of seedlings with Chris. This was a trial work day, which we require of all perspective employees before hiring them on a regular basis. Tasha's first task was to write up 57 small wooden stakes to label each tray which were going to plant – so many stakes for lettuce, so many for broccoli, and so on. Tasha stacked the stakes for each vegetable in a neat pile and at the end she recounted them to make sure that she had written the right number of each. Recounting the stakes was typical of the methodical care which she brought to all tasks over the next four years. No instruction was forgotten, no task not carried out. She set the standard for exacting perfection: a row she weeded had no weeds; a bean plant she picked from had no stray bean pod hiding under a leaf. Tasha hoed with eye-pleasing grace; standing erect and relaxed, slicing weeds off with small accurate strokes and without any of the tense, jerky motions that make the onlooker cringe. We sent her to Farm and Fleet to shop for the farm with certainty that she would return with exactly the right plow bolts and motor oil. She voiced no complaint in the most miserable rain and heat. In between tasks, she never stood idle, but always found work cleaning, organizing, or preparing for the next work. When we overlooked or misstated something, she always quietly corrected us.

After four years of work here, Tasha had a great stockpile of farm memories, and she spent a great deal of time discussing them with Chris, who also prides himself on remembering every day of work ever completed on Two Onion Farm. They enjoyed testing each other (where was the first zucchini planting in 2007?), comparing notes on past workers (who would lift the most straw bales at once?) and remembering the most onerous, the most beautiful, and the most satisfying days.

In this week's box:

Vegetable	Refrigerate?	Store In Plastic Bag To Retain Moisture?	Approx. Storage Life	Comments
Beets	Yes	Yes	2+ wks	
Cabbage	Yes	Yes	1-2 wks	Flat green head; not in all boxes
Cauliflower	Yes	Yes	1 wk	Not in all boxes
Cucumber	Yes	Yes	1 wk	
Garlic	No	No	4+ wks	Cured; store at room temperature
Leeks	Yes	Yes	1-2 wks	Long, cylindrical; white at the bottom and green at the top
Lettuce	Yes	Yes	1 wk	Summercrisp
Onions	No	No	2+ wks	Cured; store at room temperature or in fridge
Pepper	Yes	Yes	1 wk	Red peppers - sweet, not hot

Vegetable	Refrigerate?	Store In Plastic Bag To Retain Moisture?	Approx. Storage Life	Comments
Squash, Acorn	No	No	1-2 wks	Not in all boxes
Swiss chard	Yes	Yes	1 wk	Large green leaves with tones of red, yellow, or white
Tomatoes	No	No	1 wk	

Leek. The flavor of leeks is similar to, but subtler than, that of onions. You can substitute leeks for onions in many recipes and appreciate the change in taste. Leeks can be eaten raw, but are usually cooked. Like onions, leeks will sweeten when cooked. Generally the white portion of the leeks and the lower portion of the green leaves are eaten. Cleaning leeks can be tricky, because soil particles are often trapped within the bases of the leaves. Here's what we recommend: start by chopping off the green tops, if any, to within 2 inches of the white portion. Then peel off the outer layer if it has turned slimy or brown, which happens naturally as the leeks mature. Now slice the leeks and place them in a colander. Rinse the leeks under running water to wash the dirt away.

Swiss Chard is the large green leafy vegetable with bright colored stems. It is generally cooked. Both the stems and leaves can be eaten; the stems require longer cooking. Generally you should cut the leaf away from the stem and prominent midrib before cooking.

You can sauté the chard: Separate the leaves and stems. Slice the stems, and cut the leaves into 1/2" wide strips. Start the stems sautéing in olive oil with salt and pepper, and, optionally, onions, garlic and/or thinly sliced fennel bulb. When the stems begin to become tender, add the leaves. Continue cooking until the leaves are just tender. Serve over pasta with parmesan cheese. Or dress with lemon juice or vinegar and serve as a side dish.

A number of people have enjoyed our recipe for Swiss Chard cooked with almonds and raisins, in our [7/6/2008](#) newsletter.

Acorn Squash. The simplest way to prepare Acorn, or any other squash is baking (or roasting). Baking condenses and conserves

flavor and yields a tastier squash than boiling or steaming. To bake: wash the squash and cut it in half from top to bottom. Then scoop out the seeds and stringy pulp from the center of the squash. Try to scrape out all traces of the stringy pulp because in some squash it has an unpleasant flavor. Place the squash halves face down on a dish or tray and cook in a microwave or 350 degree oven until the flesh is very tender but not dried or charred. If baking in an oven, you can pour a little water in the bottom of the dish to keep the squash from drying out. Baked squash can be eaten straight from the shell with a fork.

Squash should be stored in a dry place outside the refrigerator. The ideal temperature for squash storage is 50-55 degrees. However, room temperature is okay. Acorn squash only stores well for short periods; this is especially true for squash (such as those in this week's box) which ripen in late summer. We suggest you eat it in the next week or two.

Leek, Pepper, and Tomato Pasta Sauce

4 medium leeks, washed and thinly sliced
 1/4 cup olive oil
 2 yellow or red bell peppers, cut into short, thin slices
 1 tsp thyme
 1 tsp salt
 1 large (or 2 small) tomatoes, diced

Heat the oil in a large frying pan. Add the leeks along with 1/4 cup water and cook covered over medium heat until leeks are tender, about 8 minutes. Uncover and stir in peppers, thyme, and salt. Cook until peppers are just tender and then add tomatoes. Cook another two minutes or so and then serve over pasta. Makes enough for 4 large servings.