

Two Onion Farm

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Week of July 29th, 2007

Green Beans

When we surveyed farm members at the end of the 2006 season, you overwhelmingly asked for more green beans in your boxes. We are trying to comply this year. This is the fourth week in a row we are giving beans out, and we hope to distribute them for several more weeks this summer.

Like other vegetables beans must be planted, cultivated, irrigated, and protected from disease and insects. However the most difficult part of growing green beans is picking them. It takes a lot of time. Like our other vegetables, we pick beans twice a week, on Sundays for our Monday deliveries, and on Wednesdays for our Thursday deliveries. We've picked up to 80 lbs in a day, and picking beans takes up to 9 or 10 person hours on each harvest day. Nowadays, picking green beans alone takes 30-40% of all the time we spend harvesting and washing vegetables, even though we're harvesting 10 or more different vegetables. Good employees are a must for growing green beans!

There are two types of bean varieties: "bush" beans grow on short bushy plants, less than two feet high. Bush beans produce a lot of beans over a short, 1-3 week period. "Pole" bean plants grow much larger, up to 5 or 10 feet high, and must be grown on poles or trellises for support. Pole beans can potentially bear for a much longer season, although disease sometimes kills the plants prematurely.

Most modern varieties of bean are bush varieties. This year we are only growing bush beans. Because a given planting of bush beans will only bear for a couple of weeks, we

planted a new planting of beans every 2 weeks from mid-May to the beginning of July to ensure a continuous harvest. We have experimented with pole beans in the past. The pole beans had great flavor but we were disappointed because they were very prone to diseases. The major disadvantage of bush beans is that the plants are low to the ground. All the hours spent picking beans are spent crouching, crawling, squatting, or bending over. Because pole beans grow upright on trellises, a person picking them can pick them standing up or sitting on an overturned five gallon bucket. So we'd like to continue experimenting for the next several years to find reliable pole bean varieties.

Green beans can be eaten raw, but they're generally cooked. Steamed or boiled beans can of course be eaten as a side dish. Cooked beans are also fantastic dressed with a vinaigrette and served chilled or at room temperature. We've included a recipe for a green bean and tomato salad. Some other good green bean recipes from past newsletters, which can all be viewed on our website:

[Green Bean Salad \(8/8/2005\)](#) – salad of green beans and cooked onion in a vinaigrette.

[Walnut-Tarragon Green Beans \(7/30/2006\)](#) – Cooked green beans served with chopped walnuts.

[Salad Nicoise \(8/1/2005\)](#) – Chilled salad of green beans, cherry tomatoes, green pepper, potatoes, olives, onions, hard-boiled eggs, and tuna. Requires some preparation time but is *very* delicious.

In this week's box:

Vegetable	Refrigerate?	Store In Plastic Bag To Retain Moisture?	Approx. Storage Life	Comments
Lettuce	Yes	Yes	1 wk	Romaine
Broccoli	Yes	Yes	1 wk	
Collard Greens	Yes	Yes	1 wk	Waxy green leaves
Tomatoes	No	No	<1 wk	
Green Beans	Yes	Yes	1 wk	
Green Pepper	Yes	Yes	1 wk	Not a hot pepper
Garlic	No	No	1 mo	Dried garlic which does not need refrigeration.
Ailsa Craig Onions	Yes	Yes or No	2 wks	Very juicy and only moderately pungent, well suited for light cooking and eating fresh.
Eggplant	No	No	1 wk	Light or dark purple skin
Parsley	Yes	Yes	<1 wk	
Cucumbers	Yes	Yes	1 wk	Not in all boxes

Parsley is excellent chopped and added to lettuce salads or chilled vegetable and pasta salads. It can also be added to many cooked dishes (stir-fries, tomato sauces, soups) near the end of the cooking time.

Collard greens are closely related to cabbage, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, and the like. Collards are generally eaten cooked. Use them similarly to kale and Swiss chard. However, collards are quite tough, and you will probably want to cook them a bit longer than kale or chard. Also, collards do not reduce in volume while they are cooked as much as chard or kale. The stalk and midvein of the collard leaves is quite tough, so we recommend that you cut them away and discard them before cooking.

A simple way to cook collard greens is to sauté onions and garlic, then add chopped collards with a small amount of water and braise covered for about 15-20 minutes, until greens have almost reached the desired texture. Remove the cover and continue cooking to boil away the water until greens reach desired consistency. Season with salt, pepper and/or fried bacon pieces, and serve. We've also included a recipe for a lentil soup with collard greens.

Green Bean and Tomato Salad

1 lb green beans
2 medium tomatoes, cut into 1/2 inch cubes

1/4 cup minced onion
2 Tblsp olive oil
1 Tblsp lemon juice
2 Tblsp minced fresh parsley
Salt and pepper to taste
1/2 cup crumbled feta cheese or grated other cheese

Boil or steam green beans until crisp-tender. Drain and cool to room temperature. Combine other ingredients except cheese and stir them into green beans. Add cheese and serve.

Lentil Soup with Greens

2 cups lentils
1 onion, minced
2 bay leaves, 1 tsp cumin, 1 tsp coriander, & 1/4 tsp cardamom
5 leaves of collard greens, destemmed and chopped. (You can substitute chard or kale for the collards).
1 tsp salt
1/4 cup olive oil
1/2 Tblsp dry basil and/or 1/2 Tblsp dry mint
1 clove garlic, crushed

Combine lentils, onion, bay leaves, cumin, coriander, cardamom and 4-5 cups water in a covered saucepan and cook, on low heat, for 20-40 minutes or until lentils are soft. Add greens and salt and continue cooking until greens are tender. Stir in olive oil, basil, mint, and garlic, and serve immediately.