

# Two Onion Farm

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## Week of June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2005

**Broccoli.** This is our first broccoli of the season. Broccoli is a finicky vegetable which only thrives in very mild weather. This spring, the weather changed rapidly from cold in late April and early May to hot in late May and early June. Consequently, the broccoli has sulked and many of the plants produced no heads, deformed heads, or tiny heads. So although we hoped to harvest our first broccoli a few weeks ago, we could not. A simple quick way to prepare a side dish of broccoli is to steam the broccoli until it is just barely tender and then place it in a baking dish, cover it with grated cheddar cheese, salt, and pepper, and warm it in the oven (or microwave) until the cheese melts.

**Beets.** These week's beets are Chioggia beets. This type of beet has pretty fuchsia rings which you can see if you slice the root crosswise. Cooking, however, dulls the bright color of the rings. Chioggia beets have a milder taste than standard red beets, and many people who don't like the strong beet taste in regular red beets enjoy the Chioggia beets. Chioggia beets have another advantage in that they don't stain your kitchen red with beet juice!

We know three basic ways to cook beet roots. You can slice them about 1/4 or 1/2 inch thick and steam them, you can boil them, or you can wrap them in aluminum foil and roast them in a 350 degree oven until they are tender, usually over an hour. Roasting takes a lot longer, but roasted beets tend to taste a bit better because the flavor doesn't leach out into the cooking water. Don't overcook beets or they will be mushy. Once cooked, you can eat the beets plain as a side dish or incorporate them into many recipes. Try them in the beet fennel salad recipe on the next page.

**Peas.** We've included a bag of sugar snap peas. You can eat the entire pea, both the outer pod and the pea seeds within. The pod is crunchy and the seeds are sweet. We eat the peas raw. You can also cook them quickly, for no more than 2 or 3 minutes, then blanch them immediately by immersing them in cold water to stop the cooking process, and later serve them chilled in a salad. Some people "string" the pods before eating them to remove the string from the side of the pod. To string them, snap off the stem toward the flat side of the pod and pull downward.

**Green Onions or Baby Leeks.** Folks with biweekly shares receive a bunch of green onions, and those with weekly shares a bunch of baby leeks, since you received green onions last week. Slice the onions or leeks raw and eat them in salads, or cook with them. Baby leeks are a young version of the adult leeks you may have eaten in autumns past. Leeks taste similar to onions, but their flavor is a little mellower and less pungent. Try substituting the leeks for onions.

**Fennel Bulb.** This is the flattish, white vegetable in your box. You'll see that the bulb has overlapping layers. The outer layer or two can be a little tough and stringy; so you may want to discard those and eat only the inner layers. Fennel bulb can be eaten raw and cooked. If you've never eaten it, try a little raw to familiarize yourself with its spicy, licorice-like flavor. You can use it in the fennel beet salad recipe on the next page. The fennel bulb comes from the same plant as the dry fennel leaves and fennel seed which you can find in the herbs and spices section of the grocery store.

**Carrot.** A bunch of our earliest carrots. Eat raw carrot sticks as a snack, or slice or grate them into salads. Just as with the radishes and turnips in the past two weeks' boxes, we've removed the tops from these carrots because carrots store longer and stay crisper without the tops.

**Swiss Chard.** This is the bag of leaves with stems of various hues. Chard is a close relative of beets, as you may guess from the similar appearance of the leaves. However, chard lacks the swollen root of beets. The leaves you've received this week are still fairly young; when older the leaves are quite large and the stem swells to the size of a celery stalk. The most common way to eat chard is to coarsely chop the leaves into pieces about 1" large and then cook them in a little butter or olive oil until they are wilted. You can also cook sliced onions, leeks, or garlic with the chard. After cooking the chard, season it with salt and pepper. We like to dress the cooked chard with balsamic vinegar and eat it as a side dish, or serve it (without the vinegar) over spaghetti with lots of parmesan cheese.

Why it is called "Swiss" chard? It's actually native to western Asia, and has been cultivated since ancient times, when it was well known to the Greeks and Romans. However, a Swiss botanist of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Casper Bauhin, was the first to describe the yellow leaved variant of chard, and his nationality was thereafter prepended to the name of the plant.

**Lettuce.** The outer leaves of this week's lettuce have been torn by the rough storms we've had recently. However, the taste is still good, and the leaves at the center of the head are undamaged.

**Storage.** Store all of this week's vegetables, bagged, in the refrigerator to keep them cool and moist. If you will not eat the beet leaves, cut them off and discard them – this will prolong the life of the beet roots.

## Beet and Fennel Salad

3-4 medium beets  
1 tsp Dijon mustard  
salt and pepper to taste  
¼ cup olive oil  
2-3 Tbsp balsamic vinegar  
1 fennel bulb, thinly sliced  
chopped pecans or roasted pine nuts (optional)

Cook the beets as you prefer, either boiling, steaming, or roasting (see the discussion of beets, above). Slice the cooked beets to a comfortable bite size. Mix the mustard, oil, vinegar, salt and pepper together to make the dressing. Stir together the beets, fennel, nuts, and dressing, refrigerate, and serve chilled.

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