CSA News

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Fall CSA Week 8
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Log in to your CSA account online to find a customized list, photos and descriptions for your share.

Farm Share Storage & Use Tips:

- Beets, radishes, carrots and hakurei turnips: Remove the root from the greens and store separate in plastic bags in the fridge.
- Brussels sprouts: Store unwashed in their bag in the veggie bin.
- Cabbage: Keep dry, unwashed cabbage in the vegetable bin of the refrigerator. If the outer leaves lose their firmness, remove and discard those. Once cut, wrap in plastic and continue to refrigerate; it should keep for several weeks more.
- Broccoli: Store in the veggie bin; freezes well.
- Ginger and turmeric: Keep baby ginger and turmeric in a closed container in the refrigerator. No need to peel. They freeze well.
- Garlic and onions: Leave on your countertop or in your pantry.
- Leafy greens (arugula, kale, spinach, mizuna, tat soi, bok choy, lettuce mix, etc.): Store in your fridge in perforated plastic bags.
- Leeks: Loosely wrap unwashed leeks in a plastic bag, and store them in the crisper drawer of your refrigerator.
- Potatoes: Refrigerate in a perforated plastic bag or paper bag. Keep out of light to prevent skins from greening.
- Sweet potatoes and fall squash: Keep on the counter or in a pantry.

Bet You Didn't Know About the Sweet Potato

One of the many seasonal vegetable options you have available in your CSA shares right now and for the foreseeable future is organic sweet potatoes. These are hands-down a favorite food around here, and we eat them the whole time they're available to us.

To set the record straight, yams are not sweet potatoes. We do not grow yams in this country. They are a starchy subtropical tuber—a staple in parts of Africa and South America. Some might accidentally have a similar shape, they both store well and provide nutrients, but that's about it as far as similarities. Yams have a very thick, rough coconut'ish exterior. They are a different genus in the Plant Kingdom. When I see sweet potatoes being sold as yams these days, it makes me wonder what else they are not telling us.

With that out of the way, let's explore just how great we think sweet potatoes are. From the farming perspective, they grow well and incur little pest pressure, and we have a long time to sell them after harvest, when handled properly.

Instead of seeds, we buy "slips" from an organic farm in North Carolina, where sweet potatoes reign supreme. They bury the seed tubers in sand, encouraging the sweet potatoes' many eyes to sprout. They snap off the sprouts (which are the slips), bundle them up by the hundreds, get twice as many in a box as I could ever figure out how and send them to us via UPS. We immediately open the boxes to give the tiny plants air and then plant them ASAP.

Without a root ball on the slips, our mechanical transplanters won't work, so each and every sweet potato slip is planted by hand. We run irrigation immediately after setting, and so far, they have always taken off.

The key to organic sweet potatoes for us centers around weed control. Once the slip establishes a root system, multiple stems emerge from the crown, rapidly increasing in leaf area to feed the developing roots. While this is going on, we run cultivators down the rows, keeping weeds from competing for space, precious nutrients and moisture. At some point, the stems—which are actually vines—start running every which way, blanketing the field to capture as much sun as possible to feed the roots that are storing that solar

energy in the form of tubers. These vines and leaves shade out subsequent weeds, for the most part.

Most of the work of sweet potatoes is getting them out of the ground. John welded a fin on a sub-soiling shank to run along the edge of the sweet potato row. It jostles the soil around the tubers, allowing us to easily pull them up. They then get spray washed individually before going into a retrofitted greenhouse for curing. Sure, we eat them as soon as they come out of the ground, but curing sets the skin to extend storage quality and increases sugar content, akin to letting wine breathe.

From a consumption perspective, sweet potatoes are tasty, nutrient dense and easy to prepare. Since technically not a potato, either, they have a low glycemic index.

Revel in the various sizes and varieties. We grow several orange-flesh types, each with slightly different growth and storage characteristics. Then there is the Japanese murasaki purple-skin, white-flesh variety that some people prefer.

What can be easier than popping a fist-sized sweet potato into the oven and coming back an hour later to put it on a plate, slice it open, add butter, salt and pepper, or not, and scoop out the goodness? There are tens of thousands of recipes out there, I'm sure, and customers go on about theirs, and they are all good, I'm sure, but I don't think it is necessary to go to all the effort. There is nothing better than a bowl of mashed sweet potatoes.

I know of nowhere else in the Ohio Valley than Elmwood Stock Farm to get fingerling sweet potatoes of any variety. Our harvest crew takes the effort to pick up *all* the sweet potatoes, no matter how small. These long, skinny tubers are not marketable in mainstream produce distribution, seen as too small to bother with in North Carolina and the Deep South growing regions, but I wonder why.

Simply coat the fingerlings with a little olive oil, sprinkle some salt, pepper and garlic powder, and roast or bake (I'm not sure the difference?) for a short while until soft. Eat them like French fries, skin and all. I like to dip mine in the catsup or barbeque sauce we offer, which is made from the farm's organic tomatoes.

When making your CSA vegetable selections this fall, try the different varieties and sizes of sweet potatoes. Stock up, as they keep well. Bon appetit. —*Mac Stone*

Recipe

Kale & Sweet Potato Tart
Adapted from Woks of Life

1¼ c. all-purpose flour
1/4 c. sugar
1/4 tsp. salt
1 cold stick butter, cut into small cubes
1 egg yolk
1 T. ice cold water
2 T. butter
1/2 c. chopped leeks
1 bag greens, chopped
1/4 tsp. red pepper flakes
olive oil
salt & pepper
2 sprigs fresh thyme
1 c. ricotta
1 small sweet potato, sliced thin
1/2 c. shredded cheddar

In a large mixing bowl, combine flour, sugar and salt. Cut in cold butter with a pastry cutter or two knives until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Whisk egg yolk and water, and add it to the flour mixture. Mix with a fork until the dough comes together. Flatten into a disk, cover tightly with plastic wrap, and refrigerate for at least an hour.

Remove dough from fridge a few minutes before you need it. Roll out dough to fit your 9x9 or equivalent baking or tart pan. Patch up any holes with dough from the edges. Pierce the dough all over with a fork, and place in the freezer for 30 minutes.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Blind bake the tart shell for 10 minutes, and remove from the oven. If it puffs up, poke with a fork.

Melt 2 tablespoons of butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Cook leeks for about 10 minutes. Add greens, red pepper flakes, and a couple drizzles of olive oil. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Cook until greens are wilted. Remove from heat.

Add thyme and ricotta to the kale mixture. Place a layer of sweet potato slices in the bottom of the tart shell. Spread kale mixture evenly over that, and top with another layer of sweet potato slices. Brush the top thoroughly with olive oil, and sprinkle cheese on top. Bake for about 20 minutes, until golden brown.

Find more recipes on the Elmwood Stock Farm **Pinterest** page.