

MEXICAN SWEET POTATO QUINOA CASSEROLE

Adapted from fitfoodiefinds.com

2 medium sweet potatoes, cubed	30 oz black beans, drained, rinsed
1 medium yellow onion, chopped	3 Tbsp taco seasoning
1 c quinoa	3 c vegetable broth
12 oz salsa	cilantro (optional garnish)
15 oz diced tomatoes	avocado (optional garnish)
4 oz green chilis	lime (optional garnish)

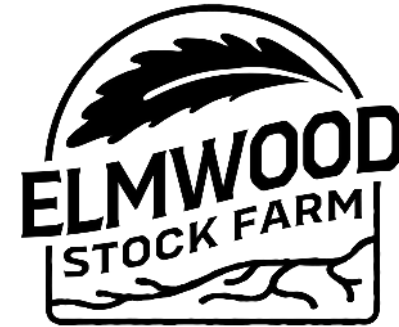
1. Preheat oven to 375F.
2. Place all ingredients into the casserole dish and mix well. Cover and place in the oven for 30 minutes.
3. Remove from oven, stir, re-cover, and place back in the oven for 40 more minutes or until sweet potatoes are softened.
4. Remove from oven and let sit 10 minutes, covered, before serving.
5. Serve with cilantro, avocado, and/or lime juice.

CARROT, HAKUREI TURNIP, AND GINGER BISQUE

Adapted from alyshathekitchenologist.com

3 c carrots, peeled, diced	1 c heavy cream (and a little extra for topping)
2 c hakurei turnips, peeled, diced	microgreens
1/4 c fresh ginger, peeled, diced	black pepper
2 1/2 c chicken stock	

1. Combine carrots, turnips, ginger, and stock in large pot. Cook on medium-high heat for 15-20 minutes until vegetables are tender and can be easily pierced with a fork.
2. Turn off the heat and carefully transfer your vegetable/stock mixture to your blender (You can use a ladle to do this or gently pour everything in; alternatively, use an immersion blender).
3. If desired, pour a cup of heavy cream on top of everything once it's in the blender.
4. Use the blender to puree the mixture, and pour everything back in your pan.
5. Turn the heat on medium if needed to reheat the soup slightly.
6. Drizzle the top with heavy cream, sprinkle with black pepper and add microgreens if desired.
7. Enjoy warm. Leftovers store great in the refrigerator and can easily be reheated.



Winter/Spring CSA News



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Leafy Greens: Store leafy greens in the fridge in a perforated plastic bag. If you chop and wash ahead of time, spin the leaves dry before putting back in the bag with a dry paper towel to absorb moisture. Refresh as needed by plunging them in ice water 15-20 minutes.

Carrots: Refrigerate in a plastic bag or other closed container. To freeze carrots: Chop, blanch for 3 minutes, rinse in cold ice water, drain, let dry, and pack in an airtight container.

Sweet Potato: Store at room temperature. Refrigeration will cause them to harden and blacken when cooked. Check weekly and use any that may soften, most will keep for weeks or months.

Jarred Items: It's the best time of year to include Elmwood's organic Diced Tomatoes, Marinara, BBQ or Salsa in your seasonal recipes—think chili, lasagna, soups, or what about as a pizza topping?

Onions: A staple of many kitchens, onions can be used in all its forms. The dried bulb that we often see this time of the year is popular, but also we can use any green sprout that comes out of that onion (yes, it's where we get green onions!) For longer storage, a dried onion can be stored in the refrigerator as long as it's a dry location without moisture.

Spring Break

With this bewitching spell of warm weather we've had at the end of February, the ice and snow and frigid cold we experienced seem like ages ago. Most likely we are in for more really cold weather yet this spring, but if it does come, it won't last very long. Timing is everything in farming, especially now, as the earth begins to warm and our little micro-ecosystem wakes up.

When the ground freezes, ice crystals form. Those crystals swell the soil, actually shearing and spearing their way between the soil particles and holding it all together in a frozen mass. When it thaws, the particles of soil must nestle themselves back into place, forming the habitat for roots, insects, worms, and microbes to coexist. The firm footing will return if undisturbed. But during that transitional time, farmers would say the soil has 'no bottom'. We know to keep all four wheels of the vehicles on the gravel, and look for the best sod to pick a path when in the fields. The hoof action of the cattle tears up the sod in conditions like this, which is one reason they are kept on the fields that will be plowed for crops in a few weeks anyway. Feeding the big round bales of hay with the tractor is messy, especially at funnel points like gates. But we unroll the bales so all the animals can eat at once, so that at least eliminates the mud holes around bale feeders so many farmers use to feed their herds.

In order to prevent harming the soil structure, we need a window of dry weather for the moisture from all the snow and rain to drain out of the top layer of soil before it can be tilled. The art of being a good farmer is knowing when the soil conditions are right for it to be worked to manage a crop. We invert the top eight inches of soil with a moldboard plow (a bigger, badder version of the iconic Norman Rockwell image in your head). If the window is open long enough to almost dry out enough, and we know freezing weather is still likely, we will go ahead and plow, so the alfalfa and other turned-over cover crops will have time to decay to feed the next crop. If we do not expect the freezing action described above, we hold off. We were within a few hours of drying time this week to plant peas and spinach, since just the top couple of inches need to dry for that. But we are equipped, seed in hand, whenever we get the next opportunity.

When you see all manner of earthworms strewn about on top of the ground, that tells you the air chambers of the soil are full of water and the worms are escaping from drowning. Some perish before finding their way back underground, but not to worry, they have left millions of eggs, or pupae, or whatever they use to procreate, that survive the wet conditions. The bazillions of microbes slow down and/or

hibernate during inclement weather, be it freezing temperatures or excessive rain. To be clear, sub-zero temperatures do not "kill all the bugs" as many home gardeners hope. They, too, have tried and true survival mechanisms that have adapted to the Central Kentucky climate over the past several million years. Sure, if it stays really cold longer into the spring, their emergence may be delayed, a mere tribute to their capabilities. This warm spell we are in may trigger some to wake up early, and then fall on hard times if it gets really cold again, but don't get your hopes up that they will all magically disappear forever, they won't. The pattern may be altered a bit, but that's it.

We can track the progression of the annual awakening after winter as we see song birds returning to adorn the fields and trees. We heard the first spring peepers on our morning walk today (frogs for the unfamiliar), aptly named, to announce the coming of spring. Countless "V's" of Canada Geese have been seen heading north, the killdeer are already luring us away from their camouflaged eggs on the ground, and the robins are on the ground nourishing themselves on the easy pickings of worms, as they prepare to rear their broods. I saw the first red-winged blackbird at its usual spot on the fencepost last week. The meadowlarks will be back soon, but only when the barn swallows return from South America do we know spring is over and summer is here.

Our Narragansett tom turkeys began strutting their stuff this past week and the hens will begin laying eggs any day now. Unlike chickens, these magnificent creatures are still seasonal egg layers, like their wild first cousins. The skunks went into their mating rituals right on cue in mid-February, evident from all those hit by cars, since they have other things on their minds. They coyotes have been howling like crazy since it warmed up, they are doing the same thing as the bulls, skunks, raccoons, opossums, frogs, birds, and the bees. I'm pretty sure it was farmers that coined and gave meaning to the phrase 'the birds and the bees'.

So here we are, busy as bees, seeding flats in the greenhouse, lining up help for all the work to come, encouraging folks to reserve their CSA share. The long range forecast looks like we might get an opportunity to work some ground and plant some more crops soon, but who knows how it will play out. Much like the rest of nature, we are waking up from winter and definitely heading into spring. We just have to be ready when the windows of opportunity present themselves. Luckily we have lots going on around us to enjoy between now and then. - Mac Stone