ANDOUILLE SAUSAGE SKILLET WITH SUMMER VEGGIES

Adapted from sugarmaplefarmhouse.com

1 Tbsp olive oil
1 pack Andouille links, in 1/2" rounds
⅓ c diced red onion
2 bell peppers, any color, chopped
2 summer squash, sliced, quartered
½ tsp garlic salt
¼ tsp sea salt
⅛ tsp black pepper
2 ears corn
⅛ c basil
⅛ c cilantro
(optional) jalapeno, sliced, to taste

Basil cilantro crema
½ c mayonnaise
¼ c sour cream
⅓ c basil, packed
¼ c cilantro, packed
1 Tbsp olive oil
½ tsp garlic salt
¼ tsp white pepper
juice from half a lime

1. Blend ingredients for basil cilantro crema in food processor and set aside.
2. Add olive oil to pan over medium-high heat. Add sausage when oil shimmers. Cook 3 minutes per side, then remove from pan.
3. Add corn to separate skillet over medium heat, or put on the grill, cooking 4 minutes per side.
4. Add onion to the skillet that cooked the sausage, cooking 3-5 minutes until softened. Add peppers and cook 3-5 minutes. Add squash, garlic salt, sea salt, and black pepper, cooking another 3-5 minutes, stirring frequently.
5. When corn is done, cut off the cob. Add corn and sausage to skillet. Saute 2 minutes, then remove from heat. Cool 3 minutes, then add cilantro and basil.
6. Top with basil cilantro crema and serve.

CORN CUCUMBER TOMATO SALAD

Adapted from frommybowl.com

Dressing:
3 Tbsp avocado oil
2 Tbsp lime juice
1 tsp agave
½ tsp chili flakes
½ tsp kosher salt

Salad:
3 ears corn, kernels removed
1 pint cherry-size tomatoes, halved
½ cucumber, diced
¼ red onion, sliced thin
2 jalapenos, seeds removed, finely diced
⅓ c feta cheese

1. Combine dressing ingredients in a jar and shake until emulsified, set aside.
2. Add corn, tomatoes, cucumber, onion, jalapeno, and feta to large bowl. Pour dressing over salad and toss until combined.
3. Place in fridge for 15 minutes to chill, or serve immediately with chips or as a side salad.

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Tomatoes: Store tomatoes stem side down on a plate or cutting board at room temperature. Try not to refrigerate tomatoes as cold temperatures deplete their flavor and texture.

Sweetcorn: Plan to eat your corn soon after you receive it. As time elapses after harvest, the sugars turn into starches, and the corn loses its sweetness. Refrigerate sweet corn as soon as possible. Keep husks on.

Peaches: Allow unripe peaches to ripen in a closed bag or container on a countertop; or out on the counter. To slow down ripening, keep refrigerated. Cut peaches can be kept for 3-4 days in the fridge.

Peppers: Wrap unwashed in a paper towel to absorb any moisture, and keep in the veggie drawer of your refrigerator. In order from mild to spicy, we expect to see red or yellow bell peppers, green bell peppers, jalapenos, serrano peppers, and cayenne peppers.

Potatoes: These potatoes are freshly dug and not yet cured. These should be stored in the refrigerator in a paper or perforated plastic bag. When ready to use, scrub well, peeling is optional.

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Investing in the Future

The potatoes and garlic in your shares, along with a few other goodies, have a longer history on this farm than some of the other veggies. At some point in the past, last year or maybe several years ago, we made the decision to saving back "seed" for a future season, and one of those future seasons is now. Seed-saving is a good way for us to maintain cultivars that have proven well-adapted to our land and our organic systems. It's especially beneficial in the light of the ever-shallowing gene pool in the market place. As we harvest or grade the crops, we sort out what we think is best to have for planting next year, but it's tricky to know which ones to keep.

"Seed" refers to actual hard dry seeds (think sunflower seeds), to garlic cloves, to potato eyes, to runners, to cuttings, to rhizomes and numerous other forms of reproduction in the plant world. Each type of plant perpetuation has its own considerations when it comes to determining which to keep and which to eat. When it comes to true seeds, it's only worth saving those that come from open pollinated varieties, not hybrids. When you see "heirloom" on a tomato label or in seed catalogues, that generally means the parent stock are genetically the same type, so their offspring will look just like them, or be "true to type." So saving open-pollinated or heirloom seeds means you can count on what your next generation of veggies will look and taste like.

In contrast, a hybrid is the result of differing parent lines crossed in a Mendellian fashion, seeking to get the best attributes from each parent to make a genetically superior plant, known as hybrid vigor. If you save the seeds from a hybridized plant, the offspring may grow out to display any characteristic, good or bad, from one parent line to the other. This is why those melons or squash that grow out of your compost pile were healthy, but not all that great to eat. There are volumes written on how to save true seeds, and we do it some, but it is not without its perils, such as disease and virus issues, so be careful if you try this at home. Archeologists recently found some maize (corn) pollen in Mexico some 4,000 years old, indicating our ancestors have been saving seeds for quite some time.

With potatoes, it is a healthy "eye" we are looking to save rather than a seed. It is not as easy as just saving the eyes from the big potatoes, hoping they'll produce more big ones next year. We look for tubers that match the parent stock the best: oblong, smooth, deep color for example. Then we consider the overall health of each potato, knowing that the healthy ones have the best chance to keep through the winter under refrigeration. For some varieties, we save eyes from the smaller ones because they do not have to be cut before planting, whereas the bigger ones can yield enough eyes for several plants.

Garlic was harvested during the extremely wet conditions this year and has either been delivered to you as fresh garlic, or has been hanging in the barn to cure. Once cured, we deliver that to you too, grading out the nice ones for y'all. We look for the ones that have an issue to individual cloves on a bulb, and set those aside for seed. The good cloves are separated from the damaged ones, to be planted this fall for next year's crop. Each clove will produce one bulb next year.

We sometimes harvest runners from the strawberries and root them, and this makes a whole strawberry plant for next year. It paid off to do this last year. You might have seen some news articles in the past year about a fungal disease affecting one of the major strawberry plug plant producers who supplies nurseries nationwide, causing shortages. Instead of risking infected plants, we saved last year's runners. Doing this yielded smaller fruits, which meant fewer pints of berries for us to enjoy, but we were thankful to be able to offer you any at all earlier this spring.

Not all seed makes sense logistically for us to save from one year to the next. Sweet potato slips are really difficult to manage, so we usually purchase them from the farmers that specialize in that. Also, seed catalogues are full of acceptable hybrid varieties that have been bred for flavor, or other useful qualities like disease resistance, and we use a lot of them. For us, they must come from an organic farm, which also means they have been selected as top performers in organic systems. We depend on our network of organic farmers to provide us the genetics we need to produce crops our way.

As farmers all over the world save seeds, there will naturally be genetic drift after many generations of selection. Which is to say, after a few generations of seed-saving, a tomato may not look or taste much like her great-great-great-grandmother tomato did. Therefore, we occasionally purchase new pure lines of seeds to ensure we are capitalizing on the benefits the professional seedsmen offer. The growth of the organic food movement has spurred farmers to capture unique genetic diversity and bring that to us. Each variety is special, and a diversity of genetics (a deep gene pool) makes the whole population more resilient when blights and pathogens wreak havoc.

On the other side of the farming world, a farmer growing GMO crops is liable for theft if they save seeds, as it is stealing the intellectual property of the seed company. At one time, inserting a terminator gene into the parent stock was being considered by some companies, which would make any contraband saved seeds fail to germinate. They said this was for our own good, because everyone, even impoverished nations, would always have access to the latest and greatest technology–so long as they purchased it. Thankfully, the organic community was able to hold on to some good genetics before GMOs really took off. We don't want anything to do with their so-called intellectual property. Farmers are more secure by saving seeds of many kinds, and more importantly, by sharing them. With your support, we are able to invest in the future of your food supply. —Mac Stone