

Roots & Sprouts

News and Ideas from the Belmont Farmers' Market

autumn 2010

www.belmontfarmersmarket.org



*Open rain or shine
Until October 28th!*

**Thursday afternoons
1:30 to 6:00 pm
Belmont Center parking lot**



In this issue . . .

**Enjoy savory root vegetables this fall
Preserving summer's bounty
CSAs in the off-season
Recipe for marinated red cabbage**

*The Belmont Farmers' Market is a member
of the Belmont Center Business Association.*

Tweaking your taste buds

Try these savory root vegetables for winter meals

Looking for "healthy" vegetables, low in calories and high in vitamins and minerals that also taste yummy? Some unfamiliar veggies at the Belmont Farmers' Market might be just what you want. Here's a little information about a few of them: kohlrabi, rutabaga and celeriac.

Did you know **kohlrabi** is a member of the cabbage family? It's also related to broccoli, cauliflower, kale, collard greens and Brussels sprouts. Its name comes from the German "kohl" meaning cabbage and "rabe" meaning turnip because its shape resembles a turnip in its roundness. Kohlrabi is sometimes referred to as "German turnips." Who knew?



The taste and texture of kohlrabi is similar to that of broccoli stems, but a little milder and sweeter. Young specimens can be crisp and juicy like apples, but much less sweet. And kohlrabi can be eaten raw or cooked. Interestingly, kohlrabi is one of the most commonly eaten vegetables in Kashmir where it is called "monj" and is made into spicy dishes for several meals each week.

The website Vegetarians in Paradise (www.vegparadise.com) states, "kohlrabi was once a favorite vegetable of European nobles and peasants alike, but has fallen off the veggie 'top ten' list." It has a long history as a food, starting with preparations described by Apicius around the 1st century CE, who wrote the oldest known cookbook in imperial Rome. Charlemagne ordered kohlrabi to be

grown on his lands around 800. And by the 1600s, India included it as part of the Hindu diet. More recently China and Africa have added it to their cuisines. While kohlrabi was in common use throughout Italy, France and Germany from Charlemagne's era up to the present, Americans have never given it much notice.

Like all members of the cabbage family, kohlrabi is low in calories, high in fiber, a good source of vitamins A and C, folic acid, potassium and calcium. So, not only does it taste good, it's good for you. What more could you ask of a vegetable?

Perhaps surprising, **rutabagas** are also part of the cabbage family, not the turnips that they resemble. "A relative newcomer in the world of vegetables, rutabaga is thought to have evolved from a cross between a wild cabbage and a turnip. The earliest records of rutabaga's existence are from the 17th century in Southern Europe where they were first eaten as well as used for animal fodder. It's curious that throughout history animals were often fed the healthiest foods, often thought to be inappropriate for human consumption." (www.vegparadise.com)



Because rutabagas thrive best in colder climates, they became popular in Scandinavia, but especially in Sweden, the country that earned them the name "swedes." Today the name is often used in Sweden and throughout northern Europe. They were

(continued on page 4)

Preserving the summer's bounty:

What to do when your garden runneth over

What am I to do with six large red cabbages? As a novice gardener with a small community garden, I still produce more fruits and vegetables than I can immediately consume. As a beginner, I sought the advice of an expert on how to preserve the garden's bounty in a short, concise book called *How to Store Your Garden Produce* by Piers Warren. Here is what it taught me.



Food preservation is necessary because, left on its own, fresh food is prey to enzymes, bacteria, yeasts and fungi. The goal is to keep food safe and edible, preferably until the next year's harvest. There is no single way to do it, and almost each fruit and vegetable may be kept edible in a variety of ways. "The priority," says Warren, "should always be to eat the freshest produce while fresh, then store the excess. If you have a freezer full of year-old broccoli, you have simply grown too much broccoli."

Storing food can be broken down into several basic methods: basic storage, clamping, freezing, drying, vacuum-packing, salting, bottling, and last, but far from least, fermenting.

"The simplest form of *STORAGE* is to leave it to nature." A number of crops, like leeks, can be left in the ground until needed. Potatoes are storable in cool, dark spaces. Fruits like apples and pears can be stored on shelves or in boxes. Hanging in a net bag is a technique mainly used for onions and squashes.

CLAMPING is a method of storage for large quantities of root vegetables by piling straw, then dirt over them. Perhaps this method is not the most appropriate for New England since it is not recommended if you have very hard frosts.

FREEZING is "quick, easy, and very effective." Label, organize, pack appropriately, and freeze the best of the harvest; cook food as soon as you can after it comes out of the freezer. Blanching prior to freezing is an effective pre-freezing process, particularly for tomato puree, stewed prunes and apples.

"Enzymes, bacteria, yeasts and fungi all require moisture, so *DRYING* food is effective at preventing the action of all of them." Dried plums and grapes become prunes and raisins.

VACUUM-PACKING extracts fungi or bacteria and eliminates foods degrading through oxidation. Home gardeners can use this technique independently or in conjunction with freezing.

When *SALTING*, only use sea salt or rock salt since table salt contains chemicals not suitable to the preserving process. Before using the vegetables, make sure to rinse them in several changes of cold water.

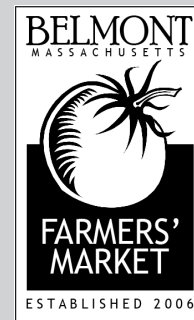
With *BOTTLING/CANNING* "the idea is that the food in the bottles, or jars, is heated to a high-enough temperature, for a certain time, to kill the bacteria, yeasts and fungi, and to stop enzyme activity." The acidity of the produce in bottling is also a protection against contamination by the *botulinium* bacteria.

And finally... *FERMENTING*. Alcohol produced by the fermenting process inhibits and inhibits the growth of the micro-organisms that are a potential menace. Brewed drinks may be stored for many years. Think fine, old wine.

Other ways to preserve food include making pickles and chutneys, both of which require vinegar for preservation. Also, a fine way to preserve extra fruit is to make jams, jellies or fruit butters.

So what will I do with my red cabbage? See my recipe for marinated red cabbage on page 4 of this newsletter.

— Bob Silverman



www.belmontfarmersmarket.org

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Contact us at
belmontfarmersmarket@gmail.com

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PO Box 387
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2010 Vendors

- **Bee-Cause Apiaries** local honey and hand-made beeswax candles
- **ButterGirl Baking Co.** fresh baked treats made with a whole lotta luv
- **Coutts Specialty Foods** jams, jellies, applesauce, relishes
- **Dick's Market Garden Farm** vegetables, fruits, and plants
- **The Farm School** organic vegetables, fruits, flowers, eggs, grass-fed meat
- **Fior d'Italia** pasta in many different shapes and flavors
- **Fiore di Nonno Cheese** handcrafted fresh mozzarella and burrata
- **Goodies** award-winning, better-than-homemade cookies
- **Hmong Farms at Flats Mentor Farm** fresh produce featuring Asian vegetables
- **Hutchins Farm** certified organic plants, vegetables, herbs, small fruit, and apples
- **In Good Taste** Pam's black bean salsa
- **Kimball Fruit Farm** vegetables, fruit, and plants
- **Lawton's Family Farm** fresh cheeses and veal
- **Leslie Wolf Baking** baked goods from a Belmont kitchen
- **Mamadou Bakery** handcrafted breads
- **Nicewicz Family Farm** apples, peaches, plums, berries, vegetables, flowers
- **NorthStar Farm** perennial plants, produce and more from Westport
- **Samira's Homemade** Middle Eastern dips & salads, freshly made and delicious
- **Sassy River Sauces** savory sauces without the fat
- **Sassy Sauces** sweet dessert sauces
- **Turkey Brook Farm** home of Red Label Poultry, raised in the French tradition
- **Siraco** sharper knives since 1953
- **Stillman's at the Turkey Farm** grass-fed meat and freshly-cut flowers
- **Underwood Greenhouses** potted plants grown in Belmont

Food for Thought

Residents share their passion for fresh food, farmers' markets, and good living

Have you ever heard of a CSA and wondered what it was? Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a business arrangement in which consumers buy a share of the farmer's produce before the start of the growing season. It is a relationship of reciprocal advantage: the farmer has both a steady customer base and a cash flow early in the growing season, whereas the customer will receive fresh, locally-grown produce on a regular basis. It connects consumers with their food source and provides farmers with more security during the season in the face of variable growing conditions.

There are many types of CSAs. A CSA farm may use conventional, organic, integrated pest management (IPM) or chemical-free methods. Many CSAs, such as Shared Harvest in Lexington (formerly the Belmont CSA), sell only vegetables. The Farm School in Athol is an example of a CSA that sells both vegetables and deep-frozen "consciously-raised" meat in assorted pre-packages. While most winter CSAs end by December, Enterprise Farm in South Deerfield extends their program from December to June by including produce not only from Massachusetts farms but also from farms along the East Coast. In addition, Red Fire Farm in Granby will reduce the cost of belonging to their CSA based upon volunteering time working at the farm.

Some CSAs from distant farms have local pickup locations: Shared Harvest, comprising six farms (Lexington pickup, October–December), The Farm School (Watertown pickup, February–October), Chestnut Farms (Arlington pickup, fall/winter meat shares) and Stillman's Farm (Jamaica Plain and Brookline pickup, all-year meat shares). An unusual fall CSA is Joan Teebagy's honey, a one-time share for buyers because honey can last a long time.

Farmers are increasingly offering more flexible options, thereby allowing customers to tailor a CSA more closely to their family's

needs and lifestyle. Members of Shared Harvest are able to order additional produce such as handmade cheese, chocolate, local apples, cider, maple syrup and honey. Most CSAs provide each customer with a non-negotiable assortment of produce, equivalent to a "boxed share", but the Farm School now has an alternative "market style" pickup (they provide 12–15 types of vegetables from which members may choose 9–12). Stillman's Farm offers three different-sized packages for 6 or 12-month periods. Shared membership with family and friends makes quantities more manageable, but some farms accommodate families' needs for smaller quantities per week.

Ultimately, there is a challenge inherent in CSAs for both parties: farmers need to transport produce to pickup sites; buyers must collect the produce and sort and store it at home. In a difficult season, consumers may receive less varied produce or a more unusual mix, but they share in the harvest when the season is plentiful. In addition, farmers are often helpful by sharing new recipes and answering questions about growing and cooking.

While CSAs limit one's choices to certain produce seasonally available, they also provide an opportunity to experience new foods and discover ways of preserving somewhat larger quantities of food. If your goal is to eat locally-produced food and support local agriculture into the winter, you may find that a winter CSA share is a tasty extension of the prime eating season. As Irina Rosenblum, a CSA member, explains: "Being open-minded and learning to use what you have" are key.

For more information about CSAs, see *local-harvest.org*

— Denise Umans
With many thanks to Leah Bloom and Gretta Anderson of Shared Harvest, Beekeeper Joan Teebagy of Belmont, and CSA members Julie Kirrane and Irina Rosenblum

*CSAs — not just
for summertime*

(continued from page 1)

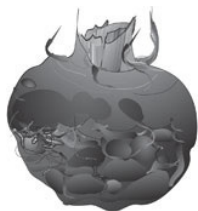
first cultivated in the northern United States and Canada in the early 1800s where many Scandinavians immigrated and settled.

Although this beta carotene-rich vegetable has been grown and marketed in our country for nearly 200 years, it remains an uncommon food in American diets. Low in sodium, they also provide a significant source of vitamin C, potassium, manganese. Its flavor has a delicate sweetness and can be used as an alternative to sweet potatoes when mashed or made into a gratin. Find them at farmers' markets now, as they are at their flavor peak in early fall.

Celeriac is also known as celery root, knob celery and turnip-rooted celery. Developed from the same wild species as stalk celery, celeriac is first cousin to anise (fennel), carrots, parsley and parsnips. Many early civilizations, including those of Egypt, Greece and Italy,

found it useful for medicinal and religious purposes.

Celeriac is a little ugly — brown and bumpy — but has a mild celery flavor and can be a nice addition to a pan of roasted winter vegetables. Low in saturated fat and cholesterol, it is high in vitamin C, vitamin K, phosphorus, potassium, dietary fiber, vitamin B6, magnesium and manganese.



Again, Europeans have enjoyed celeriac for centuries, but in America it's not that familiar. The cold French salad *celerie remoulade* is made from peeled and grated celeriac "cooked" in lemon juice (or blanched briefly in vinegar infused water) to lose a bit of its rawness, then dressed with a mustardy mayonnaise. Of course, the benefits of celeriac's

low calorie count (half a cup contains only 30 calories and no fat) might be hidden beneath the dressing. (www.npr.org)

You most likely can find all of these autumn vegetables in the produce department of many grocery stores, but don't be surprised if the checkout clerk doesn't know what they are. And unlike buying at the Belmont Farmers' Market, you probably won't get a recipe to try. Stop by The Farm School, Hutchins Farm and Flats Mentor Farm booths and ask how they prepare the kohlrabi, rutabagas and celeriac they sell. You'll get some new cooking ideas that are sure to be tasty.

— Jan Cannon

Sources: Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org), Vegetarians in Paradise (www.vegparadise.com), UMass Extension (www.umassvegetable.org), Culinate (www.culinate.com), Simply in Season (www.worldcommunitycookbook.org), National Public Radio (www.npr.org), eSSORTMENT (www.essortment.com)

Marinated red cabbage

(*chou rouge mariné*)

This simple dish is a delicious way to get vitamin C and vitamin A as well as antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer benefits.

- 1 red cabbage
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 bay leaf
- 8 peppercorns
- 2 tablespoons vinegar

Wash the cabbage, cut it in quarters and remove the hard core. Cut the cabbage into very fine julienne slices and put in a bowl with a tablespoon salt. Leave it in a cold place for 24 hours, turning it over from time to time.

Squeeze out all the water. Add the garlic, bay leaf, peppercorns and vinegar.

Let the cabbage stand for a few hours to pickle in the refrigerator. Serve cold.

— Adapted by Bob Silverman from

GOURMET'S BASIC FRENCH TECHNIQUES OF FRENCH CUISINE, by Louis Diat

Super season!

2010 was the Belmont Farmers' Market's fifth season and it was another recognized success. *Boston Magazine* placed us runner up for *Best of Boston Farmers' Markets* following our 2009 first-place win. We wish to thank the Board of Selectmen for authorizing the use of the municipal parking lot, and the Health Department for oversight of a safe food environment. Thanks also for support by organizations that displayed sandwich boards all season long: the Town, Beth El Temple Center; Cushing Auto, and First Church Unitarian Universalist. Finally – many thanks to our tireless volunteers, fabulous vendors, musical entertainers and shoppers from Belmont and beyond. You all contributed to making Thursday afternoons in Belmont Center *the* place to be. See you next year!

— the Belmont Farmers' Market Committee

Correction to last issue's banana bread recipe ingredient list: the final two ingredients are ¼ tsp baking powder and ½ tsp baking soda. We apologize!