

## PRESERVING OPTIONS

Eggplant freezes well but should be frozen within a few days after harvesting in order to preserve its firm texture. Blanching is required to deactivate surface enzymes that contribute to a change in color and flavor. The eggplant should be sliced thinly, dropped in a boiling water-lemon juice mixture, and blanched for 4 minutes. Once cooled completely in an ice water bath then drained, the eggplant slices can be stored in zip-top freezer bags. Frozen eggplant will keep for up to a year.

\*\*\*\*\*From *Epicurious.com*\*\*\*\*\*

**Pickled Carrot Sticks** - 10 to 12 servings

### Ingredients

- 1 pound carrots, cut into 3 1/2- by 1/3-inch sticks
- 1 ¼ cups water
- 1 cup cider vinegar
- ¼ cup sugar
- 2 garlic cloves, lightly crushed
- 1 ½ tablespoons dill seeds
- 1 ½ tablespoons salt

### Directions

1. Blanch carrots in a 4-quart nonreactive saucepan of boiling salted water 1 minute, then drain in a colander and rinse under cold water to stop cooking. Transfer carrots to a heatproof bowl.
2. Bring remaining ingredients to a boil in saucepan, then reduce heat and simmer 2 minutes. Pour pickling liquid over carrots and cool, uncovered. Chill carrots, covered, at least 1 day for flavors to develop.

\*\*\*\*\*From *Epicurious.com*\*\*\*\*\*

**Roasted Carrots** - 8 servings

### Ingredients

- 3 pounds small carrots (including greens; carrots about 5 inches long), tops trimmed to 1 inch and carrots peeled
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

### Directions

1. Preheat oven to 500°F with rack in lower third.
2. Toss carrots with oil, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper and spread out in a large 4-sided sheet pan. Roast 20 minutes. Reduce oven to 325°F and roast, stirring occasionally, until carrots are browned and tender, about 25 minutes more.



## Sisters Hill Farm

127 Sisters Hill Road, PO Box 22, Stanfordville, NY

August 10, 2013

August 13, 2013

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### From the Apprentices' Perspective



Hello, all! It's been another wonderful week here at Sister's Hill. The bounty of the high-summer season is still going strong, and each week's share seems more colorful and more impressive than the last. But—as Dave says—farming is all about balancing current harvests with future yields, and so we've also marked with no little excitement the beginning of our fall planting cycle. Broccoli, rutabaga, and kale transplants have all been tucked into their carefully-tilled beds, and the seeds of our future greens, radishes, and carrots are just peeking up above the ground. As everything finds a home in the field, our greenhouse has become less an intensively-managed nursery, and more an airy drying house, now host to thousands of onions.

So, maybe it's the first stirrings of the unmistakable "back-to-school" feeling that sneaks in with early August that's got me thinking like an anthropology student again. Or perhaps it has more to do with the presence of the Sisters—women of such faith and conviction, who began and continue to direct this farm as part of a sacred mission. Either way, I've been pondering a lot lately on the connection between food and spirituality.

In one instance, I was chatting with a new friend of mine, an apprentice at a farm in the Berkshires. Somehow, we began talking about meditation, and I explained to her how I started meditating. She then asked me a question on which I've been ruminating for a while: "How does meditation help you as a farmer?"

I don't remember exactly what answer I gave her—it was probably long and enthusiastic—but I have been turning it over, and have since realized that one of the most farm-applicable skills from meditation has been the ability to live in the current moment.

There is no pleasure more fleeting than good food, no beauty so ephemeral as that of farming. There have been so many little moments of incredible beauty this season: this morning, we saw the sunrise as we begun our work, the day before last, dew glowed like frost on a perfect blue-green bed of dill. So many beautiful sights, glorious breezes, particular scents on the air...but nothing we can hold on to, not even things we can capture in a photo. Even our gorgeous vegetables, which we care for and watch grow, are meant to be enjoyed only for a brief moment, then consumed.

So perhaps this week, as we bite into ripe tomatoes or pile up beds of jewel-colored lettuce, we can all share moments of meditation—on good food, perfect summers, and the beauty of things that don't last.

*Surely this is the year of the egg plant. Hope you enjoy a few different ways to*

*fix this vegetable:*

\*\*\*\*\*From *Epicurious.com*\*\*\*\*\*

### **Marinated Eggplant** - Makes 12 (antipasto) servings with leftovers

*In this savory starter, sticks of eggplant readily soak up a garlicky oil- and-vinegar marinade and soften, making them an ideal topping for crusty bread.*

#### **Ingredients**

- 2 pound eggplant, peeled and cut into 3- by 1/4-inch sticks
- 3 cups water
- 1 1/2 cups white-wine vinegar
- 4 garlic cloves, coarsely chopped
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped oregano
- About 1 1/2 cups olive oil, divided
- Accompaniment: crusty Italian bread

#### **Directions**

1. Toss eggplant with 1/4 cup salt and drain in a colander set over a bowl, covered, at room temperature 4 hours. (Eggplant will turn brown.) Discard liquid in bowl.
2. Gently squeeze handfuls of eggplant. Bring water and vinegar to a boil in a medium pot. Add eggplant and boil, stirring occasionally, until tender, 2 to 3 minutes. Drain in colander, then set colander over a bowl and cover eggplant with a plate and a weight (such as a large heavy can). Continue to drain, covered and chilled, 8 to 12 hours. Discard liquid in bowl. Gently squeeze handfuls of eggplant to remove excess liquid, then pat dry.
3. Stir together eggplant, garlic, oregano, 1/2 teaspoon pepper, and 1 cup oil in a bowl.
4. Transfer to a 1-quart jar or other container with a tight-fitting lid and add just enough olive oil to cover eggplant. Marinate eggplant, covered and chilled, at least 4 hours. Bring to room temperature before serving.

\*\*\*\*\*From *Epicurious.com*\*\*\*\*\*

### **Spicy Eggplant and Green Bean Curry** - 4-6 side-dish servings

*This fresh and sophisticated dish would be a delicious vegetarian entrée for two—just add rice. Look for curry paste and coconut milk in the Asian foods section of the supermarket*

#### **Ingredients**

- 5 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided
- 4 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 tablespoon chopped peeled fresh ginger
- 1 (14- to 16-ounce) eggplant, peeled, cut into 2 x 1/2 x 1/2 inch sticks
- 8 ounces green beans, trimmed, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 1 tablespoon grated lime peel
- 1 teaspoon Thai green curry paste
- 1 cup canned unsweetened coconut milk
- 3 green onions, chopped
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro

- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint

#### **Directions**

1. Heat 4 tablespoons oil in large skillet over medium-high heat. Add garlic and ginger; stir 30 seconds. Add eggplant and green beans. Cook until almost tender, stirring often, about 10 minutes. Cover and cook until completely tender, about 3 minutes longer. Transfer vegetables to bowl.
2. Add 1 tablespoon oil, lime peel, and curry paste to same skillet; stir 15 seconds. Add coconut milk; bring to boil, whisking until smooth. Return vegetables to skillet; toss until sauce thickens enough to coat vegetables, about 3 minutes. Season with salt. Mix in onions, cilantro, and mint.

\*\*\*\*\*From *EatingWell.com*\*\*\*\*\*

### **Grilled Eggplant Salsa**- 2 cups

#### **Ingredients**

- 6 large cloves garlic, unpeeled
- 4 whole shallots, unpeeled
- 3 Asian eggplants (about 1 pound total), left whole, or one 1-pound eggplant, halved
- 1-2 fresh bird chiles or cayenne chiles, minced
- 2 tablespoons fish sauce
- 1/4 cup fresh cilantro leaves or chopped fresh mint

#### **Directions**

1. Preheat grill to medium or preheat broiler to high.
2. If grilling, skewer garlic. Place the garlic, whole shallots and eggplants on the grill rack. Grill, turning as necessary to expose all sides to the heat, until very soft: about 6 minutes for the garlic, 8 to 10 minutes for the shallots and about 12 minutes for the eggplant. If broiling, place garlic, shallots and eggplants on a lightly oiled baking sheet and broil about 4 inches from the heat; leaving the oven door ajar. Broil, turning a few times, until well softened, 8 to 10 minutes.
3. Set aside until cool enough to handle, about 10 minutes. Peel the garlic and shallots and place in a food processor. Pulse several times to chop, but leave it chunky. Scrape the eggplant flesh from the skin into the food processor. Pulse several more times to combine.
4. Transfer the mixture to a bowl; stir in minced chile and fish sauce. Serve warm or at room temperature, topped with cilantro (or mint).

\*\*\*\*\*From *Fine Cooking in Season CookBook*\*\*\*\*\*

### **EGGPLANT**

#### **HOW TO USE IT**

Eggplant is one vegetable for which slight under-cooking will not work. It must be completely cooked through until it's soft, smooth, and creamy. The best cooking methods include high heat and some fat, both of which transform the flesh from vegetal to rich. Frying, stir-frying, grilling, or roasting are perfect for slices or chunks, and char-roasting a whole eggplant over a grill produces a deep smoky flavor. The charred skin peels off easily.