

- 1/4 cup water
- 1/2 cup slivered fresh mint, divided

Directions

1. Heat 1/2 cup oil in a large cast-iron skillet or shallow enamel-lined pot over medium-high heat until shimmering. Place a wire rack next to the stove and cover with a layer of paper towels. When the oil is very hot (but not smoking), add squash, a few slices at a time, and cook until tender and browned on both sides, 2 to 4 minutes a side. Remove to the prepared rack. Continue with the remaining slices, reducing the heat as needed to prevent the squash from overbrowning before it's tender. Arrange the squash on a serving platter and sprinkle with 1/8 teaspoon salt.
2. Discard any oil remaining in the pan and wipe it out with paper towels. Add the remaining 1/4 cup oil to the pan and heat over medium-low. Add onions and cook, stirring occasionally, until completely softened but not brown, about 10 minutes. Stir in garlic and cook for 1 minute, then add olives and cook for 1 minute more.
3. Meanwhile, heat vinegar and water in a small saucepan over high heat. Boil until reduced by half, about 5 minutes. Add the vinegar reduction to the onion-olive mixture and increase heat to medium-high for 2 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in the remaining 1/8 teaspoon salt and all but 1 tablespoon mint. Spoon the onion mixture over the squash slices. Garnish with the reserved 1 tbs. mint. Let stand at room temperature for about 30 minutes to let the flavors develop before serving.

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

Roasted Pear-Butternut Soup with Crumbled Stilton - 6 servings

Ingredients

- 2 ripe pears, peeled, quartered and cored
- 2 pounds butternut squash, peeled, seeded and cut into 2-inch chunks
- 2 medium tomatoes, cored and quartered
- 1 large leek, pale green and white parts only, halved lengthwise, sliced and washed thoroughly
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon salt, divided
- Freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 4 cups vegetable broth, or reduced-sodium chicken broth, divided
- 2/3 cup crumbled Stilton, or other blue-veined cheese
- 1 tablespoon thinly sliced fresh chives, or scallion greens

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Combine pears, squash, tomatoes, leek, garlic, oil, 1/4 teaspoon salt and pepper in a large bowl; toss to coat. Spread evenly on a large rimmed baking sheet. Roast, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are tender, 40 to 55 minutes. Let cool slightly.
3. Place half the vegetables and 2 cups broth in a blender; puree until smooth. Transfer to a large saucepan. Puree the remaining vegetables and 2 cups broth. Add to the pan and stir in the remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt.
4. Cook the soup over medium-low heat, stirring, until hot, about 10 minutes. Divide among 6 bowls and garnish with cheese and chives (or scallion greens).



Sisters Hill Farm

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Field notes from our Apprentice Katherine Chiu

This spring when I arrived at Sisters Hill from the Bronx, most of my experience with growing food had come through the context of urban agriculture. I was beyond excited to be working on a rural production farm at last, and just as excited to meet my new neighbors in Stanfordville. I made a trip to Elvin's, the grocery store in town, where I met one of the owners, Jimmy. He asked me where I lived, and I told him I was here at Sisters Hill for the season. "Oh yeah, you're working with that garden down the road?" he said. Wait a sec. A garden? Was he talking about Sisters Hill or somewhere else? Jimmy saw the look of confusion on my face and thought he had made a mistake.

"Oh, I'm sorry--or are you one of the new Sisters?" he asked. Now I knew we were talking about the same place! No, I assured him, he had had it right the first time. A farm by any other name is still growing great food and feeding its CSA members, right?

For me, "farming" typically connotes an operation that aims for financial sustainability based on crop production at a scale that will serve others besides the farmer, while "gardening" connotes an activity where crop production and/or profit off of crops is not the main goal. When the farm is a smaller acreage and much or all of the work is done at a hand scale, some folks would call that a market garden.

Our five acres of planted fields at Sisters Hill would just about fill the average Manhattan city block--perhaps a garden-sized plot to some folks, but to other folks, and definitely to urban growers, a big, farm-sized chunk of land. My first experience growing food in New York City had me measuring arable land not in acres, but in square feet. It was a four by four foot plot within a community garden in downtown Brooklyn, and, not realizing how huge and sprawling two small seedlings could grow up to be, I ended up with 50 percent of my "land" planted in husk cherries. I thought back to this community gardening experience more than once this past spring, when we were preparing fields for planting and Dave emphasized the importance of removing "trash," or sizable chunks of natural debris like last season's shriveled and hardened kale stalks, away from the fields in order to make tilling go more smoothly and to eliminate havens for pests and disease. It was hard for me to dissociate the word "trash" from the actual garbage that I remembered blowing in through my garden's gates from the street and littering the ground: candy wrappers, plastic grocery bags, and once, I hate to say it, a used diaper.

But I am to this day so grateful for that first community gardening experience in the city--it rekindled my love of growing food that I had enjoyed as a child, and it drew me into the diverse, storied world of urban agriculture in New York City. I saw how green open spaces provided a place where people could gather to grow food, form communities, and build community resilience.

I think that much of what urban farmers and gardeners are doing, and what many small-scale farms like Sisters Hill are doing, highlight the many different forms

of value that a farm can offer other than directly material and financial value. Dave has worked hard and very intentionally to create a financially sustainable farming operation, and at the same time, he has built the farm to be a place that embraces training and education for beginning farmers, the health of our CSA community, and the health of the farm's soil. Because it is such a well-oiled operation here, I know I often take these aspects of the farm for granted, when in fact, I do think that Sisters Hill and other farms like it offer an expanded definition of what it means to be a modern-day farm.

At five acres, Sisters Hill often straddles the line between tractor-scale and hand-scale. We certainly could not accomplish all that we do between Dave and us three apprentices without the help of the farm's tractors. However, all of our harvesting is done by hand, and while some weeding is taken care of with tractors, much of this is done by hand as well. And on those days when we're relying on raking or hoeing more than is typical, Dave will exclaim, "We're doing a bit of gardening today!" Over the course of the season, I've come to especially enjoy using some of our hand tools for weeding and have often thought how my fellow gardeners and farmers in the city, as well as our CSA members who have small home gardens of their own, would also take pleasure in these tools, if you don't already. Whether gardener or farmer, we can all agree on a love of good, fresh vegetables and an equal dispassion for the weeds that try to take their place!

The Wheel Hoe

<http://www.johnnyseeds.com/p-5490-glaser-wheel-hoe.aspx>

What it is and how we use it:

We push the wheel hoe down our paths between beds and in between rows of plants to clear the weeds in a straight path about 8 or 12 inches wide (depending on which of our two wheel hoes we're using), when the plants have become too big for us to use our tractors to mechanically cultivate without destroying plants.

When I fell in love:

It's an ongoing relationship. It's such a quick, effective way to hit most of the weeds between straight rows of plants, and when I've worked up a sweat after wheel hoeing my way through several beds, I have really appreciated the effectiveness of tractor cultivation as well as the capabilities of my own body.

The Long-Handled Diamond Hoe and Hand Hoe

<http://www.dewittoolsusa.com/long-handled-hoes/>

<http://www.johnnyseeds.com/p-5504-hand-hoe.aspx>

What they are and how we use them:

Weeding tools with sharp-cornered blades that allow us to reach around and in between plants, effectively cutting weeds at their base.

When I fell in love:

While weeding our melon patch this summer, I tried the hand hoe for the first time and was immediately amazed at just how quickly I could cut through all the purslane and move between plants and under vines, isolating weeds without damaging our crops. Because it's just a blade, it doesn't have an open space like other hoes that can get clogged with soil and weeds. The diamond hoe and hand hoe are fairly similar, but the long-handled hoe allows you to work while standing upright, while the short-handled hand hoe would be used while kneeling and offers finer control and maneuverability with its shorter handle.

Short-Handled Wire Weeders

<http://www.johnnyseeds.com/p-5505-wire-weeder.aspx>

<http://www.johnnyseeds.com/p-8319-lucko-wire-weeder.aspx>

What they are and how we use them:

Hand-held weeding tools that allow for precise, thorough weed removal within rows of plants. We crouch in the path next to a bed and quickly move alongside the bed as

we aim for 100% removal of weeds. The larger wire weeder works great to maneuver around heads of cabbage or broccoli plants without having to worry about slicing the plants at their base, while the smaller wire weeder works wonderfully to scratch out the tiny weeds growing within rows of greens, after we have come in with the mechanical basket weeder on a tractor or with the wheel hoe in between the rows to get the majority of the weeds.

When I fell in love:

Anytime when we have overlooked or not prioritized getting a bed of greens weeded while the weeds are small. Absence makes the heart grow fonder, and the value of weeding becomes obvious during the harvesting stage. Cutting arugula goes much, much faster when you don't have to isolate their leaves from those of neighboring weeds.

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

Kale, Carrot & Apple Salad 12 servings

Ingredients

Cider Vinaigrette

- 1 small shallot, chopped
- 1/4 cup cider vinegar
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons apple cider
- 1 1/2 tablespoons whole-grain mustard
- 2 teaspoons pure maple syrup
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- Ground pepper to taste

Salad

- 10 cups coarsely chopped lacinato kale (1-2 large bunches)
- 2 sweet-tart apples, such as Golden Russet or Jonagold, cut into matchsticks
- 3 cups matchstick-cut carrots
- 1 cup matchstick-cut radishes
- 3/4 cup flat-leaf parsley leaves, coarsely chopped

Directions

1. To prepare vinaigrette: Puree shallot, vinegar, oil, cider, mustard, maple syrup, salt and pepper in a blender or mini food processor until smooth and creamy.
2. To prepare salad: Toss kale, apples, carrots, radishes and parsley in a large bowl. Drizzle with the dressing; toss to coat.

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

Fried Winter Squash with Black Olives - 8 servings

Ingredients

- 3/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 2 1/2 pounds butternut squash, peeled, halved, seeded and cut into 1/4-inch-thick slices
- 1/4 teaspoon sea salt, divided
- 2 medium yellow or red onions, halved and very thinly sliced
- 4 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped
- 1/2 cup salt-cured (or oil-cured) black olives or Kalamata olives, pitted and coarsely chopped
- 1/2 cup red-wine vinegar