

RED DOG FARM



In your share this week:

Gold Beets
Broccoli
Garlic
Sweet Onion
Parsnips
Green Mustard
Sunchoke (large shares only)

Well, from my end of things, the first week of the winter CSA went marvelously. Most of you remembered to pick up your shares, all the last minutes switch-a-roos and sign-ups worked out just fine, and hopefully, the produce from last week is devoured and you're ready for more!

One business item to mention: if the newsletter is coming to you unformatted on your email, try opening the attachment and viewing it that way. I think you will find it easier and more enjoyable to read and you'll also see the pictures, when I put them in.

It has been just a glorious couple of days. As I write this, Wednesday morning, the sun is peaking out over the trees onto frost encrusted ground, all glittering in its coldness. Yesterday had a warmer start, but was just magnificent with clear blue skies and sun! We couldn't have asked for a better harvest day.

Red Dog Lake has shrunk considerably. There are now only patches of water puddles in the field, nothing like the great expanse just last week. Although it was beautiful to enjoy lakeview property, and so much fun to watch all the birds, I am glad for the soil's sake that it is now above the water level.

Since so many of you enjoyed hearing about the bird activity in my first letter, I thought I'd tell you a little more about what we have witnessed.

The most exciting visitors by far were the trumpet swans. A pair visited several times. I loved most when they would fly overhead, true to their name, trumpeting. At first, I thought the noise was from one of those cars with the trumpet-style horn, blasting as it drove by on Center Rd. But it was not an artificial noise, but from the beak of a large white, long-necked bird. Mostly, we observed them just floating gracefully around the lake, probably busily feeding.

Another large graceful bird to make an appearance was the great blue heron. I see the heron almost every day visiting the creek in the morning. While the lake was here, it came by much more frequently. There really is nothing quite like watching a heron swoop down over a body of water, flying seemingly effortlessly just over the surface.

We also saw hawks hunting right near the edge of the lake. Someone speculated that probably the high water was driving out all of the field mice and voles that normally feel right at home in the field and the hawk was taking advantage of their discomfort. Such is nature. Also, there were ducks; mallards and other species I didn't identify. Two hunters have actually stopped by to ask if they could shoot ducks on the farm. I said no, but I can hear that close by there is a lot of hunting happening, leaving my dog cowering in any cave-like place he can find (poor fellow!)

Last but not least, the seagulls were here in large numbers, cawing and creating a happy-sounding ruckus. It was enough to make me feel as though I lived right on the shore! It was really amazing to see how many birds are attracted to water.

Of the non-water loving birds, I am so happy to report that the barn owls are back again this year! I mostly find evidence of them in the form of their pellets and the notable absence of rodents (thankfully!) in and around the barn. I really rely on them for their "cleaning up" ability.

Recipes

This soup recipe is a reprint from last year as I got so much feedback about how much everyone enjoyed it. Red lentils are available in the bulk section of the Food Co-op in PT.

Red Lentil Soup with Parsnips and Mustard Greens

2 cups Red Lentils
2 lbs. Parsnips, cubed
1 T. turmeric
4 T. butter
Salt
1 large onion, chopped
2 t. ground cumin
1 ½ t. mustard seeds
1 bunch Mustard Greens, chopped
Juice of 3 limes
Plain yogurt
Fresh cilantro (optional)

Put lentils, parsnips, 1 T. butter and 1 T. salt into a soup pot with 2 ½ quarts of water. Bring to the boil, reduce heat, then simmer for 20 minutes, or until lentils are falling apart. Meanwhile, sauté the onion in the remaining butter with the cumin and mustard seeds. Stir occasionally. Add in the mustard greens, and continue cooking until just wilted. Add the onion mixture into the lentil mixture. Add in the juice of 3 limes. When serving, swirl a spoonful of yogurt into each bowl. Garnish with fresh cilantro, if desired.

Warm Veggie Salad

Gold Beets
Sunchokes (optional, or substitute potatoes)
Olive oil
Garlic
Onion
Salad greens, lettuce or spinach
Dressing

Slice the beets and sunchokes and boil until tender. Meanwhile, sauté the onion and garlic in olive oil until translucent. Arrange the greens in a salad bowl. Top with the sautéed onions and garlic and sliced boiled roots. Dress and serve immediately.

Sunchokes (aka Jerusalem Artichokes) have a taste and texture similar to potatoes. They are delicious pan fried, lightly steamed or raw. Take care not to over-cook them as they become mushy easily. Sunchokes are composed of inulin (not insulin) rather than starch, making them a very low glycemic food and a great choice for those with blood sugar imbalances. The inulin can be hard for some people to digest, so they have a bad reputation as causing flatulence. I've personally never had that reaction with them, but I have heard it commonly. I guess you'll just need to try them to find out!

Pan-fried Sunchokes

1 lb. Sunchokes washed and sliced thin
2 T. butter or olive oil
Sea salt to taste

In a heavy-bottom skillet, fry the Sunchokes in butter until just barely tender and slightly browned, stirring often, about 15 minutes. Season with salt.

Beef, Broccoli and Wild Mushrooms *www.mariquita.com*

Makes: 4 servings

1 pound beef boneless sirloin steak
2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1/2 pound broccoli, cut into flowerets and stems cut into 1-inch pieces
3/4 cup beef or chicken broth
1/3 -1/2 pound fresh shiitake mushrooms, cut into fourths (2-3 cups)
6 ounces fresh crimini mushrooms, sliced (2 cups)
2 tablespoons dry sherry or apple juice
1 tablespoon soy sauce
1 teaspoon cornstarch
1 package (10 ounces) curly Chinese or Japanese noodles

1. Cut beef with grain into 2-inch strips; cut strips across grain into 1/8-inch slices. Spray 12-inch nonstick skillet with cooking spray; heat over medium-high heat. Add beef and garlic; stir-fry 4 to 5 minutes or until beef is brown. Remove from skillet.
2. Add broccoli and 1/2 cup of the broth to skillet. Heat to boiling; reduce heat to medium. Cover and cook about 2 minutes or until broccoli is crisp-tender. Add mushrooms, sherry and soy sauce. Cover and cook 2 to 3 minutes, stirring occasionally, until mushrooms are tender.
3. Stir in beef. Mix cornstarch and remaining 1/4 cup broth; stir into beef mixture. Heat to boiling, stirring constantly. Boil and stir 1 minute.
4. Meanwhile, cook and drain noodles as directed on package. Divide noodles among bowls. Top with beef mixture.

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