What’s in the box?

Baby Greens, Beet and Chard
Carrots, Nelson
Parsnips, Lancer
Fennel, Perfection
Green Beans, Bronco
Zucchini, mixed varieties
Apples, Auvil Fuji, Gale Gala, and Jonagold Decoster
Potatoes, German Butterball
Onions, Red Bottle (“Torpedo” type) and a PUMPKIN!

Notes from the Field by Liz Milazzo, Field Production Manager

It’s starting to feel like fall ... The air is crisp on harvest mornings, and we had a nice little heat wave on Monday that is bringing some sugar into the apples. We clipped the first two varieties of winter squash from the vine this week, Delicata (small and cream-colored with green and orange stripes, sliced lengthwise resemble little “boats”), and the traditional Acorn squash. As the thermometer got up to 90, we brought burlap sacks out to shade the Acorn squash curing in the field. We learned the hard way that the dark colored squashes can sunburn in even one day of real heat because they absorb so much solar radiation.

Winter squash is a reliably productive crop at the UCSC farm. We plant between May 15th and 30th, weed the rows early and until the vines create a good canopy, water once or twice a week with drip, keep an eye on the gophers and squirrels … and all of a sudden the treasure is visible! The canopy shrinks to the ground as the vines dry to reveal the bright jewels. To assess ripeness, we look for a hard shell, and a brittle stem (on Delicata, Acorn, & Butternut) or the stem turning yellow with pronounced cracking (Kabocha or Hubbard). We clip the stems and leave the fruits to cure a day or so in the field before gathering into bins. The favorite day all year for many a farmer is a morning or afternoon spent tossing winter squash. You’ll be receiving Acorn squash this week, then Red Kabocha, then Delicata, then Butternut!

Let us know what you think of the Howden variety pumpkins! They get so huge! Along with the Howden we also have Baby Pam, Winter Luxury pie pumpkins (with a netted skin), and the large scarlet French pumpkin, Rouge Vif D’Etampes. A certain 3-year-old I am very fond of is convinced that if you put your ear to a pumpkin, you’ll hear a little mouse inside. Take a listen.

This week we’re preparing a trial with Environmental Studies researchers Joji Muramoto and Prof. Carol Shennan, to evaluate alternatives to chemical soil fumigation in strawberries. The organic treatments to be evaluated over four years are: anaerobic soil disinfestation, treatment with compressed mustard cake (a byproduct of a local biofuel operation), and incorporation of broccoli crop residue. All of these are treatments to combat Verticillium dahliae, a soil pathogen that can severely limit strawberry yields (which is usually responsible for our strawberries declining in August). The trial is being planted in the south end of the Main field. This week we’ll shape the raised beds and Joji will apply the mustard cake, and rice bran, then we’ll apply the plastic mulch, and irrigate heavily to create the anaerobic disinfestation (a soil bacterial population is stimulated by the rice bran which counteracts the Fusarium fungus).

Next summer we’ll dedicate a half acre to a companion larger study, with the CASFS Farm serving as the “mother trial” and “baby trials” planted on local area farms including Swanton Berry Farm in Davenport and High Ground Organics in Watsonville.

Upcoming Event

Medicinal Herb Intensive
Saturday & Sunday, Oct. 22-23 | 9am-3pm
UCSC Farm

Join us for a weekend at the Farm to explore many aspects of medicinal herbs. Taught by chiropractic physician Dr. Edna Williams, topics to be covered include: herbal properties and qualities; how various parts of plants are used; gathering, drying and preparing herbs for medicinal uses; uses of regional garden and native plants; Native American, Asian, and ancient European approaches to herbal medicine; making and using medicinal teas, infusions, decoctions, tinctures, tisanes, elixirs, oils, liniments, syrups, salves, poultices, compresses, capsules, and honeys.

Cost: $195, general public; $170 Friends members; $90 UCSC students. Questions? Email casfs@ucsc.edu or call 831.459-3240.
Fennel and Parsnip Soup

2 tablespoons olive oil
1/2 onion, small diced
1 clove garlic, minced
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1/2 pound parsnips, thinly sliced
1/2 fennel bulb, sliced thinly
4 cups vegetable stock
Sea salt and white pepper
Greek yogurt

Heat the olive oil in a medium saucepan. Add in the onion and garlic and sauté, stirring often, without browning, for 4-5 minutes.

Add the cumin and stir, and then add the parsnip and fennel, stirring well.

Add in the stock, bring to the boil, reduce the heat and simmer for 15-20 minutes until the parsnips and fennel are tender. Season with salt and white pepper to taste.

Allow to cool for 5 minutes and pour half the soup into a blender start blender off slow and hold top. Pour back into pot. Repeat until all the soup is pureed.

Reheat gently over a low heat. Ladle into 6 serving bowls and garnish each portion with a swirl of Greek yogurt.

New in your box today are parsnips.
The parsnip is a biennial plant grown as an annual in agricultural production. It has a long taproot that can grow up to 12” in length and about 3 inches in diameter at the shoulder. Growing from its shoulder, above ground, is the plants foliage which resembles large celery leaves and stems. Its tapered root varies in skin color depending on variety, but its flesh is always a creamy white. Parsnips have smooth skin with a sweet, nutty flavor and fine grained flesh. Parsnips, like carrots, may be used in sweet and savory preparations because of their high natural sugar content.

Roasted Pumpkin

Medium-sized pumpkin
1 pound goat cheese
4 cups heavy cream
pinch of grated nutmeg
1/2 stick of butter, cut into pieces
1/2 cup honey
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 French baguette sliced thick

Preheat oven to 400°F. Using a sharp pointed knife, slice around the stem of the pumpkin at a 45-degree angle. Scoop out pulp and seeds and save the top.

Heat cream until just warm then pour inside pumpkin. Crumble in goat cheese, nutmeg and butter. Place pumpkin on a sheet pan replace pumpkin top and bake in oven for 1 hour; check for doneness. Pumpkin is ready when inside of pumpkin is soft and easily scoop out.

Remove from oven, add honey and cinnamon and scoop inside of pumpkin into cream. Place pumpkin in a bowl, serve with crust baguette.