Notes from the Field by Liz Milazzo, Field Production Manager

The farm crew attended a *variety trial field day* October 18th at Coke Farm in San Juan Bautista, hosted by Dale and Christine Coke and the Organic Seed Alliance, a non-profit based in Port Townsend, Washington. OSA is partnering with farms across the country to do variety trials that will identify varieties that perform well under organic conditions – where nutrients are slow-release, and pests and diseases are kept in check with habitat enhancement /biological diversity more than with pesticide applications. We saw side-by-side grow-outs of 17 varieties of Swiss Chard, 12 selections of Lacinato kale (“Dino”), as well as about 40 varieties of lettuce, and a dozen varieties of broccoli. OSA lead scientist John Navazio presented the trials, and solicited comments from growers in attendance as to most important qualities to be working on in each vegetable: for example, wide stems for bunching chard, bright colors and color contrast between leaf and petiole, etc. With the plant-outs arranged side by side, planted on the same day under the same conditions (with two replications of each variety), farmers could readily see contrasts between varieties and selections within varieties. One selection that really stood out was the “Lacinato” kale from Wild Garden Seed in Oregon – tall and dark green, and remarkably resistant to flea beetles under a lot of pest pressure. Results of these trials and other work of OSA, including technical bulletins on growing seed crops is available on their website: www.seedalliance.org/.

A gentle rain fell Sunday evening into Monday morning, ½” so far. As fall comes on, we’re focused on gleaning crops, rolling drip tape, mowing and discing to prepare the ground for cover crop planting. Last Friday morning after the harvest we were able to clear the lower half of the Main field, and Andy got it mowed and disc’d in the afternoon as apprentices packed their tent cabins, and got ready for their graduation ceremony. Now as you go round the corner by the Mutsu apples and Jim’s bench, you can see again the curve of the land, the dark earth visible in it’s twice yearly un-dressing. Six foot tall salad lettuces gone to seed, the rows of field flowers spreading wide like willows on a winding creek, the half row of Lebanese zucchini speckled white with powdery mildew— all gone, turned into the fertile earth. The symphony plays on, and we hope there’s a part for the Tyte cover crop seed drill in about 10 or 15 days to get the cover planted before the soil is too wet. This year, we’re going to try out a later plant date for the cover crop, hoping the rye in the mix will germinate well in early November and out-grow the weedy mustard. Last year we planted about 50% of the fields to cover crop on October 25th. That was pretty early, and in the fairly warm temperatures of late October, the tiny mustard seeds germinated quickly, establishing dominance over the cover crop! We’ll see if changing the timing helps shift the balance in favor of the rye.

2012 CSA End-of-Season Survey

Help us improve your CSA experience at the CASFS Farm! Please take a few minutes and go to the online link below to answer 10 questions regarding your experience as a CSA shareholder.

We hope to compile your feedback by Friday, November 16.

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/XLGNSVL
**Winter Squash Soup with Gruyere Croutons**

**Soups:**
1 cup (1/2 stick) butter  
1 large onion, finely chopped  
4 large garlic cloves, chopped  
14-1/2 ounce cans low-salt chicken broth  
4 cups 1-inch pieces peeled butternut squash (1-1/2 lbs.)*  
4 cups 1-inch pieces peeled acorn squash (about 1-1/2 lbs.)*  
1 1/4 teaspoons minced fresh thyme  
1 1/4 teaspoons minced fresh sage  
1 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin  
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger  
1/8 cup whipping cream  

**Croutons:**
2 tablespoons (1/4 stick) butter  
24 1/4-inch thick baguette bread slices  
1 cup grated Gruyere cheese  
1 teaspoon minced fresh thyme  
1 teaspoon minced fresh sage

For soup: Melt butter in large pot over medium heat. Add onion and garlic and sauté until tender, about 10 minutes. Add broth, all squash and herbs; bring to boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer until squash is very tender, about 20 minutes. Working in batches, puree soup in blender. Return soup to same pot. Stir in cream and bring to simmer. Season with salt and pepper. (Can be made 1 day ahead. Chill. Rewarm over medium heat before serving.)

For croutons: Preheat broiler. Butter 1 side of each bread slice. Arrange bread, buttered side up, on baking sheet. Broil until golden, about 1 minute. Turn over. Sprinkle cheese, then thyme and sage over. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Broil until cheese melts, about 1 minute. Ladle soup into bowls. Top each with croutons and serve.

* Suggest roasting squash, halved and seeded, on a baking sheet coated lightly with oil at 425º until soft, adding to the pot, and cooking it the rest of the way.

**Winter Squash Varieties available at market cart:**
- **Butternut** – versatile, holds the longest, small seed cavity, great flavor for soups and pies
- **Buttercup** – dark green, square shape with “button” on bottom, hard to cut open, bright orange flesh, dry, good for stuffing
- **Red Kabocha** – bright scarlet, moist flesh, great for creamed soups, easy also to roast in wedges
- **Spaghetti** – flesh cooks up in yellow strings, roast and scoop out, serve with sauce on top!
- **Acorn** – halve and serve roasted, with a stuffing or plain.

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**Pear, Cranberry and Gingersnap Crumble**

**Crumble:**
1 cup all-purpose flour  
1/4 cup granulated sugar  
3 tablespoons packed dark or light brown sugar  
1 cup gingersnap crumbs (4 ounces or about 16 cookies)  
1/8 teaspoon ground ginger  
1/8 teaspoon table salt  
Pinch of white pepper, if your gingersnaps aren’t “snappish”  
1/2 cup (4 ounces or 1 stick) unsalted butter, melted and cooled

**Filling:**
2 pounds (about 4 to 5) large ripe pears, peeled, halved, cored and sliced 1/4 inch thick  
1-1/2 cups (6 ounces) fresh cranberries  
1 tablespoon lemon juice  
1/2 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest  
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract  
1/2 cup granulated sugar  
2 tablespoons cornstarch

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Stir together flour, granulated sugar, brown sugar, gingersnap crumbs, ginger and salt. Stir in the melted butter until large crumbs form. In a 1-1/2 to 2 quart baking dish, mix the pears, cranberries, lemon juice, lemon zest and vanilla. In a small bowl, whisk the sugar and cornstarch together then toss it with the fruit mixture in the pan. Sprinkle the gingersnap crumble over the fruit. Set the crumble on a foil-lined baking sheet and bake it for about 45 minutes, until the crumble is a shade darker and you see juices bubbling through the crumbs. See how long you can wait before digging in!

www.smittenkitchen.com
Adapted from Bon Appétit, December 1996

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Adapted from Sweet Melissa Patisserie