

Nourish Ourselves Nourish Our Community October 30, 2008

One of the very nicest things about life is the way we must regularly stop whatever it is we are doing and devote our attention to eating.

-Luciano Pavarotti and William Wright, *Pavarotti, My Own Story*



The story and practice of the intertwining of the Three Sisters-corn, beans, and squash-is as ancient one, which seems to have originated with the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) people and became widespread in Native American planting. Corn is planted in the center of a mound (often with a fish buried in it for fertilization), beans are grown up the sturdy corn stalks, and the squash, with its broad low lying leaves is planted around them both, shading their roots and conserving water. Stories about the origin of this practice vary but the intuitive perception that these sisters can compliment and support one another has been amply demonstrated and has become part of our shared planting wisdom.

Our dinner tonight features the autumnal-squashes, onions, apples, and pears-and also some of the last of our late summer produce like tomatoes. As always it is wildly enjoyable to work with our beautiful local produce. The colors, smells, and textures are intoxicating and inspiring. Thanks to all of the following:

Squashes came from Todd and Diane at T&D Farms, Ken and Kathryn at Horse Drawn Farm, Steven Wrubleski brought gorgeous squash back for us from the Barter Fair. Onions, sweet and hot peppers, and tomatoes came from Horse Drawn. Garlic came from Todd Kegerreis, Stephen Wrubleski, and Wendy Westervelt. Painted Mountain Corn was grown specifically for the Evening Meals by Cedar Charnley. Thank you. Stephen and Wendy also contributed corn. Lettuces of all kinds were provided by Michele and Steve Heller. Chard is from Christine at Lopez Harvest, sorrel from Farida's CSA, and cabbage, chard, sorrel, and herbs from Jean's garden. Bosc pears were brought to us by Charles and Clarissa Mish, and apples came from the orchards of the Currie family and most movingly, from the Devore family.

Cam Devore loved food and he valued and relished his Lopez community. He was a volunteer for and supporter of numerous Lopez projects. The image that is used for the Evening Meals by Diana Bower is a view from the Devore property. Cam shared his life with his friends and loved his family deeply. We would like to dedicate this Evening Meal to the life and memory of our friend, Cam Devore.

Abundant thanks to our three guest chefs from Vita's. Joyce Brinar, Wendy Westervelt, and Mary Jennison were the epitome of competence, inspiration, and sheer delight in the kitchen. Thanks to every volunteer.

Our next meal will be Thursday, December 11th. See you there.

Three Sisters Stew

Serves 8

2# winter squash (red kuri, sweetkeeper, hubbard)
1 ½ cup dried white beans (or 2 cans)
1 cup dried corn-Painted Mountain, optional
1 to 2 cups fresh or frozen corn
3 onions, diced
1 cup peppers, diced (sweet and/or hot)
4 to 6 cloves garlic, minced
1 to 2 cups tomatoes, diced or roughly pureed
herbs (roasted sage, cumin seeds, and oregano)
salt and pepper

For our version of this stew we soaked the dried beans and corn overnight separately, adding baking soda to the corn.

The soaking water was discarded and the beans brought to a boil in fresh water (with the herb epazote if available) and simmered for about an hour until tender. Repeat this process with the corn-the corn takes several hours to cook. Squash, onions, peppers, tomatoes, and garlic were roasted until tender on sheet pans, one layer deep, at about 350°. Fresh corn can be roasted too. Toast herbs watchfully on stovetop. Combine all ingredients in a pot or slow cooker using bean cooking water as stock. Add more water or stock as necessary. Add salt and pepper and cumin powder to taste. Simmer for flavors to blend

Cornbread

Makes 1-8" by 8" pan

2 cups yellow cornmeal
½ cup whole wheat pastry flour
1 tsp salt
½ tsp baking soda
1 tsp baking powder
1 to 3 Tblsp honey or other sweetener
1 to 2 eggs, beaten
1 ½ cups buttermilk, yogurt, or milk

Optional Ingredients: grated summer squash, carrots, or cheese, minced herbs-parsley, oregano, etc. or spices-chili powder, cumin, cayenne pepper, etc. Mix dry ingredients thoroughly in a bowl. Add eggs and milk and mix briefly. Add optional ingredients and lightly mix. Pour batter into buttered baking pan. Bake at 350° until golden brown and a toothpick inserted into center comes out clean.

Rice and Quinoa Pilaf

Serves 8

2 cups short grain brown rice
2 ½ cups quinoa (red)
1 onion, minced
2 Tblsp olive oil
chopped assorted herbs
garlic, if desired, minced

Rice and quinoa have different cooking needs so we baked them separately at first. Rinse rice and drain.

Stir in a little salt and 1 T olive oil to coat, add 3 cups water and cover Bake at 400° until tender, about an hour. Rinse and swirl quinoa for 30 seconds (removes bitterness), stir in 1 T olive oil, salt, and 3¾ cups water. Cover and bake for about 25 minutes. Sauté onion, garlic, and herbs. Gently mix rice, quinoa, and sautéed mixture, season with salt and pepper to taste and place in baking dish. Bake covered for 20 minutes or until heated through.

Apple Pear Crisp

Makes 1-9" by 13" pan

8 to 10 cups apples and pears, cored, thinly sliced
juice of 1 lemon
¼ cup flour
1 Tblsp ground cinnamon
½ cup sugar
½ cup melted butter
2/3 cup sugar
¾ cup whole wheat pastry flour
1 ½ cups oats
1 Tblsp ground cinnamon

Preheat oven to 350°. Mix the first 5 ingredients and spread in the bottom of the baking dish. Mix remaining dry ingredients, add melted butter and mix until crumbly. Spread on top of apple pear mixture and bake for approximately 45 minutes or until fruit bubbles and top browns.