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We'd like your input for the newsletter! Please send related news articles, book reviews, recipes, etc to carolyn@johnsonsbaygard.com

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- 1) In Your Box this Week

Early Girl Tomatoes
Zucchini
Patty Pan Squash
Zephyr or Yellow Straight Neck Squash
Pickling and Slicing Cucumbers
Sweet Peppers
Hot Peppers
Eggplant
Onions
Okra
Melon

Look for cherry tomatoes in the Trade Box

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As the unexpected never fails to happen, keep in mind that this list is subject to change depending on availability and quality of crops on harvest day. You'll find the most accurate packing list on the homepage of our [website](#). This list also features links to recipes, photos for the more unusual veggies, and other interesting tidbits.

2) Farm News

- New CSA memberships will be put on our waiting list – don't be discouraged, we are expanding and have more crops growing than we ever have before, so get on the list now before it gets too long! Current members can renew on our website, you'll just need to enter your email address to link to our database. If you did not include your email address when you signed up, or have forgotten which one you used, just email us at farm@johnsonsbackyardgarden.com
- We will be having a Melon Day on a Sunday afternoon within the next month – we're not very good at predicting things around here but look for an announcement in the newsletter in the next couple weeks. Bring a picnic to enjoy in the shady pecan orchard, there will be complimentary melons for CSA members, Brenton will have the grill fired up if you want to bring burgers, and hopefully we'll round up a band!
- This week we are saying goodbye to intern Sarah Dyer. Thanks for all your hard work Sarah, we'll miss you!



- We're still looking for a CPA (with agricultural experience preferred), contact us if you're interested.
- Our new 1100 feet of irrigation pipe that we've been talking about for so long has arrived – we will be renting a trencher and installing it later this week.
- Beth Johnson and the kids left for a trip to Alabama last Friday. It's going to be a quiet month around the farm!
- Last week with Aaron, our webmaster, around we got a lot of computer work done. He worked out some bugs in our database, updated our online subscription process, improved our file storage and task management calendar.

3) Bulk CSA Distribution

We are strongly considering changing our CSA distribution method in the near future. Many CSA's of comparable size use a bulk distribution method – produce is delivered to the pickup location in bulk bins and members assemble their individual share from these bins according to posted amounts. Generally pickup locations are churches or community centers that have a large, air conditioned space available. This distribution method would free us up to focus more on producing high-quality vegetables, while at the same time keeping the cost of CSA membership reasonable. We welcome your input on this change. Also please let us know if you have suggestions for suitable pickup locations – churches, community centers, neighborhood

associations, etc.



4) Cookbook Review

Elaine DiRico

How to Cook Everything Vegetarian, Mark Bittman, Oct. 2007

Mark Bittman has been in my Top Ten Food Writers for a very long time. He has contributed a food/cooking column to the NY Times for many years, and is now augmenting with a blog, suitably titled "Bitten". He is self-trained and open minded, confident, funny and creative. His long running column is called, "The Minimalist" and he is refreshingly terse with his recipes. On Wednesdays, when the column appears, there is also a video on the web page, which for me, at least is invaluable as a guide for the recipe.

Bittman has issues, and one of his most vocal is the viability of farming and food as we know it. This is what prompted him to write an exhaustive, encyclopedic thousand page cookbook. In my lifetime, I suspect I could cook 1% of what he covers, but as a manual for the vegetarian kitchen, it is hard to beat. It is beautifully organized and clear, and the dozen or so recipes I have made were quite easy, and clearly presented, plus delicious.

The section on Technique I find especially useful. Over decades of food prep, I have gotten slack on a number of things, and Bittman has reigned me in. Good technique equals a better product and a more efficient recipe, is now my kitchen mantra. I am also charmed by the fact that this man has never gone to cooking school, but rather learned the same way that I did, and has developed some decent tricks and shortcuts of his own along the way.

To see my perception of the quintessential Mark, got to www.nytimes.com, from there to the Dining section, and click on whatever video they are showing, (these are archived as well.) The 10 second introduction gives you a perfect view of the author of this lovely and amazing book.

Bittman is not himself a vegetarian, nor am I. I call myself an omnivore, and I am still looking for a food I don't like. But like Bittman, my meat eating and cooking is down about 50% from a few years ago, and fish is my most frequent protein source. It is easy to throw a slab of some sort of animal protein on a grill, whip up a salad, pull a baguette out of a bag, and declare it dinner. With some support from this book, an open mind, and a willingness to learn, dinner can be both more enticing and healthful, not to mention the money to be saved.

This is also my new favorite wedding gift to give.

Favorite recipes- a growing list:

Braised and Glazed Radishes p 354

Spicy Red Beans, Indian Style p 593

The World of Rice Salads p 79

Elaine DiRico is a freelance food critic and long-time CSA member. Feel free to contact her with questions, comments and recipe requests at ELAINE@dirico.com

5) Eggplant: Purple, Delicious and in Your Fridge

Elaine DiRico



Like most Texans, grilling is a religion at our house, especially in the summer, to avoid heating the kitchen. Once the fire is built, we cook everything we can find on it, to store that smoky goodness. Zucchini, sliced thick, brushed with olive oil, then grilled and frozen can bring a little sunshine to a pot of minestrone next

January. Whole heads of garlic, the top 1/2" removed, doused with good olive oil, salt and pepper, set off to the side of the grill rather than over the flames, can roast until soft enough to squeeze out like butter. Salad dressings, bread, soup, slabs of fish...there's very little I can think of that isn't improved with roasted garlic. The Garlic Festival, going on in Gilroy California right now, even has a pretty delicious roasted garlic ice cream!

But my favorite vegetable on the grill is eggplant. It can be slabbed like zucchini and also freezes well for a mid-winter ratatouille, or it can be punctured a few times with a fork, and like the garlic, set off to the side to roast and soak up flavors. In a half hour, more or less, depending on the eggplant, it will kind of sigh and collapse. Pull it off, scrape out the meat, add some of the roasted garlic and serve with bread or pitas. I usually pour a little olive oil around the mound of dip, just for pretty. Chopped parsley is nice as well, and brightens it up. Lemon sections... In the Middle East, this simple and delicious dip is called *baba ghanoush*.

Eggplant makes a surprisingly good soup as well. Roasted in the oven or on the grill, take 2 cups of the flesh, two or three tomatoes, also roasted, a small onion, roasted, and put in a blender or food processor with 2 cups of broth or stock. Blend until smooth. Add some cream for richness if you like, and chopped fresh herbs like basil, parsley or thyme. Serve cold, hot, or in between, and top with some crumbles of feta cheese.

Eggplants also called *Aubergines*, originated in Sri Lanka. They are in the nightshade family, (*aka Solanaceae*) like tomatoes and potatoes, but are the only nightshade from Eurasia – all of the others are natives of South America. Because the seeds are within the fruit, it is botanically classified as a berry, along with pumpkins and tomatoes, but not strawberries... Hmmmm. They are often grow wild as perennials in tropical Asia and can reach as much as 7' tall with 12" leaves. Ostensibly, they arrived in Europe with Marco Polo, where they were bred to be larger and firmer. The beautiful lavender and white Rosa Bianca is perhaps the best result of these efforts, being much sweeter and firmer than the Asian and large Italian purple eggplants.

There is often a question about peeling eggplants. When they are very fresh, the skin is delicate and thin, but hardens as they dehydrate. I rarely peel mine, but I do salt them. This is a traditional prep method in an Italian kitchen. Slice the fruit and lay it in a colander. Salt it well, and let it drain for a half hour to an hour, then rinse very well. Not only does this remove the dreaded bitterness, but it also keeps it from absorbing as much oil.

Elaine DiRico is a freelance food critic and long-time CSA member. Feel free to contact her with questions, comments and recipe requests at ELAINE@dirico.com

6) Vegetable Storage Tips

We aim to grow and package our vegetables to maintain the highest taste and nutritional quality possible. However, once they've left the farm it's up to you to keep them fresh and nutritious. There's no refrigeration at the CSA drop points so it's good to pick up your box as early as possible. Here are some additional tips on how to store this week's share:

Fridge

- **Peppers** and **Cucumbers** should be stored in the crisper, and washed in cold water before use.
- **Zucchini** and other **Summer Squash** will last 4-7 days in plastic bags in the crisper.
- **Okra** will keep for only two or three days. Refrigerate unwashed, dry okra pods in the vegetable

crisper, loosely wrapped in perforated plastic bags. Wet pods will quickly mold and become slimy. When the ridges and tips of the pod start to turn dark, use it or lose it. Once it starts to darken, okra will quickly deteriorate.

Counter

- **Eggplant** and **Onions** are best kept moderately cool, no lower than 50 degrees. A cool, dry dark place is best- on the counter, in a cupboard or basket. Eggplant are delicate and do not store well, so try to use them within a few days.
- **Tomatoes** should be kept at room temperature, but can be refrigerated if very ripe. Leaving them in the paper bag will help them ripen quickly. Also, be sure to store your tomatoes away from your eggplants, or other sensitive produce such as bananas, as the tomatoes will make them ripen faster.
- **Melons** should be stored uncut in a cool dark place. Keep cut melons in the refrigerator.

Checkout our [storage tips](#) on our website for a more complete guide, and of course feel free to contact us with any questions.

7) Recipes

Chocolate Zucchini Cake

From Sunset Magazine

Sarah's note: I usually substitute applesauce for the butter and it turns out very well. I have also tried putting in 1 tsp of instant coffee grounds instead of the orange peel and have been happy with that, too.

2 1/2 cups regular all-purpose flour, unsifted
1/2 cup cocoa
2 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1 1/2 teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon cinnamon
3/4 cup soft butter
2 cups sugar
3 eggs
2 teaspoons vanilla
2 teaspoons grated orange peel
2 cups coarsely shredded zucchini
1/2 cup milk
1 cup chopped walnuts or pecans
Glaze (directions follow)

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

1. Combine the flour, cocoa, baking powder, soda, salt, and cinnamon; set aside.
2. With a mixer, beat together the butter and the sugar until they are smoothly blended. Add the eggs to the butter and sugar mixture one at a time, beating well after each addition. With a spoon, stir in the vanilla,

orange peel, and zucchini.

3. Alternately stir the dry ingredients and the milk into the zucchini mixture, including the nuts with the last addition.

4. Pour the batter into a greased and flour-dusted 10-inch tube pan or bundt pan. Bake in the oven for about 50 minutes (test at 45 minutes!) or until a wooden pick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool in pan 15 minutes; turn out on wire rack to cool thoroughly.

5. Drizzle glaze over cake.

Glaze: Mix together 2 cups powdered sugar, 3 Tablespoons milk, and 1teaspoon vanilla. Beat until smooth.

Cut in thin slices to serve. Makes 10-12 servings.

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I'm Annelies, and I'm here visiting my sweet sister (known to you as intern Carolyn). I've been happily discovering farm life this past week, with all its bugs, squash, bad jokes, good food, and heavy lifting. Carolyn recruited me to find new and interesting recipes involving summer squash, as I gather much of it has already been eaten this season... I found these four recipes on [www.marmiton.com](http://www.marmiton.com), which is my favorite French recipe website. I've translated them for you, and hope you enjoy them!

Carolyn's note: Annelies is studying French/English interpretation, hence the reason she can translate recipes for you and will someday buy me a farm. How nice. She is also a good cook – I am hoping that perhaps she will make all of these things while I am busily working!



### **Whole Chicken with Summer Veggies**

(Recipe adapted from the Ivory Coast)

Serves 3 - 4

1 whole chicken

1 big eggplant and 1 zucchini (or more if you wish)

3-4 tomatoes

2 cloves of garlic (or more)

1 large onion  
5-7 bay leaves  
thyme  
ginger (very important!!!) (fresh if possible)  
salt and pepper

Preparation :

Oil (or use butter) a large soup pot, put the chicken cut into pieces in it.

Cut up all veggies and add to pot. (you can blanch the tomatoes to peel them first if you wish)

Add the garlic, minced.

Put on the stove at medium heat – add a bit of water if necessary to prevent sticking.

Add spices – use LOTS of ginger – that’s what adds spice to this dish. You’ll know it’s done when the chicken is fully cooked.

Serve with rice or another grain.

### **Moroccan Zucchini**

3-4 zucchini and/or peeled eggplant

3-4 tomatoes

2 onions

fennel

garlic

thyme

salt and pepper

Preparation :

In a baking pan, alternate round slices of tomatoes, zucchini, and onions. Add spices, cover with aluminum foil and bake at 300 for about an hour.

### **Summer Vegetable Bake with Chevre and Honey**

2 zucchini

2 eggplant

2 onions

3 tomatoes

1 green or red pepper

chevre (4 oz. or so)

herbes de province and/or fresh basil

3 T honey

3 T olive oil

ground salt and pepper

Cut (no need to peel) veggies into round, flat pieces. Layer in baking pan. Put pepper on top, and cover with chevre. Sprinkle with basil, herbes de province, olive oil and honey. Cover with aluminum foil, bake at 400 for about 45 min, then take aluminum foil off and let it bake for about another 15 minutes. Yum.

### **Summer veggies with pecans, feta and balsamic vinegar**

Serves 2

1 red pepper  
1 eggplant  
2 small zucchinis  
1 block of feta  
pecans  
balsamic vinegar  
olive oil  
salt, pepper

Cut veggies in thin slices and sautee with a bit of olive oil.  
Once they're cooked, put them in a large salad bowl with chunks of feta and pecans. Season with balsamic vinegar, olive oil, salt and pepper to taste. Can be eaten hot or cold.

Bon appetit!

We would love to share your recipes too! Please email your favorites to [sarah@johnsonsbackyardgarden.com](mailto:sarah@johnsonsbackyardgarden.com)

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9) Johnson's Backyard Garden Contact Information

Johnson's Backyard Garden

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