

FRESH PROSPECTS

Week 8 – August 7, 2008

This Week:

- Who speaks for the plants?
- The trick to dry sautéed string beans
- Farmer Ted's pickles
- Visiting Windflower Farm

Michael Pollan at P.S.1

This Friday at P.S.1, author Michael Pollan will speak about his new book, *The Botany of Desire*, a fascinating look at the history and evolution of cultivated plants from the plants' perspective. P.S.1 calls him "one of today's most influential investigators of what we eat and how plants impact our daily lives and culture."

The match of speaker and venue is especially apt, since P.S.1's courtyard has been transformed for the summer into P.F.1 (Public Farm One), a quarter-acre working farm designed by WORK Architecture Company.

P.S.1 Courtyard

22-25 Jackson Ave (at 46th Ave), Long Island City

Date: Friday, August 08

Time: 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM

Doors open 7 p.m., \$5 suggested donation

www.ps1.org/calendar/view/52

Szechuan Dry Sautéed String Beans

Who hasn't admired the withered crispy-but-tender string beans you get in Szechuan restaurants? If you've ever tried to make them at home (in vain), you've quickly realized that drying them takes you in the wrong direction.

The bad news is that the restaurants use a Frialator. But you could make do with a pan full of boiling fat. The "dry" in the name refers to dry-frying, or gan bian, a cooking method similar to deep frying, only hotter.

The beans are first submerged in smoking hot oil to pucker and brown them, then drained and quickly sautéed in very little oil with garlic, ginger, scallions, chili paste, soy sauce, sugar, salt, and pepper. And if your aim is authenticity, you'll also want a little ground pork, preserved vegetables, and MSG.

Ted Blomgren's Bread & Butter Pickles

Adapted from *Cooking Light*, August 2008

Yields 8 1/4-cup servings

2 3/4 cups thinly sliced cucumbers (about 3/4 lb)
3/4 tablespoons kosher salt
1/2 cup thinly sliced onion 1/2 cup sugar
1/2 cup white vinegar
1/4 cup cider vinegar
1/8 cup packed brown sugar
3/4 teaspoon mustard seeds
1/4 teaspoon celery seeds
1/16 teaspoon turmeric

Combine cucumbers and salt in a large bowl; cover and chill 1 1/2 hours. Drain and rinse cucumbers under cold water. Drain and return cucumbers to bowl. Add onion to bowl.

Combine sugar and remaining ingredients in a medium saucepan; bring to a simmer over medium heat, stirring until sugar dissolves. Pour hot vinegar mixture over cucumber mixture; let stand at room temperature one hour. Cover and refrigerate 24 hours. Store in an air-tight container in refrigerator up to two weeks.

Back to the Land

Though you've probably just received an email from core member Vince about the upcoming Windflower Farm weekend, we think it's important enough to warrant extra props here. Can you fully enjoy your CSA membership without visiting the farm? Maybe not.

A CSA is more than just a convenient way to get great produce. It's a direct connection to your food source. You are just a handshake away from the person who planted your beets. But until you've actually shaken that hand, the connection feels vague and abstract.

At the farm, though, you'll not only get to shake hands with Ted and his family; you'll touch the leaves of the living crops that feed you; you'll trod the very rows your investment helped plow. You'll never look at those plastic bins the same way again.

If that's not enough of a draw (hard to imagine), don't forget the pot luck dinner, the camping out, the swimming hole, the breakfast, and the county fair.

Getting there is simple. You can offer to drive or hitch a ride. Vince will do the matching. Riders pay \$20 for gas, and the CSA will pay for a van if needed.

- Windflower Farm
- Valley Falls, NY
- Sign up with Vince at tvtrotter@hotmail.com by Monday, Aug 11
- Four hours by car
- Departing mid-morning Saturday, Aug 23
- Returning early evening Sunday, Aug 24

UNTIL NEXT WEEK, we wish you all happy veggie eating...