



WINTER GREEN FARM

Box note #7 for the week of July 22, 2013

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Top five ways to use Pesto

By Linda Larson,
about.com guide



1. Toss it!

Pasta is a natural partner for pesto. As you toss hot cooked pasta with this flavorful sauce, the heat brings out the fabulous flavors of the basil, garlic, and cheese.

2. Spread It!

Pesto is delicious as a sandwich spread and as a layer in any appetizer dip. It's particularly good in open-faced sandwiches. You can also spread it on any thin cut of meat or fish, then coat with breadcrumbs and quickly sauté.

3. Stuff It!

Whether on its own or mixed with other ingredients like cream cheese or bread crumbs, pesto makes an excellent stuffing ingredient.

4. Mix It!

Pesto mixed with everything from olive oil to mayonnaise makes a fabulous salad dressing, especially for pasta salads. It can be stirred into rice or mashed potatoes, or mixed into hot vegetables or a casserole made with leftover meat.

5. Drizzle It!

If the pesto is too thick to drizzle, just stir in a bit more olive oil. It's the perfect finishing touch for any grilled meat or vegetables too.

Steamed Collards with Lemon Balm Cream

From: Farmer John's Cookbook, The Real Dirt on Vegetables

1 pound Collard Greens, stems removed and discarded, sliced crosswise into 1/2-inch strips
1/4 cup butter
2 tablespoons flour
1 cup half-and-half or heavy cream
1 tablespoon chopped fresh lemon balm
1 teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon freshly ground black pepper

1. Place the chopped collards in a steamer basket over 1 1/2 inches boiling water, cover, and steam until just tender about 20 minutes or longer depending on the thickness of the leaves.

2. Meanwhile, melt the butter in a medium skillet over medium-low heat. Sprinkle in the flour and stir it in to form a thick paste. Stir in 1/4 cup of the cream, then gradually add the rest of the cream, stirring it in thoroughly, so that the mixture slowly changes from a thick to a thin, runny sauce.

3. Stir in the lemon balm and add salt and pepper to taste. Continue cooking, stirring constantly, until thick again. Remove the skillet from heat.

4. Pour the sauce over the collards; toss to coat well.

This Week's Harvest (subject to variation)

Carrots

Beets

Sweet onion

Lettuce

Collards

Zucchini

Pesto

Some sites only:

Cauliflower

Eggplant

Tomatoes

Cucumbers

Strawberries

VEGETABLE STORAGE AND PREPARATION TIPS:

CUCUMBERS: Cucumbers are best when eaten fresh, but will keep for up to a week in a drawer of your refrigerator. Cut or peeled cucumbers will stay fresh for only a few days. Wash cucumbers well before using. Peeling is optional for organic cucumbers. Try peeling skins in alternating strips for a decorative effect. Cut into spears and serve with dip, put slices on sandwiches, or marinate slices for cold cucumber salad.

News from the Field

Greeting members! The boxes are looking full and beautiful this week. The warm weather crops are starting to make more appearances in your boxes, but it will still be a surprise as to which of these vegetables you will be receiving, as these harvests come on slow. We are dividing it up between drop-off sites and keeping good records to make sure it is all divided fairly.

You will all be getting **PESTO** in your box this week! We make the pesto right on the farm, in our certified processing kitchen, from basil that we grow on the farm and harvest the morning we process. We are excited to be sharing it with you. The pesto is a frozen product so you will find it at each drop-off site in a CSA bin full of ice. Please only take **ONE** per share. If you share your box on-site with another, you will need to split up the container, so plan accordingly. Try to get to your site as soon as you can to pick it up and get it back home! Last week I wrote an article about our compost system at Winter Green Farm and posted it on the blog. Since you don't get the blog I thought I would print it out here for you to read. Have a great week!

Winter Green Farm is made up of some people who have previous farming experience as well as others who are just beginning their journey in agriculture. The owners have always felt a responsibility in making sure that our crew is able to learn as much as they can during their time here, and are very generous with their farming expertise and their depth of agricultural knowledge.

The farm is made up of so many different parts, some quite complex, and it takes years to even begin to understand all that goes into growing this food. To better understand the big picture, and all the different areas of the farm, the owners lead after-hours talks on the aspects of the farm that they focus on. The most recent of these talks was about compost and specifically our composting system at Winter Green Farm. Wali Via led the talk, as he is the compost guru here at the farm and has been for almost 30 years! He makes some mighty fine

compost, as you can attest from the quality of the vegetables in your box each week!

Compost is the center of our fertility plan, along with crop rotation, pasturage of our grazing stock, and cover cropping. Compost is integral in maintaining good soil health at the farm. Compost returns nutrients and organic matter back to the soil, which increases the soil's ability to hold water and air.

On a hayride at the farm's open house this spring, Wali stopped the wagon at a compost pile and ran to get a handful of compost to share with everyone. Although he has done this on countless hayrides and fieldtrips throughout the years, his face still lights up when he talks about compost, and instills wonder in everyone when he shares that there are billions of organisms in his hand at that moment.

As he passed the dark, earthy, crumbly compost sample around, I remember him saying why compost is so important to soil health as opposed to the farms that use a lot of fertilizer inputs, (both conventional or organic). Compost provides the plants with all the nutrients they need, and they are able to use these nutrients, as they need them. I remember Wali likened this process to a nutrient "buffet". This is in stark comparison to chemically fertilized farms where plants are force-fed fertilizers that create an imbalance in their natural growing cycle.

Here at Winter Green Farm we compost using Biodynamic methods. These methods, inspired by lectures given by Rudolf Steiner in 1924, include the application of several herbal preparations to aid and enhance the compost pile. As part of the after hours compost session, those that attended treated the 2013 compost piles with these preparations.

We make the compost in late spring by first collecting manure from our cattle herd. The cows spend a few months during the winter in the barn, where we bed them down twice a week with straw. In the spring we scoop out the straw/manure mixture and combine this with green chop. Green chop is grass that we cut in the morning with as much dew as possible to provide the compost ingredients with proper moisture. If the mixture is too dry, the temperature will get too high. We strive for temperatures

at 140-145° F. The mixture is laid out in long windrows that are 9' at the base and no more than 5' high. The piles are then turned five times in a fifteen-day period to meet current organic standards. The piles are turned with a compost turner, check out Wali's video on YouTube for a first hand account of this! You can find it by the title: Turning Biodynamic Compost at Winter Green Farm.

The compost will continue to work it's decomposing magic throughout the summer. Wali will check the piles at least two times a week. He checks their temperature, the feel and smell, moisture content, and gives an overall visual assessment of the piles. He wants the piles to be hot enough to sterilize weed seeds and kill pathogens, but not too hot as to kill the beneficial bacteria that are needed to break down the organic matter. He wants the feel of the compost to be that of a wrung out sponge, not soggy, but not too dry, and the smell to be rich and earthy.

We will cover the piles in the winter with tarps to prevent nitrogen run-off from the rain. In the spring, the compost will be ready. It is then loaded into a manure spreader and applied to the fields to be tilled into the soil. We apply ten tons of compost per acre of cultivated field.

There are so many factors that contribute to making a successful compost pile. There are many variables based on the ingredients that go into the piles, and some years make better compost than others. Wali has kept extensive records over the years and continues to strive for perfection in the compost realm of the farm.

When I walk through the fields I feel it is apparent that the soil is healthy. The plants are strong, with dark green leaves, thick stems, standing upright in the summer sun. Of course we have our challenges, as do all farms, but the thirty years of continual addition of compost and thoughtful fertility management shows. Working in the greenhouse we always try to give the plants the best start possible, but we always have a sigh of relief when they are all transplanted into the fields, knowing that our "babies" will be well taken care of. The plants grow to be vibrant vegetables before our eyes, and the cycle of life at the farm continues.