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# THE WSU ORGANIC STANDARD

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## Summer Crops and Something New: Okra!

The warm season crops are upon us with the onset of long hot days and even a couple nights above 60 degrees. The summer squash, cucumbers, tomatoes, and beans are all racing along now, maturing almost faster than we can harvest. Last week the remainder from the first corn seeding set tassels, indicating there may be hope for the bulk of our planting which went in about 10 days after the first. You can expect ears about 18-24 days after the first ear silks show. And I've actually seen some of the pie pumpkins starting to turn from dark green to orange. There's still not much happening in the winter squash, but we might get some surprises.

The long skinny cucumbers that have been in the large shares are an Asian variety called Suyo Long, grown on trellis lines in the large hoophouse. These beauties have small spines on the skin that easily rub off when washing and lend themselves to cool summer salads. We are just now starting to harvest the lemon cucumbers which are small golf ball sized yellow slicers. And there are some pickling cucs as well that we are learning how to grow this year.

A new summer crop for us this year is okra. I've always been intimidated by this vegetable that's largely unknown in the northern states. But one of our springtime students recommended we start some in the greenhouse. We'd also had a few requests from customers, so we gave it a try. The plants did well in the greenhouse and we managed to find room for them in the big hoophouse when the tomatoes were going in. I've had to do some research on okra, and turned to one of my vegetable cookbooks that also provides growing recommendations, *The Garden-Fresh Vegetable Cookbook* by Andrea Chesman. This book breaks down all the garden vegetables by

season and provides some history, growing tips, general cooking suggestions and great detailed recipes. Okra is in the hibiscus family, and you wouldn't know it until you see the plant's amazing flower. The variety we have produces a gorgeous creamy yellow flower with a deep violet center that then turns to the actual fruit. The little okras grow upright pointing their tip to the sky, and each plant seems to continue to flower and produce pods regularly. Chesman recommends harvesting the pods young and we've confirmed this at the farm with taste tests. As the pods get larger they get very tough and fibrous, and the gelatinous liquid many associate with okra increases. A small young pod eaten raw has the texture of a thin skinned pepper but with a unique cucumber like flavor with a nice bite.

Unfortunately we didn't grow enough plants to provide for the CSA, but we are selling the okra at the Wednesday market and Friday pickup at the farm. Give them a try and enjoy the summer.

--Brad

### U-Pick Flowers for Fridays!

Beginning this week, the farm will offer U-Pick Flower bouquets to members on **Fridays, from 3-6pm.**

Remember, so that everyone has the chance to enjoy this, we ask you pick one **reasonable-size** bouquet per membership per week. Check in at the shed for scissors and details to get started.



This week I've got two different recipes for green beans, one of the few vegetables (though not technically a vegetable but a legume) that my seven-year-old will devour without hesitation—with or without cooking. For this reason, we don't usually do much to our green beans beyond steam them. However, the braised beans recipe is not only delicious, but also incorporates other produce available this time of year, and the fresh bean pickle is a delicious treatment for beans as well as many other vegetables coming our way, including thinly sliced red onion, beets—and okra! These are refrigerator—or fresh—pickles, so while they're simpler and quicker to prepare than processed pickles, they do require refrigeration. While I've read refrigerator pickles will last up to a month, I tend to make them in quantities that are sure to disappear within a week or two at most.

--Jamaica

### **Braised Beans and Summer Veggies**

*Adapted from [www.eatingwell.com](http://www.eatingwell.com)*

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil	1 medium zucchini, sliced in half moons, ~ ¼ inch thick
1 small onion, halved and sliced	
1 clove garlic, minced	1 medium tomato, diced
1 tablespoon fresh oregano, finely chopped (or 1 teaspoon dried)	¼ teaspoon salt (or to taste)
½ cup white wine or chicken/vegetable stock	¼ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
1 pound green beans, trimmed	¼ cup shredded Parmesan cheese

Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add onion and oregano and cook, stirring, until softened and beginning to brown, about 2 minutes. Add garlic, stir a moment and add wine (or stock) and bring to a boil. Add green beans, reduce heat to a simmer, cover, and cook for 10 minutes, stirring once or twice. Add summer squash (or zucchini) and tomatoes and continue cooking until the vegetables are tender, 8 to 10 minutes more. Season with salt and pepper. Serve sprinkled with Parmesan.

### **Fresh Pickled Green Beans (or other vegetables of choice)**

*From The Art of Simple Food, by Alice Waters (Clarkson Potter Publishers, 2007) .*

Green beans, trimmed, enough to fill at least one quart-jar	4 thyme sprigs
1 ½ cups white wine vinegar	½ a dried red pepper or a pinch of chile flakes
1 ¾ cups water	½ teaspoon coriander seeds
2 ½ tablespoons sugar	2 whole cloves
½ bay leaf	1 garlic clove, peeled and cut in half
	1 big pinch of salt

Combine all ingredients *except* for the beans (or other vegetable) in a medium saucepan and bring to a boil. This is the pickling brine. Once the brine is boiling, add the green beans and boil until they are cooked but still a bit crisp. Using a large slotted spoon, remove beans to a clean quart jar. If you are doing other vegetables, add them to the brine and repeat the process. When finished, pour brine over the jarred vegetables to cover. Let cool and store in the refrigerator for 1-2 weeks.