



# High Ground Organics Community Supported Agriculture

Week 2: March 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> 2012

## Why the Plastic Liner Bag? from Jeanne

Plastic bags have been in the news this week, as Santa Cruz banned stores from giving people plastic bags to carry home their purchases. We have had a few comments from CSA subscribers about the plastic liner bags that we use in the CSA boxes, wondering why we use them. This is a topic that we have thought a lot about and have actually reduced our packaging a lot in the past year. We wish it were as easy as eliminating the plastic bags altogether, but have found that the issue is more complicated than that.

First, the primary purpose of the liner bag is not for people to be able to carry their produce home easily (though this also has an environmental benefit -- see below). The bag actually does an impressive job of keeping the produce fresh in the boxes during the delivery day. The produce is picked, generally the day before delivery, washed and kept in the cooler overnight. When we pack for the CSA early in the morning, the produce comes from the cooler with some water from the washing still clinging to it. The perforated liner bag keeps the produce moist and cool through the day, even if you end up picking up your veggies late that evening. We want your produce to be as fresh and full of nutrients as when we picked it, and vegetables can wilt quickly if they are not kept moist. Adding the liner bag to our boxes several years ago led to a vast improvement in the quality of the produce that our subscribers receive and we are unwilling to give up this benefit.

Believe it or not, the plastic bags have a compelling environmental argument going for them as well. When we started using the liner bags in the boxes, we cut down on our largest source of packaging waste, the boxes. We are now able to reuse the boxes nearly twice as many times before they become too weak to stack, because they are protected by the bags. Also, before the liner bags, we recovered far fewer boxes back from the pick-up sites (people were more likely to take the boxes home). I have not done the calculations, but I would be very surprised if on balance, the plastic bags don't come out orders of magnitude better environmentally, when you take into consideration the resources, energy use and resulting pollution to create the boxes and dispose of them. From the cost standpoint the plastic bags are a real winner, as the boxes cost us more than \$1.25 each, compared to just pennies for a bag.

Consider this: Even with our plastic liner bags and the plastic portioning bags we use for salad mix and occasional other vulnerable items, receiving your vegetables this way almost certainly uses less plastic and other packaging than buying them from the store. The produce industry uses packaging to transport the vegetables to the store, at which point the original packaging is thrown away and then the store or the consumer puts the vegetables in another bag in the

produce section of the store. To get the equivalent amount of produce from the store, you might end up using 5 or 6 plastic bags, even if they go in a paper or cloth bag at the checkout counter. In the wholesale trade, a single use of the waxed boxes like the ones we use is the norm to take the produce to the store or distributor. We get an average of 15 uses out them. To extend the environmental comparison further, there are of course the energy savings from cutting down the average number of miles your vegetables have travelled to reach you.

While we are unwilling to part with the liner bag for all these reasons, we have made a lot of progress in cutting down our use of the portioning bags within the box. We cut our use of plastic portioning bags about in half from 2010 to 2011. Some items still go in a plastic bag, like the salad mix and broccoli di cicco this week, to keep them contained or protected. But the liner bag helps us to be able to do without individual bags for many vegetables, and whenever it is feasible we put items either bunched or loose, like the celery root this week.

You can help us save resources by carefully folding your boxes and leaving them neatly stacked at the pick-up sites. (Be careful not to tear the tabs when collapsing the box. The best method is to turn the empty box upside down, grasp the edges of the box bottom with your fingers, and use your thumbs to squeeze the tabs out of the slots.) The boxes also last longer if they are stored out of the sun and weather.

We will keep thinking about these issues and appreciate your suggestions and feedback.

## This Week

**Salad Mix**  
**Carnival Squash**  
**Red Russian Kale**  
**Bunched Chantenay**  
**Carrots**  
**Fennel**  
**Celery root\***  
**Broccoli di Cicco\***

**Flowers: Sweet William, Calendula, and Tulips**

## Veggie Notes

Store everything but the Carnival Squash in the refrigerator. **Salad Mix** is a mix of 4 different baby lettuces. It is triple washed and ready to eat. **Chantenay carrots** are big sweet carrots that are great for either cooking or eating raw. **Red Russian Kale** is an heirloom kale variety that is making a comeback in popularity. To prepare, strip the leaves from the stem with your fingers. You can eat the stems, but they need to cook longer so chop them small and put them in 5 minutes before you add the leaves. An easy sauté with garlic, onions, or leeks will work for this. When you add the leaves add a little water with them, cover the pot and let it cook ten minutes or until the greens are as tender as you like them. **Carnival Squash** is like a large sweet dumpling squash. These work nicely cut in half (with a strong knife), seeds scooped out, and baked upside down with 1/2 of water in the baking dish. Cook them until the flesh is soft and has started to caramelize. Chef Andrew suggests stuffing the squash with a sauté of kale,

onions, mushroom and garlic tossed with wheat berries, then topping with cheese and breadcrumbs. **Broccoli De Cicco** is like thin stems, leaves, and small florets of broccoli (it's actually an Italian heirloom type of broccoli). You eat the whole thing, stem, leaves, florets, and all. Chef Andrew says: "You can just chop the entire thing up after washing, and then sauté it, or you can fire the stalks, then florets, and add the leaves at the end for a more uniform degree of "doneness". When in a hurry, Broccoli di Cicco is a favorite of mine for pasta dishes because I can just chop everything up and sauté it with onions and garlic, add some chili flakes and lemon and then add the pasta. Add in some of the pasta water and reduce it a little and you have your sauce and vegetable all in one."

**Fennel** can be used in soups, grated raw in salads, or as its own feature vegetable. Generally you cut the stems and leaves away and use the bulb, though the stems are tasty to munch on or to use in soup stock. My favorite way to use fennel is to roast it with onions. Trim the fennel bulbs and cut them in wedges through the root end (thirds or sixths). Slice an onion in thin wedges. Drizzle olive oil in a baking dish, add the fennel and onions and coat the whole thing generously with more oil. Sprinkle with salt and pepper, cover with foil, and bake at 400 for 30 minutes. Remove the foil and continue to bake another 15-30 minutes, until the fennel and onions are soft and caramelized.

**Celery Root, The Ugly Duckling (by Andrew Cohen):** It's funny, because in France the word "céléri" refers to the celery root (aka. "céléri-rave"), whereas it is always "céléri branche" for the stalks Americans know and crunch for everything from dips to diets. Celery root is also known as celeriac, and is one of three forms of celery; root, branch (or stalk), and leaf, but they are all variants of the same plant. Interestingly enough, I see descriptions of celeriac that say it is milder than celery, and some say stronger. Here is my take on the flavor of celeriac--I think it tastes more intense, as if the flavor of celery were compacted, but it also is as if you were tasting it from far away, like hearing a song clearly, but from the next room. Where celery can have a strong sharpness to it, celeriac has an intense celery flavor, but without the bite that celery often has, especially the darker stalks. Another difference between the two is the texture--where celery is wet and crunchy, celeriac has a texture similar to turnip or carrot, and when cooked it can take on a smooth velvety texture. It makes a great soup, and I like to add it to roast vegetables, too. It is great as part of a gratin too. Raw, it has a lot of character and is toothsome, making a wonderful addition to slaws and salads. It also makes a great salad alone, as in the famous céleri remoulade, which is grated celeriac dressed in a Dijon mustard spiked mayonnaise dressing and is standard in bistros all over France. Hot, it pairs well with other roots, and with apples, chestnuts, and mushrooms. Cold, think apples, lemon based dressing, and peppery greens like rocket, mizuna, and peppergrass.

**Prepping Celeriac:** When it comes to peeling these roots, leave the peeler in the drawer. Use a sturdy knife to cut off the top and bottom of the root, and then use the knife to cut from the top down along the sides, peeling the side away from you. If this is intimidating, cut the root into half through the equator or quarters and then peel it. Celeriac will oxidize almost immediately, so have some water with lemon juice or vinegar handy and pop the peeled bits into the water if you are concerned about keeping it pale. To avoid getting the celeriac waterlogged, though, keep immersion time short.

## Basic Celeriac Salad, from Chef Andrew E Cohen

I combine this with young lettuces, or with sharper greens such as rocket and pepper cress.

### Ingredients:

1 medium to large Celery Root, peeled and julienned on the medium blade of a mandolin.

### Dressing:

2 TBS fresh squeezed lemon juice	2 TBS rice vinegar
1 shallot, minced finely	Salt and pepper to taste
1 tsp. minced thyme	12 TBS olive oil

Make the dressing: Put the shallot, salt and pepper, and thyme into a largish non-reactive bowl, and add in the lemon juice and vinegar. Allow to steep for 10 minutes. Drizzle in the oil slowly, whisking vigorously all the time until you have a nicely emulsified dressing. Taste for balance and make any needed adjustments. If you are not sure, dip some of the celeriac into the dressing and taste it that way. Pour a small amount of dressing into a non-reactive bowl and add the celeriac. Toss to coat well and allow celeriac to marinate at room temperature for a ½ hour. Taste for seasoning.

The salad can now be used or stored in the refrigerator at this point. If storing, add a little extra dressing to ensure the celeriac is well coated. Reserve the rest of the dressing. It will keep in the refrigerator for a couple days before losing texture and flavor. When using after it has been store a while, shake off the dressing from the container along with any liquid that may have accumulated and dress with fresh vinaigrette for best flavor.

## Whole Roasted Chantenay Carrots, from Chef Andrew E Cohen

1 bunch of Chantenay carrots, or as many as you want, stems removed, and washed well. <i>Do not peel!</i>	Olive oil, enough to coat the carrots well
Salt and pepper to taste	6-8 large sprigs of fresh thyme, or enough to go under all the carrots

Heat oven to 375°F. Place a rack into a roasting pan, and lay the thyme on the rack. Oil the carrots so they are coated all over. Salt and pepper them, and transfer them to the rack. Place the rack in the center of the oven and roast the carrots for 50 minutes. At this point, the carrots should be a nice golden color, with the skin looking like wrinkled parchment. A sharp knife should slip into the carrot at the widest point easily, telling you the carrots are done. Serve now or save for later.

**Chef's Notes and Tips:** After 50 minutes, the flavor of my carrots was bright with some toasty, woody overtones to them. I let some cook another 15 minutes and tried those. They had a deeper flavor with an almost smoky quality, with flavor and texture that reminded me of roast butternut squash. I recommend playing with the times to see what the flavors are like. Using different herbs, such as rosemary or sage for roasting will give nice variation.

*Everything in your box and the flowers are certified organic. This week the celery root, broccoli di cicco and some fennel are from Coke Farm. All other vegetables were grown by High Ground Organics. Organic flowers are from the Thomas Farm.*