I know you may be thinking that August 23rd is a bit early for winter squash. I’m thinking it too. But still, these delicatas are as ready as can be. Sweet and yummy and wanting to be eaten. Some are already showing signs of storage stress from the two weeks they have been curing in the hoop house at the farm. These winter squash are always the first to come on and the first to go. They don’t keep long under the best of conditions, and all this damp, mold-promoting rain has not been good for them. We separated them out into just-about-perfect squash and those that are starting to have spots. You should have one of each in your share. Eat the spotty one first. Just use a sharp, pointy knife to cut out the spots before you cook it.

How to cook a delicata? My preferred method is to stuff it. First, cut it in half lengthwise and scoop out the seeds. Then stuff it with your favorite stuffing (celery, croutons, onions, thyme, veggie stock...) and bake it in the oven until you can push a fork through the skin. When I make this dish, I eat it skin and all. If you don’t want to stuff it, after you remove the seeds, you can steam the squash and just eat the flesh scooped from the skin. Or you can cube it and roast it with some cipollini onions, garlic, and carrots coated with olive oil, salt, and thyme. It’s fall and winter food, I know. It’s also good in the rain!

(continued on the back)
Recipes

To be true, I have not used a pesto recipe for many years. I just put basil in the blender with as much olive oil as I need in order to keep the blades turning. Then I throw in some garlic, walnuts, and Parmesan cheese along with a dash of salt and process a bit longer. Usually it works out pretty well. Sometimes better than others. When I was growing up, my mom would periodically make a huge batch of spaghetti sauce and freeze it for use throughout the year. She never consulted a recipe. My dad was the final judge on the quality of the sauce. He always judged it favorably, but no sauce was ever as good as “the one she made that one year.” That was “the best sauce ever.” As far as I know, she still has not topped it. That’s the danger of not using a recipe. It’s hard to make exactly the same thing twice. No matter how you make your pesto into the future, here are some recipes to get you started.

Use pesto on pasta, in place of tomato sauce on pizza, or as a sandwich spread. If you make more than you can use in a week, freeze it for use in the winter.

Walnut Pesto

3 Tbs. walnuts  
2 cups fresh basil leaves  
2 cloves garlic  
3 Tbs. grated Parmesan cheese  
1 pinch sea salt  
½ cup olive oil

Combine walnuts, basil, garlic, Parmesan, and salt in a food processor and process to a puree. With the machine running, add the oil slowly. Scrape down the sides and process again. Store pesto in the refrigerator in an airtight jar. Keep pesto covered with a layer of oil to prevent the surface from browning.

Pine Nut Pesto

2 cups fresh basil leaves  
1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil  
2 Tbs. pine nuts  
2 cloves garlic, coarsely chopped  
1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese  
salt and pepper to taste

In a food processor or blender, process basil, olive oil, pine nuts, garlic, and Parmesan cheese until just smooth, leaving some texture. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Use immediately or refrigerate for up to 1 week.

Goat Cheese Pesto

1 cup basil leaves, loosely packed  
7 cloves garlic  
6 pieces oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes  
3 Tbs. pine nuts, toasted  
2 Tbs. grated Parmesan cheese  
2 Tbs. balsamic vinegar  
1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil  
1 pinch salt and ground black pepper  
3 ounces creamy goat cheese

Place all ingredients except goat cheese in a food processor. Process about 10 seconds until pureed. Add goat cheese and process until just blended. David Schy of Hubbard Street Grill uses this mixture on grilled vegetable sandwiches. It goes easy on the pine nuts and goat cheese, and is flavorful enough to spread thinly.

(continued from “In the Bag”)  

Unfortunately, these cipollinis are no exception. While they are supposed to be a small, flat onion, they are not supposed to be quite this small. You won’t need to quarter them when you cook them! I asked our worker share Deb for advice on how to prepare this once-a-year treat. (Deb is a wealth of ideas on delicious, though less common, vegetables.) She said that she plans to roast them with reduced apple cider, salt, and pepper, and serve them with roasted chicken and/or polenta. The reduce apple cider is just apple cider cooked down to about ¼ of its original volume. Deb said that she reduces apple cider when it is just about to go bad. Once reduced, it will keep in the fridge for a good, long time.

There’s one more once-a-year treat in the share this week. It’s edamame! These fresh, green soybeans are one of the highlights of the growing season. I don’t do anything fancy with them. I just boil them in a little salt water for 5 to 10 minutes until the bean is soft inside the pod. Then I drain them and sprinkle them with salt and eat them all one-by-one,ipping the bean from the pod with my teeth. I hear they are good for you, but I cannot say that matters much given how good they taste!

This would be a good week for polenta pie. I’ve included a recipe for this dish in the newsletter for several of the past few years, so I will not repeat it exactly, but here’s the basic idea. First make a sauce with all those tomatoes you have ripening on your counter: Sauté some garlic and onions in olive oil; then add some chopped sweet peppers and sauté a bit longer; finally add cubed tomatoes (and as much cubed summer squash as you can!) and let the sauce reduce. In a separate pan, sauté another onion in olive oil; add chopped (and slightly wet) chard, some tamari, and some apple cider vinegar. Cover and cook the chard until it is soft. In yet another pan, cook the polenta according to the instructions until it is thick, but still pourable. Pour half the hot polenta into a baking dish, layer half the chard on top of the polenta, then half the tomato sauce on top of that. Repeat the layers and top the whole thing with cheese. I prefer grated garlic cheddar. Bake in the oven at 350 degrees until the cheese is slightly browned. Make a lot, because the leftovers are even better than the original serving!