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THE WSU ORGANIC STANDARD

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Carrots: *From Seed to Salad*

The carrots are finally here! Hopefully you noticed the first orange bunches of precious carrots in your boxes last week. Everyone around here has been excited for the return of one of our favorite root crops. The carrots will again be in the shares this week and hopefully for the rest of the season. The carrots were seeded the first week of March and did great this spring under the protection of the hoophouse.

Carrot seeding is tricky! The seed is very small and oblong shaped, lending itself to being over-seeded by our mechanical seeder. Luckily the seed companies have figured out that if you coat the seeds with clay, they can be shaped into close to perfect spheres, traveling much better through the seeders.

The problem with over seeding is that we then have to go back through the planting

and thin individual plants (two fingers between each plant is good) so the remaining ones have enough room to grow into nice sized carrots. We're experimenting with the more expensive coated seeds this year to see if we can cut back on thinning labor. The seeds are small and only go in the ground about ½ to ¾ of an inch and take almost two weeks to germinate. It's critical for the soil to stay moist until germination, so we either do a good job with watering or in the early spring cover the plantings with floating row cover to help hold in the moisture until the irrigation can be turned on.

Once the carrots are up it's just a matter of keeping them weeded, usually twice for each planting. They are slow to get started but after the first 6 weeks they really start to size up. We seed carrots and beets

every other week at the farm and need to plant about 75 feet of a bed (4 rows per bed) for one week of harvest for the CSA and farmers market. That's a lot of carrots! After these first few weeks of carrots in the CSA, we will alternate with beets every third week. Beets grow very similarly and are planted in the same bed with the carrots.

I also wanted to give an honorable mention to the gorgeous deep red head lettuce that was in the box last week. That was Merlot, one of my all time favorite lettuces. I've been growing that one at home for many years but this was the first time to do a large planting for the CSA and it was a real thrill to see 150 of those lovely creatures all together in the field. The greens sure love this cool rainy weather! Enjoy.

--Brad

A Bit about the Hoophouse

You probably won't see too many other fresh carrots at the markets right now because the field carrots still aren't ready. We are harvesting these from our big hoophouse and won't be into our field carrots for probably two more weeks. The hoophouses have been a great help in allowing us to get some earlier crops to maturity sooner than we could in the field. The first carrot plantings outside went in around the middle of March, and while they are looking great, they would never be able to mature as quickly as with the extra heat and protection from the wind. The small white turnips were also from the hoop house!

This week brings two grate salad recipes—that is, two salads that require a lot of grating, though the results will be worth it! Those of you familiar with the vegetarian cookbook, *Laurel's Kitchen*, might have had the carrot salad recipe below. If not, you're in for a treat. Unlike typical carrot salads, this one uses orange and lemon juice in place of a creamy dressing. It's a great one to have on hand in the fridge—it keeps well and makes an excellent addition to lunches!

Another special crop in this week's box is kohlrabi. Kohlrabi (loosely translated from German to "cabbage-turnip") is another member of the very large *Brassica*, or cabbage, family. Its main stem is spherical, and looks somewhat like a large turnip. While the leaves can be enjoyed sautéed or braised, kohlrabi is primarily grown for its large, round stem, which grows just above the soil line. It's flavor and texture is similar to broccoli stalks. It can be cut into cubes and steamed or roasted, or sliced and added raw to salads and veggie and dip trays. Both white and purple varieties of kohlrabi are grown and over the course of the season, so we'll have a chance to enjoy both!

--Jamaica

Kohlrabi-Apple Slaw

(This recipe calls for a ¼-cup of cream—for a lighter dressing, try substituting plain yogurt.)

1 lb. kohlrabi, grated	½ teaspoon sugar
2 apples, grated	Salt and pepper, to taste
¼ cup cream	Chopped fresh mint, to taste
1 Tablespoon fresh lemon juice	
½ Tablespoon Dijon mustard	

Whisk the cream until it is just fluffy. In a separate small bowl, whisk together the lemon juice, mustard, sugar, salt and pepper, and mint, and continue mixing until the ingredients are well-incorporated. Then, stir the mixture into the cream. Pour over the grated apple and kohlrabi and stir together. Enjoy!

Disappearing Carrot Salad, adapted from *Laurel's Kitchen*, by Laurel Robertson, Carol Flinders and Brian Ruppenthal (Ten Speed Press, 1986)

¼ cup walnut pieces	½ cup orange juice
1 tablespoon shredded coconut (unsweetened)	½ cup raisins
2 cups grated carrot	Salt to taste
1 apple, cored and grated	1 ½ teaspoons grated fresh ginger
Juice and zest of ½ lemon	

Toast the walnut pieces and coconut in a 300 degree oven, the walnuts for about 10 minutes and coconut for 5. Meanwhile combine all other ingredients. When the coconut and walnuts have cooled, add those to the salad too. Mix well and serve.