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Dear members,

July 6 2011

Cashew Ginger Dressing – submitted by member Minal Shah

½ c cashews 1 Tblsp hot pepper sesame oil (she recommends Eden brand)

1 small piece ginger Salt

2 Tblsp Olive oil apple cider vinegar (didn't say how much)

Put is all in a blender and well.....blend!

She mentioned this is good on raw gailon and kale. I bet it would be good on just about anything – like the **kohlrabi** you are getting with your share this week. What to do with kohlrabi? Raw is definitely best – it is sweeter that way. If you cook it, just do so gently, like steaming. Raw kohlrabi can be cubed or sliced, then marinated, or just have a little dressing on the side to dip in. It is also wonderful grated with some cabbage for a coleslaw, could also add some carrot as well. And in case you think that kids won't eat it, in 2005, when we did a survey, kid's voted kohlrabi as their favorite vegetable. One mother discovered that her attitude when faced with an unfamiliar vegetable did a lot to determine if her daughter would want to eat it. The first time she went home with kohlrabi, she pulled it out, grinned, and said "Look what we got from the Farm – it looks like a flying saucer!" The first thing out of her two year olds mouth was "Can I eat it?"

Crop report: the gailon is pretty much gone now until September. It is basically a late spring and early fall crop. The summer crops are starting to make noises. I can almost hear them grow – lovin' the warm weather. If you don't have summer squash this week (there are some, but just the first little bit) you will next week. Carrots and beets will grow faster now. The corn is about mid-calf high, but can grow astonishingly fast when provided with the BTU's from the sun and warmer weather, as do the tomato plants. Remember the picture of the little eaten tomato plant I put in the last newsletter? That was taken just a month ago – our diligence with the potato bait paid off and we lost very few plants. They are now waist high, bushy and healthy, loaded with blossoms – so when does that translate into tomatoes? Depends on (you guessed it) those BTU's again. They had a late start this year too. I think it'll be August – don't know When in August.

Organic: why better? We all know that the absence of poisonous pesticides and herbicides is the obvious benefit, but there are equally harmful things associated with chemical fertilizers, such as nitrates, phosphorous sources contaminated with heavy metals, and the absence of micro-nutrients which are needed for a healthy vegetable, therefore a healthy body. The difference in organic begins with the soil. One teaspoon of good organic soil contains millions of micro-organisms as well as larger things like beetles, earthworms, etc. These work on breaking down organic materials like natural fertilizers, compost, crop residue and turning it into nutrients that plants can use. Organic fertilizer is not water soluble and requires "digestion" to make these nutrients available. So things that would be harmful in their raw state (such as nitrates) are in a different form once they get into your food. Not so with chemical fertilizers. They are made to be water soluble and are taken up by the plant in that form. They lack the valuable micro-nutrients that organically produced fertilizer has. Nitrates are ammonia based and are taken up in their raw form and concentrated in the plant tissues, as are any pollutants like lead, cadmium and arsenic among others. Chemical fertilizers are a prime pollutant of our water supplies. Most of our agricultural production districts have polluted wells. Farmers and their families have the highest incidence of brain, breast and testicular cancers of any other occupational group.

Because of the rampant use of pesticides and herbicides over the past few decades, the soils in chemically farmed land has very little if any beneficial soil life, because they too are killed by pesticides. So water soluble fertilizers are the Quick fix needed to be able to grow on dead soil. There are many studies showing the increased nutrient content on organically produced food. Interestingly studies also show that damage from certain insects is less on organic crops than chemical crops, despite the use of pesticides. Unfortunately, the remedy is often to increase the frequency of pesticide application. Insects such as aphids will attack the weaker, more bitter plants. And, as anyone who routinely eats organic knows, there is a definite difference in flavor – the chemicals make the taste more bitter.

Areas now called “dead zones” exist in agricultural areas in California, Florida, and the mid-west. These areas have been so polluted that NOTHING lives there, in the soil, or out of it. And they are growing. The pollutants have leached down into ancient aquifers. Farmers who pay attention to the health of the soil are like builders who make sure the foundation of the building is secure – it doesn’t matter how much fancy stuff you build on top of that foundation is faulty.

So the next time you are tempted by that lush dark green hot-house basil, think again. Unless it is organic, you’re getting a lot more than you’re paying for – a hefty dose of nitrates. Greenhouse plant culture increases the nitrate levels that plants get from chemical fertilizers.

What to do? Well, you are doing a lot already. Keeping our local farmland is urgently important to the local population, whether they realize it or not. By far, the majority of small farms in King County are organic. Also, by eating direct from a farm, you are getting the highest levels of nutrients possible, as well as live enzymes (which decrease the longer the time from harvest) which help your body utilize all those wonderful things. Also, eating “with the seasons” has been purported to be more beneficial. After a long winter, dark green leafy vegetables are just what we need.

And when you can’t buy directly from a farm, try to enroll in a winter program (such as our Winter Share Program). You can save money and the produce is direct from the depot – many days fresher. Or take advantage of organic produce which can now be found in most supermarkets. And if you must buy an item that is not organic, how can you determine which is the worst? A rule is that if the difference in price is wider between the organic vs. the non-organic, that item is not one you want. Why? Because that price differential is due to the ability of a non-organic grower to use more chemicals on that particular type of crop, hence the lower price.. Potatoes are a good example. They can be difficult to grow organically on a large scale, because there are so many pests that attack them, and the self life due to sprouting is limited. But chemical farmed potatoes can be grown on fumigated soil (that is where they “inject” pesticides right into the soil), then coated with fungicide to prevent the planted pieces from rot, dosed with chemical fertilizer, then pesticides as they grow, also herbicides several times to prevent weeds, then along comes a “defoliant” (yes, it is the familiar “agent orange”) to get rid of those pesky vines so they can be dug. Not done yet – more fungicide to prevent after harvest rotting, AND another chemical is applied to retard sprouting so they can be stored longer. Whew! If you want to experiment, buy a couple of 10 lb bags of “conventional” potatoes and put them in a closed in place where it gets warm (like your car) for a couple of days. Then open it – what do you smell?

OK, got long winded – will continue another time. The only good part I can think of is that we don’t have to work in those chemical fields. Millions do. “Happy Farm Workers are Just Dying to Grow Your Food” might be a catchy title if I’m in the mood to write about it.....

More later –

PS. Help support our local farmers and provide good nutrition to those who do not have access like we are lucky enough to have – Small donations to Farms For Life add up!!! But we’re not getting them. 98% of donations are spent supplying food. Farms for Life is all-volunteer (except for the old van which wants gas and oil and stuff)