



Gathering Together Farm

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CSA Newsletter—Week 13

## Como una Flor—the art of making beautiful bunches

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Welcome to the first week of September! With the cold nights that we've been having, things like tomatoes, cucumbers, and summer squash that we would harvest every single day are now growing so slowly that we can only harvest a small amount every two or three days. Picking all of these bulk items is most definitely a summer task, whereas making bunches of greens and roots is more of a spring and fall gig.

The gold beets in your box reminded me of a day earlier this season out in the field, bunching—you guessed it—gold beets. On this particular day, we had a lot of new people on the crew and we spent our day learning and teaching how to make beautiful, even bunches. For beets and other round roots, we are told to make bunches *como una flor*, like a flower, with one beet in the center and an array of beets around it. As we harvest, we make sure to gently pull the beets from the soil so as not to damage the delicate greens of the smaller beets that we leave behind to keep growing. On that day, we found a gold beet that was uniquely light in color, and we made an exemplary bunch that more than any other was *como una flor*.

But that's just beets! Every single item that we bunch has its own science and art to it. To bunch chard, we wade through the field of bright, rainbow leaves, try to find leaves that are of similar size, and then stack them one on top of the other with a little slap that keeps them from being a floppy mess. To bunch moss parsley, we make sure to rotate the bunch as we make it, forming a perfect little pom pom as we go. To bunch basil, we snap a few stems at a basal node with one hand, always placing the new stems in the center of the bunch so as not to bruise the soft leaves. Carrots fall easily off the bunch, so we always have to make sure to twist the tie around the bunch twice super tight. For cilantro we slip a long knife under the soil to cut under the root, remove the weeds, and bunch from there.

Whatever bunch you're making, your twist tie can't be too low or too high, too tight or too loose; the orientation of the leaves and roots must be just so, so that it turns out beautiful every time. Over the next few weeks as more and more bunched items make it into your box, remember that somebody worked hard to make sure that that one bunch was perfect and beautiful, *como una flor*.

Best, *Laura Bennett*

We'd love to see what you're doing with your CSA box! Tag us on social media @gatheringtogetherfarm!

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## Beet Slaw with Pistachios and Raisins

"The pistachio butter underneath the slaw is like an Asian peanut sauce, bringing a much fuller nut flavor than the pistachios could offer alone. As you eat the dish, the juices from the slaw dissolve the pistachio butter and make a crazy good sort of vinaigrette. Serves 4—adapted from Six Seasons

[https://www.instagram.com/p/BkQfq1hjxrf/?hl=en&taken-by=ji\\_mc](https://www.instagram.com/p/BkQfq1hjxrf/?hl=en&taken-by=ji_mc)

### Ingredients

- 2 garlic cloves, smashed and peeled
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup golden raisins
- 2 Tbsp white wine vinegar (or any acid)
- 1  $\frac{1}{4}$  lb. **gold beets**; mix of colors if you can
- 2 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup lightly packed flat-leaf parsley leaves, basil leaves, or any herb of choice
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup lightly packed mint leaves
- $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp dried chili flakes
- Salt and pepper
- Olive oil
- Pistachio butter (or any nut butter)
- Suggested Additions: cabbage & fennel, sliced thinly

### Directions

- Combine the garlic, raisins, and vinegar in a large bowl and let sit for 1 hour.
- Grate the beets on the large holes of a box grater or cut into fine julienne. Yes, your hands will get stained, but the color fades quickly.
- Remove the garlic from the raisins and discard. And the beets, lemon juice, most of the parsley and mint (save the rest for finishing), and chili flakes. Season with 1.5 tsp salt and lots of black pepper and toss. Let it sit for about 5 minutes and then taste—the slaw should be tart, spicy, peppery, and sweet. Adjust the seasoning, if necessary, then add  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup olive oil. Toss and taste again.
- To serve, plate and top with the slaw. Finish with reserved fresh herbs and a drizzle of olive oil.

## Alice Waters' Ratatouille

A genius recipe from Alice Waters' 2007 cookbook The Art of Simple Food: ratatouille that fusses only where it needs to fuss (over the eggplant), and adds a few smart, modern details -- red chile flakes, a basil bouquet -- that improve on a well-worn classic.

Note: All vegetables conveniently work out to about a pound. Serves 6-8, Prep Time: 20 min, Cook Time: 50 min —Adapted from <https://food52.com/recipes/14155-alice-waters-ratatouille>

### Ingredients

- 1 medium or 2 small **eggplant**, cut into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch dice
- 4 Tbsp olive oil, divided, plus more to taste
- 2 medium **onions**, cut into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch dice
- 4-6 garlic cloves, chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$  bunch basil, tied in a bouquet + 6 basil leaves, chopped
- 1 pinch dried chile flakes
- 2 **sweet peppers**, cut into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch dice
- 3 medium **summer squash**, cut into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch dice
- 3 ripe medium **tomatoes**, cut into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch dice
- Salt to taste

### Directions

1. Toss the eggplant cubes with a teaspoon or so of salt. Set the cubes in a colander to drain for about 20 minutes.
2. Heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a heavy-bottomed pot. Pat the eggplant dry, add to the pan, and cook over medium heat, stirring frequently, until golden. Add a bit more oil if the eggplant absorbs all the oil and sticks to the bottom of the pan. Remove the eggplant when done and set aside.
3. In the same pot, pour in 2 more tablespoons olive oil. Add onions and cook for about 7 minutes, or until soft and translucent. Add the garlic, basil bouquet, dried chile flakes, and a bit more salt.
4. Cook for 2 or 3 minutes, then stir in peppers. Cook for a few more minutes, then stir in summer squash. Cook for a few more minutes, then stir in tomatoes.
5. Cook for 10 minutes longer, then stir in eggplant and cook for 10 to 15 minutes more, until all the vegetables are soft. Remove the bouquet of basil, pressing on it to extract all its flavors, and adjust the seasoning with salt.
6. Stir in the chopped basil leaves and more extra virgin olive oil, to taste. Serve warm or cold.