



Winter CSA
Veggie Box

Palo Alto
5-5-11

[Lettuces](#)
[Orange Carrots](#) x 2 bunches
[cardoon](#)
[agretti](#)
[spigariello](#)
[2 bunches kohlrabi](#) (a red and a green)
[spinach](#)
[strawberries](#)
[lettuce](#)
[English Peas](#)



Cardoon

Disclaimer to the above vegetable list: The list above is approximate. There may be differences in your box. Thank you!

Fridge Management Everything into the fridge except the butternut squash. To eat first: I would eat the chard and collards to make space... and the broccoli and cauliflower before they get too 'cabbagey' from storage. But any of these can hold for a few days at least in the fridge. If space is still at a premium top the onions and toss their greens or make a stock with them.

[This week's Ladybug Postcard:](#) our weekly recipe newsletter with andy's shorter musings

[And yes, we're on facebook.](#) Like us if you do that sort of thing. Andy is now posting photos and thoughts regularly! (not tweeting at this time, we have our limits. ☺)

[Recipes A-Z on our website](#)

Recipes from [Chef Jonathan Miller:](#)

Eating Thistles by Andy Griffin
Cardoon stems
On September 19th, 1832, biologist Charles Darwin passed through the remote Argentine settlement of Guardia Del Monte, and noted that the village marked the southernmost limit of the cardoon infestation on the pampas. Cardoon, or *Cynara cardunculus*, is a big thistle. Darwin had passed by weed patches where cardoons stood as high as a horse's back in thickets that covered hundreds of square miles. This week we're harvesting bunches of cardoon for your CSA share boxes. "Why," you may ask, "is my farm growing a plant that science has described as a pernicious and invasive weed?" I can speak to your doubts but words only go so far, so I'm including a recipe at the end of this history. Cardoons are good food, and the proof is in the gratin.

Cardoon is a sister to the artichoke, but instead of eating the immature flower bud, we eat the petiole, or leaf stalk. Cardoons make flower buds that look like small, spiny artichokes, but you'd have to be hungry to make eating them worth the pain. A number of different cardoon varieties that have been developed by farmers, and most of them have been selected to have few, if any spines. Massed over hundreds of thousands of acres, the way that Darwin encountered them, I'd imagine that cardoons would be a dreary sight indeed, but in a garden setting the plants are beautiful and sculptural. I've found that cardoons offer excellent habitat

for Ladybugs to breed and multiply in, so our cardoon patch not only serves as a food crop, it's also an insectary crop that benefits the rest of our more common vegetables.

Lena in field of cardoon. Cardoons evolved around the rim of the Mediterranean Sea, and people have eaten them for a long time, but Roman gardeners are thought to have been responsible for taming this thistle into a garden vegetable. It was a Roman custom to dip tender, young cardoon stems in a simple sauce of warm olive oil and butter and eat them raw. The bigger stems were typically baked, steamed, or fried. As the Roman Empire expanded, the practice of growing cardoons extended as far north as the climate permitted. The cardoon, like the artichoke, is frost tender, so it didn't become established in colonies like Britannia or northern Gaul, but Roman cardoon recipes found favor in warmer regions. To this day, cardoons are much appreciated in Spain, southern France, and northern Italy.

When the Spanish conquistadores came to South America they brought their long horned cattle and their cardoons with them. A terrestrial age of Taurus dawned as wild cattle multiplied like fleas across the southern plains. Their sharp hooves cut the turf and wore it away, providing a place for feral cardoon seed to germinate. Soon, isolated outcroppings of cardoons metastasized into thorny jungles. The cardoons reacted to their new freedoms by shedding all vestiges of tender domesticity and reverting to their original vicious, spiny habits, just as the feral Spanish cattle grew ever more wily and wicked as they outwitted and outfought the native panthers. The Spaniards had come to America hoping to bring culture to a wild continent. But instead, their civilized companions, the cow and the cardoon, went "native" and reverted to their horny and thorny natures. When gauchos gave chase to descendents of the wild Iberian cattle, hoping to slaughter beef, the longhorns could disappear into oceans of thistles and thorns and be lost to the bolo, the riata, and the corral for good. The dance of progress had taken one step forward and two steps back, and that's an interesting dialectical evolution to ponder.

Photo #1: Cardoon stems.

Photo #2: Cardoon is a thistle. Here's a picture of my daughter as a young girl in the cardoon patch on Mariquita Farm. The plants don't have spines.

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Photos by Andy Griffin

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### **Martin's Cardoon Potato Gratin**

My friend Martin made this, it was delicious! Of course, anything with 1/2 & 1/2 and cheese could be delicious...

8-10 stalks Cardoon  
2-3 medium potatoes  
8 oz grated parmesan cheese  
1 pint half and half or cream  
S & P to taste

Blanch the cardoon stalks in water that has a splash of vinegar or lemon juice until medium tender. You can peel them if you like. We don't. Cut the cardoon stalks in 1/4 inch crescents, across the grain, like you would celery. Peel the potatoes. Cut the potatoes into batons, about like a french fry. Toss the cut, blanched cardoon stalks with the potatoes directly in a gratin dish. Reserve a handful of the cheese for the top and toss the rest of the cheese with the cardoon/potato mixture. Add the pint of half and half (or cream if using.) Season with salt and pepper.

Bake in a 425 oven 40 minutes or so: until golden brown and the potatoes are all the way through.

Photos by Andy Griffin.

### **Storage tips from Chef Jonathan:**

**Strawberries:** if eating the same day you pick them up, then leave on the counter. Do not rinse until just before eating. If eating the following day, put in tupperware that has a lid, and store in the fridge. No coldest drawer.

Absolutely no rinsing until just before eating.  
Eat within 36 hours.

**English Peas:** These will probably arrive in a bag. Just toss them in the fridge in the bag they are in. Not coldest drawer. Eat ASAP

**Cardoon:** Give them a drink and save the huge plastic bag that holds all your veggies to use for the cardoon. If necessary, cut the stalks in half to store them in the fridge. No coldest drawer. Use within the week.

**Kohlrabi:** Remove twisty ties/rubber bands and store in a plastic bag. Use within the week.

**Spinach:** If it comes in a bag, just toss it in the fridge in the bag it comes in. If it is bunched, remove twisty ties and give it a nice rinse, then store in a plastic bag. No coldest drawer.

**Chantenay Carrots:** Top carrots and clean off any mud. Store in plastic bag. Excellent keeper. Coldest drawer OK.

**Lettuces:** Remove twisty ties/rubber bands, give a drink and store loosely in a plastic bag. The sooner you eat them, the sweeter they will be.

**Baby Carrots:** Remove and discard/compost tops, then store the carrots in a plastic bag. Good keepers. Coldest drawer ok.

## RECIPES

From [Chef Jonathan Miller](#):

### Cardoon Gratin



Really diverse and excellent box this week, but let's address our elephant in the room immediately: the Cardoon! I will be the first to admit that I have not shown much love to this vegetable. The

last time I tried it, which was years ago, I quite unsuccessfully put it into a tabbouleh, hoping its artichoke-like flavor might fit nicely into the salad. I'm sure I didn't cook the cardoon properly, so my attempt yielded a stringy, tough cardoon that was completely unappetizing. This year, it was my mission to give it the respect its elder status has earned, so I found two dishes for you that are worth making. Up front, a classic French preparation that is rich and delicious, a creamy gratin. This recipe was mined from an old issue of Saveur, and is apparently a famous dish from Tours, prime cardoon country. Make sure you do not short the cardoon its cooking time. That's the key to making it palatable. Also keep in mind that it acts like a sponge, so be sure the liquid you use to cook it in tastes really good.

3 c cream  
1 c chicken stock  
1 bay leaf  
3 lb cardoon  
1 c gruyere, grated

Put the cream, stock, and bay leaf in a large saucepan and season with salt and pepper.

Trim your cardoons, then slice them into pieces around 2 inches long, immediately dropping them into the cream bath to prevent discoloring.

Heat the cardoons until the cream comes to a boil, then simmer over medium-low heat for about an hour. Remove the cardoon pieces with a slotted spoon, putting them into a gratin/casserole dish and continue to boil the cream until reduced to 3/4 c.

Pour the cream over the cardoons, top with the gruyere, and bake at 350 until the top has colored a little bit, about 30 minutes. Serve warm.

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## Sauteed Cardoon with Thyme and Pine Nuts

Almost all the cardoon recipes I found used a lot of cream and cheese or deep fried the stalk. I wanted to find a method that anyone could eat, not just those of us who never watch what we eat. I discovered a recipe on the [Hunter Angler Gardener Cook blog](#). This is indeed worth making. Remember that cardoon discolors like artichoke hearts do, so make sure it goes immediately into its cooking water after trimming.



- 1 lemon
- 1/2 lb cardoon, trimmed
- 1 onion, halved and thinly sliced
- 2 T olive oil
- 2 T sherry
- 2 T honey
- 1/4 c pine nuts, toasted
- 1 T thyme (fresh)

Bring a pot of salted water to boil and squeeze in the juice of 1 lemon. Cut the cardoon into large pieces and simmer for 45 minutes. Remove and cut into 1/2 inch pieces.

Heat the olive oil in a skillet and add the onion. Saute until softened and beginning to color, then toss in the cardoon for about 2 minutes. Add the sherry and reduce it until it is nearly evaporated, then add the honey, stirring to heat through. Add the pine nuts and cook for another minute or so until the sauce is thick. Remove from heat and season with

salt and pepper, finishing with the thyme. Delicious!

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## Kohlrabi Gratin



Last week I contributed a recipe utilizing raw kohlrabi. This week I'm doing a dish where it gets cooked. Since I had cream and thyme on hand from doing the cardoons, I figured I may as well use it for the kohlrabi, too. These are simple, individual gratins that only take a few minutes to put together, then are baked off for 30 minutes. Make sure you have some good bread to mop up the extra cream! And be sure to use your kohlrabi greens like you would turnip greens. They are tasty!

- 3 small kohlrabi, peeled
- 2 T thyme (fresh)
- 1/2 c grated gruyere
- 1/2-3/4 c cream

Slice the kohlrabi into thin circles, then blanch them in boiling water for just a minute. Butter the bottoms of 4-5 individual ramekins (the 1/2 c size). If your kohlrabi slices don't fit into the ramekins, cut them into half circles. Layer the kohlrabi in the ramekins, seasoning each layer with salt, pepper, and some thyme leaves. When all the kohlrabi is used up, top with a little of the gruyere. Pour in a little cream into each ramekin, but do not submerge the top layer of kohlrabi. Bake at 350 for about 30 minutes until nicely colored and the kohlrabi is soft. Serve warm.

Photos by Shelley Kadota.

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### **Pork Tenderloin with Roasted Carrots**

Here's a nice dish I taught at a cooking class over the weekend, and is great way to use your baby carrots.

1 lb baby carrots  
1 T olive oil  
1 T butter, softened  
2 garlic cloves, sliced  
1 jalapeno, chopped  
1 t honey  
½ t chile powder  
½ t cumin, ground  
¼ t salt

1 pork tenderloin  
2 t oregano, dried  
2 t cumin, ground  
1 t chile powder  
1 t smoked paprika  
1 T salt  
1 T olive oil

Heat the oven to 400. Put the carrots on a sheet pan. Combine the olive oil, butter, garlic, jalapeno, honey, chile powder, cumin and salt in a bowl, mixing with your fingers until it is a paste, then toss with the carrots, making sure the carrots get coated well. Toss and roast until tender, 30 minutes.

Dry the tenderloins. Combine the oregano, cumin, chile powder, smoked paprika, and salt in a bowl, then rub the tenderloins with it. Sear the pork, then finish it in the oven until cooked to your liking, maybe 8-10 minutes. Rest for 5-10 minutes. Slice and serve with the carrots.

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### **Salad of the Week: Quinoa with Snap Peas and Spinach**

1 c quinoa  
1 bunch scallions, sliced thinly  
3-4 oz fresh goat cheese  
8 oz spinach  
8 oz snap peas, blanched  
small handful kalamata olives, pitted  
1 t cumin, freshly ground  
juice of 1 lemon  
2 T white wine vinegar  
4 T mint, chopped  
1/4 c olive oil

Toast the quinoa in a saucepan until nutty and colored. Add 2 c water, a little salt, and bring to a boil. Cover, lower the heat, and steam for 15 minutes or until the quinoa is completely cooked. Rest for 5 minutes. Cool slightly.

If your spinach is mature, slice the leaves into thick julienne. If it is baby spinach, it is fine to use whole leaves in this salad. Cut the snap peas in half or into thirds. Toss the quinoa with the scallions, goat cheese, spinach, snap peas, and olives.

In a small bowl, whisk the cumin, lemon, vinegar, and mint together with a little salt and pepper. Add the olive oil and whisk again. Pour over the salad and toss well. Taste for seasoning and serve at room temperature or chilled.

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**And, more recipes and links from Julia!**

[Girl's Gone Child: Eat Well: Kohlrabi!](#)

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### **Roasted Kohlrabi with Crunchy Seeds**

(Adapted from *Perfect Vegetables* by the Cook's Illustrated Team)

3 medium kohlrabi bulbs, peeled and cut into  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch cubes  
2 Tablespoons olive oil  
2 teaspoons sesame seeds  
1 teaspoon poppy seeds  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon fennel seeds, coarsely chopped  
S & P to taste

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Toss the kohlrabi, oil, seeds, and S & P together in a large bowl until combined. In a single layer spread the mixture onto a rimmed baking sheet. Roast (with rack in middle position), shaking pan occasionally, until the kohlrabi is browned and tender, about 30 minutes. Transfer to a bowl and adjust seasonings to taste, serve immediately.

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### **Stracciatella (Italian spinach egg soup)**

(Adapted from *The Minimalist Cooks at Home* by M. Bittman)

4 cups chicken stock, best available will make this a great soup  
2 cups spinach greens, cleaned and ready to cook  
4 eggs  
4 Tablespoons freshly grated Parmesan cheese  
Small grating of fresh nutmeg (or a pinch from your jar)  
2 Tablespoons minced parsley (optional, only if you have some around)  
S & P to taste

Bring 3 cups of the stock to a boil over med.-high heat in a 6-8 cup saucepan. Beat the remaining stock with the eggs, cheese, nutmeg and parsley until well blended.

When the stock is boiling, adjust heat so that is bubbles lightly but not furiously. Stir in the spinach and stir for just a moment (It should cook fairly quickly), then add the egg mixture in a steady stream, stirring all the while. Stir occasionally until the eggs gather together in small curds, 2-3 minutes.

Taste and add S & P to your liking, then serve. Garnish with a bit more Parmesan if you like.