



August 10, 2002

## This Week at Market

- Summer Squash “Yellow Crookneck”
- Zucchini “Cocozella di Napoli”
- Spaghetti Squash
- Green Beans “Prolific”
- Heirloom Tomatoes “Cherokee Purple”, “Black Krim”, “Tigerella”, “Green Zebra”, “Aunt Ruby’s Green”
- Cucumber “Armenian”
- Carrots “Red Core Chantenay”
- Eggs from Free Range Hens

### **Eggplant and Cucumber Salad**

- 1 large eggplant
- 1/2 cup red onion [chopped]
- 1/4 cup italian parsley [chopped]
- 1 large red bell pepper [diced]
- 2 tomatoes [sliced wedges]
- 1/4 cup diced celery
- 1/2 cup sliced armenian cucumber
- 1 clove garlic [crushed]
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh sweet basil
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar

Roast the Eggplant on a hot charcoal grill or under the broiler until the outside skin is well charred. Let cool and remove the skin. Dice the eggplant into a medium fine size. In a bowl toss with the rest of the ingredients. Chill well then add oil and vinegar before serving. Delicious eaten with Armenian cracker bread.

### **Cucumber and Yogurt Sauce**

- 1 cup plain yogurt
- 1/2 cup cucumber, finely chopped
- 2 T onion, finely chopped
- 1 garlic clove, crushed
- 1 t sugar

Mix all ingredients and chill. Great on Gyros and other “wrap” sandwiches.

# Boánn's Banks

*Sustainable Agriculture Along the Broad River*

Hello! To make room for great quotes below, we'll be succinct: the farm is going great. Next week, we'll begin featuring our heirloom tomatoes. Thanks for coming to

market this week. Eat well!

-- Chris and Eric Wagoner

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## Featured Vegetable

This week's featured vegetable comes by many names. We call them Armenian Cucumbers, but you're just as likely to find them labeled somewhere else as Snake Melons. So what are they, a melon or a cucumber? Both. Botanically, they're a melon. The species is *Cucumis melo* var. *Flexuosus*. Their closest common relative is the honeydew. But when you slice one open, the appearance, smell, and taste will tell you it's a cucumber. It's no surprise to find something that falls on both sides. Cucumbers are closely related to watermelons. Melons are some of the oldest cultivated plants known, with seeds found in five-thousand year old Egyptian tombs. Even King Tut was given melons to take with him through the underworld. Many Egyptian drawings have been found which seem to depict the Armenian Cucumber. Across the way in Babylon, the Armenian Cucumber was known to have been grown in the Hanging Gardens. True cucumbers were domesticated in central Asia during the same time period, where their wild ancestors are still found in abundance. Melons and cucumbers then traveled all throughout Africa, Europe, and Asia, where each region developed varieties all their own. The Armenian Cucumber, the oldest of the lot, was nearly forgotten. Two places kept the strain alive: Armenia (naturally) and Japan, where it's uncommon and known as Uri.

After the crusades, it pops up here and there and has caused quite a stir. Some of my favorite historical mentions come from letters out of colonial Williamsburg: On Aug. 28, 1737 John Custis writes to Peter Collinson in London: "the seeds of the long cucumber you sent me; I planted but none came up; I gave my son 3 seeds which all came up; notwithstanding the excessive drouth he had one more than 3 feet long; to the astonishment of many; several people rid many miles to see it...there are more people begd some of the seed; then 10 cucumbers can afford." A memo in *Hortus Collinsonianus*, p. 60 reads: "I sent seeds of a Turkey cucumber to Mr. Custis in Virginia, in the year 1737; it produced a fruit three feet long and fourteen inches round; grew in one night three inches in length, and people came twenty miles round to visit it." This sensation was mentioned in the August 12-19 edition of the Virginia Gazette: "There grew, this summer, in the Garden of Mr. Daniel Parke Custis, in New Kent County, a Cucumber, of the Turkey or Morocco Kind, which measured a Yard in Length, and near 14 Inches round the thickest Part of it...They are ribb'd almost like a Musk-melon, colour'd like a Water-melon; and taste much like the common Cucumber. Several curious Persons have been to view them, the like having never been seen in these Parts before." The following year another article appears in the Gazette (Aug. 25 - Sept. 1, 1738) responding to an article in a Boston newspaper concerning the original Gazette article. It begins with a quote from the Boston paper and then goes on to insure the veracity of the now famous Virginia cucumber. "'Last Week was cut out of a Garden belonging to Capt. Wells of Cambridge...a Water Melon, that was in circumference, both Ways, a Yard and an Eighth Part of a Yard, which weighed 36 Pounds and 10 ounces...This Rarity we send to Virginia, in Return for their Cucumber.' If the Author of this Paragraph was ingenuous and candid in his Account, we receive his Present very kindly: But if he intended wittidly to impose upon us an overgrown imaginary Watermelon, for a real Cucumber, supposing our Account to be false...we must beg leave to assure him, that the Description we gave of that Cucumber was true; and that from the Seed of it, and others of the same Kind, abundance of them have been propagated in several Gentlemen's Gardens this Year, particularly in That of Mr. Thomas Nelson, Merchant, in York Town, who has one in his Garden, which measur'd (this Day) 40 inches in Length; and has several others 3 Feet long. As we have undeniable Proofs of the Truth of this Account, we venture to send it to the Northward, for Improvement, or Admiration."