

Long autumn means more choices

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The trees are mostly bare, the days are considerably shorter, but autumn just isn't ready to go away this year.

For farmers, that means more work in the fields. For shoppers, that means more choices at the markets.

Sarah Bean of Arctic Organics and the Anchorage Farmers Market (15th Avenue and Cordova Street) says the unusually warm weather is giving crops a new lease on life

"Still enjoying this very long autumn," Bean says. "Now we're finding crops in the field that are having a 'second coming.' The broccoli is lively and delicious again. We'll have broccoli sideshoots this weekend. We've still got baby lettuce mix growing in tunnels houses. Hearty greens like kale, chard and collards are thriving."

More traditional fall items include potatoes. The Beans will be offering German butterball, yellow Finn and Yukon gold in 5-pound bags (\$12) and 10-pound bags (\$22). Those and pimperl, russets and mini mix will also be available by the pound. Other autumn veggies include Brussels sprouts, onions, beets, rutabaga, leeks, cabbage, kohlrabi and daikon.

Other vendors at the market this week include Seldovitsch Family Farm, Johnny Moose Farm, Stockwell Farm, Vanderweele Farm, Turkey Red Cafe and Matanuska Creamery. Saturday is the final Anchorage Farmers Market for the season. It is open 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

A.D. Farms will be at the Northway Mall today and the University Center mall Saturday; both markets are open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Alex Davis will have carrots, beets, potatoes, cabbage, kohlrabi, eggs and jam.

Mark Rempel says, "We thought that the season was about done and then we got spring again. That means we still have a lot of nice greens like kale, cabbage and broccoli but also lettuce, Asian greens, arugula, collards, mustard, green onions and more. Of course, we will have lots of potatoes, carrots, parsnips and snow apple turnips."

The Rempels will be at the Northway Mall from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. today and at Saturday's South Anchorage Farmers Market at the corner of O'Malley Road and the Old Seward Highway.

Other vendors at the South Anchorage Market at their items include:

- The Red Beet with breads made from local vegetables and seeds, all-local yogurt and fresh farmer's cheese. They also will have tasty market pies made from local pork, cheese and onions.
- Glacier Valley Farms will be on hand with cabbages, carrots and green tomatoes. Green tomatoes are great for breeding and frying or making relish.

- VanderWeele Farms also will have carrots, beets, Yukon gold potatoes, onions, red and green cabbage, and cauliflower.
- Stockwell Farms has a great selection of potatoes -- red bliss, German butterballs, Yukon golds and plenty of others. Also fresh from the fields are sweet onions, green onions, Brussels sprouts, chard and other dark leafy greens.
- Arctic Choice will titillate your taste buds one last time with fresh seafood. This will most likely be the last week this year to stock up on fresh mouth-watering halibut, rockfish, cod, coho, clams and oysters. They also will have fresh spot shrimp, but arrive early enough to grab your fill.

Fish are also available at 10th & M Seafoods. Dannon Southall reports that the spot shrimp season is in full swing, with 16/20 fish for \$13.95 per pound. Fresh halibut is available but he says they are becoming very weather dependent. Fresh cod fillets are \$5.95 per pound and rockfish and Dover sole fillets are \$8.85 per pound. "Shellfish are coming in strong as well with live Alaskan oysters from Cordova or Kachemak Bay," Southall says. The oysters are \$9.95 a dozen.

As the season winds down, it's time to start looking at cookbooks for some ideas to use with all the abundance we have this year. I recently picked up chef Kamal Al-Faqih's "Classic Lebanese Cuisine." Following is a recipe that sounds like a winner, especially with plenty of local growers bringing onions to the market. Enjoy.

Spinach with caramelized onions

1/4 cup and 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil, divided

2 cups well packed sliced yellow onions

1/2 teaspoon and 1/2 teaspoon salt, divided

1 pound frozen cut leaf spinach, thawed with half the moisture removed (or 2 pounds fresh spinach, wilted lightly, then squeeze out half the liquid)

1/4 cup and 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice, divided

1 tablespoon lemon zest

1/4 teaspoon coarsely ground pepper

For the onions:

Preheat 1/4 cup olive oil in a medium skillet over medium-high heat.

Add the onions and 1/2 teaspoon salt and saute the onions until they are evenly reddish brown and caramelized.

Remove the skillet from heat and tilt it to one side. Use a slotted spoon to slide half the onions to the top of the pan. Use the back of the spoon to press out as much oil as possible.

Transfer the onions to a dish lined with paper towels, spreading them out evenly, and set aside.

For the spinach

Return the skillet to the stove, and over low heat add the spinach, 1/4 cup lemon juice, lemon zest, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and the pepper.

Combine the onions with the spinach, cover, and continue to cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 to 7 minutes.

Remove from the heat, and drizzle with 1 tablespoon each of olive oil and lemon juice. Mix well. Drape waxed paper over the sauteed spinach and set aside to cool.

To serve

Serve at room temperature. Arrange the spinach over a flat platter. Top with the toasted caramelized onions and surround with lemon wedges.

-- *"Classic Lebanese Cuisine: 170 Fresh and Healthy Mediterranean Favorites"*

Steve Edwards lives and writes in Anchorage. If you have a suggestion for a future Market Fresh column, please contact him at sedwards@adn.com.

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