

THIS WEEK'S HARVEST

- Basil
- Bell Peppers
- Cucumbers
- Eggplant
- Garlic
- Hot Peppers
- Red Onions
- Tomatoes
- Watermelon
- Yellow Potatoes



Late-Summer Ratatouille with Parmesan-Oat Crumble

Source: The Vegetable Butcher
Serves 4-6

Toward the end of summer, when ratatouille vegetables – eggplant, zucchini, tomatoes, and bell peppers—are at their peak, I bake them together under a buttery, savory parmesan and oat crust. Sometimes I add butternut squash. Call this a crumble, a vegetable pie, or a gratin...just please don't call it a casserole (even if it kind of is one). This sexy dish absolutely deserves a more attractive title.

For the Crumble

2/3 cup rolled oats
 ¾ cup unbleached all-purpose flour
 ½ cup freshly grated parmesan cheese, plus ¼ cup for finishing
 2 teaspoons fresh thyme leaves, chopped
 ½ teaspoon fine sea salt
 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
 6 tablespoons cold unsalted butter
 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard

For the Ratatouille

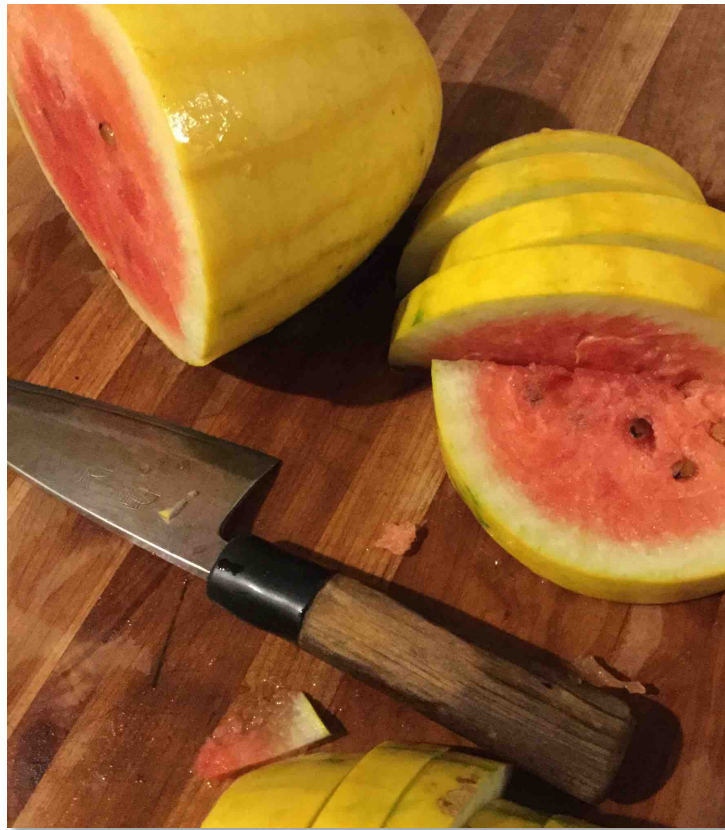
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
 1 large red or yellow onion, cut into ½ inch dice
 2 large garlic cloves, minced
 1 red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded, and cut into ½ inch dice
 Fine Sea Salt
 2 tablespoons tomato paste
 1 medium-size eggplant, cut into ½ inch dice
 1 medium-size zucchini, cut into ½ inch dice
 Freshly ground black pepper
 ½ cup vegetable stock or water
 2 large tomatoes, seeded and diced
 2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme leaves
 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
 ½ cup loosely packed fresh basil leaves, chopped
 Chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves, for finishing

1. Preheat the oven to 400 F
2. Make the crumble: Stir together the oats, flour, the ½ cup of parmesan, thyme, salt, and pepper in a medium-size bowl until evenly combined. Use the large holes on a box grater to grate the cold butter into the mixture. Add the lemon juice and mustard. Use your hands to mix the ingredients, breaking up the butter, until the flour and butter are completely combined into one mass. Wrap the mixture in plastic wrap and chill it while you make the ratatouille, about 30 minutes, or up to 24 hours ahead.
3. Make the ratatouille: Heat the oil in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add the onion, garlic, and bell pepper and cook, stirring frequently, until they just begin to soften, 3 minutes. Stir in the ½ teaspoon of salt. Cook, stirring occasionally, until everything begins to soften, about 5 minutes. Stir in the tomato paste, eggplant, zucchini, ½ teaspoon of salt, and ¼ teaspoon of pepper, and cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are just tender but not overly soft, about 5 minutes. (Add half of the vegetables stock if the vegetables begin to stick to the pot at any time.)
4. Add the vegetable stock (or remaining stock), tomatoes, thyme, and ¼ teaspoon of salt, stirring to combine, and cook for another minute. Stir in the vinegar and basil. Adjust the salt and pepper to taste. Divide the mixture among individual ovenproof bowls or gratin dishes or spoon it into a 13 x 9 inch baking dish.
5. Remove the crumble mixture from the refrigerator, break it into pieces, and sprinkle it over the ratatouille to cover. Top with the remaining ¼ cup of parmesan.
6. Bake until the crumble is lightly browned and simmering around the edges, about 25 minutes. If you wish, finish under the broiler to brown the crumble and parmesan further, 2 minutes. Garnish with the chopped parsley and serve hot.

Notes from the Field:

Sweetness

So far the watermelons are a hit. It's a good sign when our CSA members start emailing me to verify that the melons have passed quality control! Baby Beck, at a mere 5 months, approves of the sweetness level, texture, and overall "eat ability" of our Sugar Baby watermelons. He is not alone, as Shep and Henry are also big fans, and so far I think their overall health and well-being has improved as a result of these guiltless treats. Get the melon baller out, folks, these ruby-fleshed gems are *begging* to adorn a fruit salad. Or, if you prefer an even simpler approach, get out your favorite heavy knife and cut up some slices. A platter of yummy, cool slices won't last long, so enjoy the watermelon while they are in season. Who doesn't love a Sugar Baby??



Watermelons: These baby watermelons have a thicker rind and a longer shelf life than larger varieties. Rinds can be a range of colors, some with interesting, colorful stripes. We are growing two varieties this season, both of which may be in your box this week. Our go-to watermelon of choice is the round, green skinned Sugar Baby. Flesh should be Crimson in color and sweet. Diana is oblong with yellow skin and a pinkish red flesh. **Melons can be stored either on the counter or in the refrigerator. Refrigeration extends the shelf life, though fruits should not be refrigerated until fully ripe.** We do our very best to select melons for ripeness, but it is always possible that we may pick one that is not quite mature. In this case, let us know and we will replace it for you!

Red Onions: In your box this week you will find one of our favorite varieties of red storage onions: Rosa di Milano. With their flat shoulders and large bulbs, and their bronze/red skin, these onions go a long way for flavor and appeal. Red onions are best eaten raw or cooked briefly, as they lose color when thoroughly cooked.

Store onions in a cool, dry, dark place such as a cupboard or pantry.

Eggplant: Although the big, purple varieties may be most familiar, eggplants can be as small as a marble or as large as a football, and they can have white, green, magenta, or dark purple skin. In the '1800s European settlers brought small, round, mostly white ornamental varieties to the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada; their resemblance to goose or hen eggs inspired the "eggplant."

All eggplants have spongy flesh consisting of many air pockets between the cells. When cooked, the air pockets collapse and the flesh becomes pleasantly dense: creamy in some, meaty in others. The eggplants that you can expect to see in your box will be one of two varieties: the standard dark purple globe type, and a lighter purple heirloom variety. Both can be cooked with skin on if doing a longer stew, but thicker skins may need to be peeled. Peel eggplant based on personal preference and the thickness of a particular vegetable's skin.