

I don't like planting garden. I like working there after the seeds come up, but I have absolutely no faith that anything will ever emerge from the soil from those tiny seeds, so planting time isn't completely a period of anticipation. Instead, it is infused with the blackness of dread that we will not have any food supplies for this next season. And yet, most seeds DO come up and produce food. The same thing happens year after year.

So, my interest at planting time is directed toward the names of the crops themselves. A permanent marker works to imprint each variety on a wooden stick that is pushed into the soil at the northwest corner of each bed. And those evocative vegetable names are a springboard to fantasy, a trip around the world, and a mouth-watering look into the possible future—if those seeds actually produce.

Some non-English vegetable names take us to other countries: Val aux Vents shallots from France; Rossa di Milano red onions from Italy; Fehe Ozon paprika peppers from Hungary; Cosmonaut Volkov tomatoes from Russia.

And some names almost make the mouth water: Sweet Dakota Rose Watermelon; Sugar Ann Snap Pea; Cherry Belle Radish.

As I print each vegetable name, I see in my mind's eye that particular vegetable in a dish for our table. Uncle David's Dessert Squash appears baked whole, seeds excavated, dripping with butter and maple syrup. King Sieg Leeks become soup, thinly sliced and combined with cubed potatoes. Purple Moon, VitaVerde, and Charming Snow cauliflowers will combine in a colorful medley. Each buttery head of Tom Thumb Lettuce will make a salad for two. And Diamond Eggplant cubes smothered in a sauce made of Amish Paste Tomatoes, Genovese Basil, Gilboa Peppers, Clear Dawn Onions and other herbs as well will be a favorite winter meal served over homemade pasta.

So, even though I have no faith that seeds will come up, I still plan ahead for all that they will become on our table. Perhaps, I do have just a little belief in those tiny capsules of life?