



Notes From the Pea Patch

Foxtail Community Farm

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June 8 2015

Farmer's Notebook

A gentle summer rain shower has stopped the planting for the day and sent me inside to write this article. We like to break the growing season into three parts based on the primary work involved: April and May are mostly planting, June and July weeding, and August and September harvesting.

The planting has gone very well this year. A cold early spring warmed up quickly and, along with unusual dry weather, allowed us to get into the fields early. All the early cabbages and greens are in and growing, peas and beans are shooting up and our first plantings of carrots and beets are nicely established. The 6,000+ onion plants are starting to take off, the potatoes are popping and the summer squash is just about to flower. The tomatoes were put in May 3rd (very early) and are the largest plants we have ever had at this time of the year (and the greenhouse transplants have green tomatoes on them!) Even the sweet corn stand looks promising (protected from crows with scare tape, which might be the answer we have been looking for these past 10 years).

We are now done with 80% of our planting and it is time to prepare for the June onslaught of weeds. As a farm that does not use herbicides or black plastic, our weed management relies on mechanical cultivation. This starts with tractor implements like the tine weeder and field cultivator, is followed by hoeing and our push tine weeder, and finally we get down and hand weed with fingers and cobra neck weeders.

If all goes well with planting and weeding, we all reap the benefits with bountiful harvests and full share boxes. The first week of 2015 was one of our best starts ever and hopefully bodes well for the season. Right now our fields are full and most things look great. Of course the best laid plan(t)s are always subject to the whims of Mother Nature. ~ *Eric*

This Week's Harvest

Our best guess for what will be in this week's share boxes – subject to change at harvest & packing time.

asparagus (*Thurs large shares only*) – this is winding down so quickly that we didn't have enough for Greenville shares last week - enjoy it this week instead.

bok choy – a second harvest of this versatile and abundant Asian green. Use both the leaves and stems. Refrigerate unwashed in a plastic bag in the crisper.

scallions – these were a surprise addition at harvest time last week and return for an encore. The earliest onions of the season. Refrigerate in plastic bag.

lettuce – a head of tender blushed butter oakleaf *plus* a mix of several heirloom leaf lettuce varieties, planted and cut as small leaves for easy salad.

pea shoots – the tendrils and early leaves of pea plants. Munch raw, sauté lightly or toss in a salad for a subtle tease of the pea harvest to come. Store wrapped in a paper towel in fridge crisper for 2-3 days.

radishes – mild and juicy french breakfast variety, easily recognized by its long shape and red and white coloring. Traditionally eaten with sweet butter and salt. For a peppery bite, add the greens to a salad this week. Refrigerate leaves and roots separately in plastic bags.

spinach or swiss chard – two tender spring greens that can be used interchangeably in most dishes; spinach is milder and more tender, while swiss chard a bit more vibrant and with the unique addition of its colorful edible stems. Refrigerate unwashed in plastic bag, wash well before using.

Fruit Shares: strawberries from our own chemical-free fields. These are just ripening so we won't know until harvest time whether this first picking will be “just a taste” or a full bounty – but we'll share whatever we get with you! If not gobbled up right away, store unwashed in fridge for up to a few days.

Coming Attractions

- ◆ more broccoli
- ◆ turnips
- ◆ more strawberries (fruit shares)



Recipe of the Week: Lasagna with Spring Greens, Ricotta & Walnuts

Adapted from Deborah Madison's Local Flavors. I have been making my own ricotta lately (I promise you it is not difficult) and mozzarella is up next – this looks like a fine inspiration for both!

- 1 cup walnuts
- large bunch of spinach or swiss chard
- 2 tbs extra virgin olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, minced & divided
- 1/3 cup white wine
- 1 cup ricotta (preferably whole milk)
- 1 cup Parmesan cheese, freshly grated
- 1/2# fresh mozzarella, grated
- 1 ¼ cups milk
- 9 lasagna noodles

Cook greens in a large pot of boiling salted water until tender, ~3-5 minutes. Drain (reserve water); press most of the water out of greens, chop finely and set aside. Toast walnuts at 400°F until golden and fragrant and set aside. Heat oil in a skillet and saute 2 garlic cloves. Add the greens and cook, tossing frequently, for 3-4 minutes. Add the wine and cook down liquid, then set aside. Combine remaining clove of garlic, ricotta, Parmesan, and all but 1/2 cup of the mozzarella with 1/3 cup of the reserved cooking liquid and the greens. Season with salt and pepper. Return cooking water to a boil and cook lasagna noodles.

Lightly oil bottom of 9x13" baking dish. Drizzle 1/3 cup milk over the dish bottom. Line dish with 3 cooked noodles, sprinkle with ¼ cup milk, 1/3 of the cheese mixture, and ¼ cup of walnuts; repeat layers twice in same order, sprinkling final layer with remaining mozzarella and walnuts. Cover with foil tented with toothpicks to avoid sticking and bake at 400°F for 25 minutes; remove foil and bake another 10 minutes until lightly browned. Let sit 10 minutes out of oven before serving.



From Arugula to Zucchini...

For the next 20+ weeks, you'll have a steady supply of fresh seasonal vegetables to eat. The volume and variety may be more than you are used to. For many families, it means a significant change in the way we cook and eat. As we start a new season, we offer these challenges to CSA members (and ourselves!):

- ◆ **Eat more vegetables!** Getting your five-or-more-a-day can take a little effort. Snack on them, cook them, eat them raw, feature them, mix them in, put them on the side, hide them... just eat them.
- ◆ **Try something new.** Never eaten edamame or collard greens before? Now is your chance. Tired of the same traditional preparations? Try a creative new recipe from our newsletter, a cookbook or an on-line recipe site. Please share your favorite recipes with us!
- ◆ **Try something old, again.** Ok, you think you don't like beets. In fact, you hate them. Try them anyway. It's said that kids may need to try something many times before they develop a taste for it. We think that's true for grownups, too. And chances are good that if your opinion is based on supermarket produce, you'll change your mind when you taste vegetables fresh from the fields.
- ◆ **Stay in season.** It's not easy to wait until mid July for tomatoes. But that is when they come into season in this region. In the meantime, there are dozens of other in-season crops. Enjoy what's fresh and local while it's here.
- ◆ **Use your whole share every week.** Lose the shopping cart mentality and plan your meals around what you have. I often start a summer meal by laying out all the fresh vegetables we have on the counter top and going from there.
- ◆ **Save the harvest.** Don't be intimidated! Freeze, can, dry, pickle...you will be so glad in February that you took the time to do this. Don't know how? Join in one of our farm workshops.

Over and over, we hear from members what a difference the CSA has made in their eating and cooking habits. Picky kids will dive into a share box to see what's new, often gobbling things up before they even make it to the fridge. Busy adults cook more meals and pack healthier lunches to use the tasty produce that's waiting in the fridge. Let us know how the CSA impacts your family table!



From the archives

Need more recipe ideas? CSA newsletters back to 2010 are on our website:

www.foxtailcommunityfarm.com/MemberNewsletters.html

Here are a few favorites to re-visit this week:

June 18 2012

~ Catalan style
Swiss Chard

June 19 2013:

~ Stir-fried bok choy
with peanuts &
mushrooms

June 23 2013:

~ Farro salad
with pea shoots
& strawberries