



# Notes From the Pea Patch

Foxtail Community Farm ~ Vol. 13, No. 31 ~ October 28, 2018

## Farmer's Notebook

*Man is not an end but a beginning. We are at the beginning of the second week. We are children of the eighth day. ~ Thornton Wilder*

The rustle of leaves under my feet as I head out for harvest in the morning dusk reminds me that another season is coming to a close. Like all growing seasons, this one had its share of successes and failures.

A look back through our 2018 newsletters tells the story of this season. We started out strong, our early share boxes full of leafy greens, peas, zucchini, cucumbers, onions, and green beans. On July 15, we wrote about the drought we were experiencing, hoping for a little rain to give our oncoming crops a boost. One week later it started to rain, and the rains were unrelenting. On August 13, we reported that nearly 9" of rain fell here in less than a month - three times the typical amount for mid summer. It waterlogged our soil, leaving standing water in the fields, preventing plants from growing, and bringing new planting and weeding to a halt. And it continued to rain.

Those crops that were already full grown by mid July were able to survive this deluge, and we actually enjoyed good harvests of tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, sweet corn, potatoes, and winter squash. But all other root crops, and all the newly planted fall crops, rotted in the ground. The long list of casualties reported in our September 16 newsletter included Brussels sprouts, broccoli, carrots, fennel, and more. Since then, harvest lists have been dwindling as we eke out shares to get through the end of the season.

In many ways, this season exemplifies the inherent challenges we face in farming here. As you've heard Eric say many times over the years, this land is poorly suited for growing vegetables. The most limiting factor, as showcased this year,

~ continued on reverse ~

## This Week's Harvest

our best guess for what will be in this week's share boxes - subject to change at packing time:



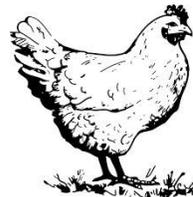
**black turtle beans** - grown, harvested, dried, threshed, winnowed, & sifted all here on the farm! Store in a jar or other tightly closed container in a dry area for 6- 12 months.

**greens** - we hope to harvest a mix of greens this week including kale, sorrel, and turnip greens. Your share may include one or more of these.



**popcorn** - in contrast to the dried cobs from last week, these are "fresh" cobs harvested this fall. Store in a dry area until the winter solstice to complete drying before popping.

**also... garlic ~ onions ~ pie pumpkins ~ potatoes**



Eggs, too! And chicken shares for Monday sites.

## Closing out the 2018 Season...

- ✓ Return all delivery boxes to your delivery sites by 7:00 pm on Monday Nov 5 (Delmar, Albany, Loudonville)/ Thurs Nov 8 (Greenville).
- ✓ For those with 2018 Year-Round Shares, please refer to the email sent separately.
- ✓ If you are interested in getting eggs & chickens for fall/winter, please email us.

*A special thank you to our site hosts for sharing your homes with us this season: Mary, Charles, Brigid, John, & Phyllis!*



## Recipe of the Week: Rachel's Black Bean Burgers

Easy to make, quite tasty and best of all, our kids are appreciative of the familiar burger style. This makes ~6 burgers; adjust proportions as needed.

- 4 cups cooked black beans (from ~2 cups dry)
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 onion + 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tsp chili powder
- 1 ½ tsp each ground cumin & coriander
- 2 tsp salt (reduce if you use canned beans)
- 2/3 cup dry bread crumbs
- mild-flavored oil, for frying

Mash cooked beans roughly in a bowl. Stir in the egg, onion, garlic, spices and bread crumbs. Cover the bowl and refrigerate for 30 minutes (up to 24 hours).

Form the chilled bean mixture into 6 burger-sized patties. Heat a thin layer of oil in a cast iron or other heavy frying pan (add more oil as you go if it dries out). Fry patties until golden brown on each side and heated through – you want to get them nicely hot, it will be at least 10 minutes per burger. If desired, top with cheese slices for the last minutes of cooking (pepper-jack, mmm.)

Serve on rolls with your choice of toppings – avocado, sprouts or lettuce, sour cream, salsa, tomato jam or whatever you love!

### **HOW TO COOK BEANS**

*~ the only hard part is thinking ahead ~*

- ➔ **rinse & sift** any stones or chaff from beans
- ➔ **pre-soak:**
  - overnight in a pot covered with water 3" above beans *OR*
  - if you forgot to do the overnight soak, boil for 2 minutes, remove from heat, cover & soak 1 hour
- ➔ **drain, rinse**, back in the pot under 3" water
- ➔ bring to a **boil**, then **simmer** uncovered until tender (about 60-90 minutes for black beans)
- ➔ **drain & use** or refrigerate.

*~ continued from front ~*

is heavy, very poorly-drained soil. We're also trying to manage extremely rocky soil, depleted fertility from years of haying, shallow bedrock, heavy deer pressure, and other significant limitations.

The hardscrabble character of this region is one of the things that drew us to it, and for the past 13 years we have been working to diagnose and ameliorate these issues. We've switched field locations, built deer fencing, brought in lime and organic fertilizer, rotated chickens and cover crops, and picked an endless number of rocks. Sometimes – as in the early part of this season – it feels like we're starting to see these investments pay off. But then, as happened so dramatically this year, we run up against the land's intractable limitations, and our work is for naught.

All this is to say that we have decided to take a sabbatical from the CSA in 2019 - to step back and reevaluate where the farm is and where it is going. As ecologist Alan Savory advocates in Holistic Management, we need to understand what attributes and limitations our land offers, assess what financial, environmental, and human resources we feasibly can invest in it, and use that knowledge to guide our business model. We hope the CSA will return in some form for 2020.

In the meantime, we'll still be farming. We'll be raising chickens for meat and eggs. There are strawberries, raspberries, and garlic planted for next year, and winter lettuce and spinach are germinating in the high tunnel. We'll continue to offer extra produce, jam, seedlings, and other items at our farm stand and by special order.

As CSA members you have supported us, shared our food, and read our stories. Thank you all. A special appreciation for our longest-term CSA members: Mary, Charles, Phyllis, Kris, & George (13 years!); Harriet & David (12); Margaret & Paul (11); David & Judy (10); Becky & Lee (9); Kevin & Amy (8). We wish all of our members a wonderful year. We hope that you will stay in touch and join us on the next stage of our farming adventure. ~ Eric & Rachel