



Notes From the Pea Patch

Foxtail Community Farm

Vol. 6, No. 3

June 6, 2011

Farmer's Notebook

Our 6th CSA season begins! With paperwork done, seeds planted, fencing up, chickens in the coop and plants in the ground, we can finally begin to enjoy the fruits (and vegetables) of our labor, savoring the return of fresh, green food to our plates.

Harvest-wise, as anticipated, we are off to a slow start. There's no question that the record-setting May rains have set local farms back this season, particularly early spring crops. For nearly two weeks, many plants (including Broccoli, Cauliflower, and Peas) literally sat under water in our fields. Though the rains eventually gave way to gorgeous summer-like weather, it's hard for any organism to bounce back from that kind of stress. Other crops, like Bok Choy and Scallions, had to wait in the greenhouse longer than optimal because they couldn't be planted until the ground dried out. These are coming along now, but will be delayed.

But with five terrific CSA seasons under our belts, we are taking this set-back in stride. Every year it seems there is at least one stretch with damaging weather conditions. Yet we've learned that losses of one crop are usually balanced by great harvests of another that seems to thrive under the same "bad" conditions. Remember the cold wet summer two years ago that led to a region-wide tomato blight epidemic? That same year we had fantastic broccoli and greens. The following year we had our best tomato harvest in memory, but a terrible broccoli crop! As we noted in last season's final newsletter, it is perhaps a truism for a diverse, small-scale and labor-intensive farm like ours that not all crops will do well in any given year. So while our spring crops have taken a hit this year, our summer crops are looking good and there is much to look forward to.

In the meantime, we're making lemonade out of this lull by trying out some new quick-growing specialty crops in the field and greenhouse. We even managed to find a great local mushroom farm to supplement our first share boxes! Please let us know what you think of these new items.

This Week's Harvest

All shares:

Chives – we aim to have an allium (onion) every week of the CSA season. These are the earliest and smallest in the family, usually used as an herb for spring cooking. Mince for salads, quiche, or to top baked potatoes. Store in a plastic bag in fridge

Pea Shoots – the tendrils and early leaves of pea plants, this specialty item has become a favorite at Farmers' Markets. Munch raw, sauté lightly or toss in a salad for lovely spring flavor. Store wrapped in a paper towel in fridge crisper for 2-3 days.

Lettuce mix - the staple of salads all summer long, our season starts with Black Seeded Simpson and Red Sails, with some mesclun greens mixed in. Store unwashed in plastic bag in fridge. Wash and dry completely before using.

Mushrooms – CSA members have been requesting mushrooms since our first season, so we are thrilled to have connected with Bulich Mushrooms, a family farm in Catskill. These are Cremini, sometimes called "baby bella" due to their rich brown color and deep flavor. Store in a paper bag in fridge.

Popcorn – from last season's harvest. Remove kernels by rubbing cobs together. For old-fashioned stove top popcorn, put a layer of kernels in the bottom of a pot with a little oil, cover and shake over medium-high heat until popping stops.

Large Shares:

Asparagus - This is the first time we've harvested this crop for the CSA, as it winds down around the time deliveries begin and is best harvested daily rather than weekly. Perfect steamed (just 4-5 minutes), roasted or grilled. Store wrapped in fridge, use within a few days.

Coming Attractions

- Scallions
- Bok Choy
- Strawberries (Fruit Shares)



Recipe of the Week: Foxtail Farm Quiche

This is a tried-and-true, highly versatile recipe that we prepare often, using different combinations of seasonal vegetables and herbs. You can add cooked meat, but it's truly not needed. Works equally well for breakfast, brunch, lunch or dinner! Keep it casual with fresh fruit salad, or dress it up with a green salad, oven roasted potatoes and a crisp white wine.

- 1 pie shell (make your own if you can – try using all or some whole wheat flour)
- 1½ cups shredded cheese (sharp cheddar, monterey jack, or similar flavorful variety)
- 2 cups chopped seasonal vegetables (try: asparagus, Swiss chard, spinach, broccoli, scallions, garlic scapes, onion, mushrooms, grated carrot, finely diced or grated summer squash)
- 3 tbs. Grated Parmesan or Romano cheese
- 2 tsp diced fresh herbs (try: chives, thyme, basil, oregano, rosemary, savory, parsley)
- dash cayenne pepper or paprika
- dash kosher or sea salt
- freshly ground black pepper
- 5 eggs
- 1¼ cups milk, half-and-half, or combination

Heat oven to 350° F. Prick pie shell with fork tines and bake 8-10 minutes to lightly brown. Remove from oven and reduce heat to 325° F.

Line bottom of hot pie shell with ¾ cup of the shredded cheese. Sprinkle vegetables evenly over the cheese, then cover with remaining ¾ cup cheese.

Combine Parmesan/Romano cheese, herbs, pepper, salt, eggs and milk. Whisk well, then pour evenly over the ingredients in pie shell.

Place pie dish on a baking sheet to catch any spills and bake about 1 hour 15 minutes, or until top is lightly browned and filling is firm. Remove from oven. Let cool slightly before cutting.

Mark Your Calendars!

Our 7th annual Summer Solstice Celebration is coming up! Join us on the farm Saturday June 25th – Sunday June 26th for games, activities, barbecue dinner, bonfire and camping. Details are on the Web site at:

www.foxtailcommunityfarm.com/SummerSolstice.html

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 of produce 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 embark on the season, we offer a few challenges to our CSA members (and ourselves!):

- ◆ **Eat more vegetables!** Getting your five-or-more-a-day can take a little effort. Feature them, snack on them, mix them in, put them on the side, hide them, cook them, eat them raw. 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.
- ◆ **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 August 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.** And while you're at it, keep a mini-journal for our newsletter. We would love to hear from you about “a week in the life” of a CSA share.
- ◆ **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.

Members frequently tell us 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 from scratch to use the tasty produce that's waiting in the fridge. Last year one member even reported losing 15 pounds as a result of eating more fresh fruits and vegetables from his family's share! Let us know how the CSA impacts your family table.