



News from

Harmony Valley Farm

An Update for Our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

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Come for the Fun!

The 13th Annual **Fall CSA Harvest Party and Pumpkin Pick** is coming up. We hope you can make it! Kids and adults alike are never disappointed!

Sunday - September 25th

12:00 Noon - POTLUCK!

1:15 - Field Tour on the Harvest Wagons

Dig, Pick, Eat, Discover!

3:00 - Harvest Pumpkins... Take your favorites back to the shed to wash & take home!

Birds, Beasts & Beets

It's dusk in my little meadow here in the valley and I have company - my typical evening companions. There are a couple of beavers splashing as they work on their latest construction project in the creek, a wary rabbit (with whom I have an understanding: if she doesn't eat ALL the bean plants, I don't report her to Richard), leopard frogs leaping out of my path, and several crickets singing. And then, of course, closest to my heart there are the birds, all much quieter this time of year now that the mating and nesting frenzy is past. We've already been seeing flocks of bluebirds moving through on migration and the fall warblers are starting to trickle down from up north. We woke up one morning to a conspicuously silent barn, as all of our many barn swallows and their progeny have begun their long journey to South America fueled by the winged insects they kept under control for us all summer. It's sad to see them go, but the birdwatching here is excellent year round.

When I first arrived last fall I was thrilled to discover that a pair of pileated woodpeckers call these woods home. These cousins of the ivory-billed woodpecker were quite a presence all winter, with a ringing call that carries from slope to slope and loud hammering that echoed the sound of construction on the new greenhouse this winter. Of course there were ever majestic bald eagles, cruising by on their way to and from the Mississippi and even a pair nesting just down the valley along the Bad Axe River. But my personal winter birding highlight was

a rare visitor from the Northwoods, a beautiful goshawk who stuck around for several weeks, attesting to the abundance of small wildlife on the farm.

I knew spring was just around the corner when the red-tailed hawks started doing their roller-coaster courtships in the sky. Then the ruffed grouse began drumming, a sound I haven't had in my neighborhood since I was a kid (I never knew until this spring that they drum in the middle of the night!). In April, I tried to show Aaron and Mike how to sneak up on a displaying woodcock, but even though he'd been there several days in a row he didn't appear that particular evening. Most of my attempts to convert the rest of the crew into birdnerds have been met with laughter. OK, OK, who can blame them for not taking that tufted titmouse or yellow-bellied sapsucker seriously? I was happy to mark the return of migrant songbirds on my own, listening for new songs every morning. About the last to arrive were a pair of cuckoos in May, who ended up sticking around and haunting my meadow all summer. All in all, it's been a wonderful place for birdwatching, and it's no coincidence that this is an organic farm with birdhouses, perches, wonderfully diverse habitat, and farmers who care about and work with their wildlife.



Agriculture is the single greatest factor influencing the landscape here in southern Wisconsin (oh, sure, I know you Madisonians think it's suburbs, but trust me on this one). This means that the way we farm has a huge effect on wildlife. Re-

This Week's Box
Broccoli OR Purple Cauliflower
Carrots
Corn - bicolor, last crop
Garlic
Green Beans - dark Concessa
Jalapenos
Peppers - colored - lots!
Onion - storage, yellow and red
Potatoes - yellow-fleshed Nicole
Salad Mix
Tomatoes - assorted
Watermelon OR Extra Corn
CHOICE
Basil

Produce Plus for 9/17
The Produce Plus program allows members to order extra amounts of produce from our farm for preserving.
Place the order by Tuesday evening . E-mail or phone the farm.
Pick up your produce at our market stand (we cannot deliver to your site) and pay upon pick up. Park your car ACROSS the street from our truck, in the bus stop or walk to our stand. Ask Richard, Linda or one of our great helpers when you get to the stand.
COLORED PEPPERS (slightly blemished) - 1/2 bushel for \$18
EDAMAME - 10# for \$25
PETITE GREEN BEANS - 10# FOR \$20
ROMA TOMATOES (slightly blemished) 25# for \$20
RED SLICER TOMATOES (slightly blemished) - 20# for \$18

cently the largest review of independent studies ever, comparing hundreds of organic and conventional farms around the world, was completed. (The data was compiled by English Nature and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds: see <http://www.soilassociation.org/wildlife>). What

Birds, Beasts and Beets *cont'd*

these studies found is no surprise: wild-life, from beneficial bacteria to mammals, was more diverse and occurred in greater numbers on organic farms. There are several obvious reasons for this. Organic farms use fewer pesticides = more insects = more food for small wildlife = more food for predators of small wildlife; organically managed soil itself is healthier, more alive with soil microbes and insects and richer in nutrients.

Another factor is the size and diversity of most organic crop fields. The smaller the field, the more edge habitat. "Clean" farming might sound good, but it's bad for wildlife; unfortunately practices such as removing all trees, brush and other vegetation and planting monocultures are still common practice for many conventional farmers. Not much can live in the middle of a giant corn or soybean field. Worldwide, organic farms tend to have taller, thicker hedgerows and more of them – chock full of food, cover, perches, and nesting spots. HVF is no exception: the fencerows and even the crops themselves here provide wonderful foraging habitat, and are full of nests of all kinds. They're easy to spot in the winter after all the leaves fall and frost knocks back the vegetation, but if you're lucky and you pay attention you get little glimpses even in full summer. There was more than one song sparrow nest tucked in on the ground in the mulch in the herb field – a sight you just won't see on most conventional farms. But my favorite this year was a goldfinch

nest, the first I've ever seen, lined with thistledown and full of miniature eggs which magically transformed into ridiculously tiny chicks a week later.

Like many organic farms, we have both crops and livestock, a combination which can be tremendously beneficial to wildlife. Organically raised livestock are often pastured on grasslands, providing a setting that mimics the prairie and savanna landscapes that many of these native critters evolved with.

We all have a part in ensuring the best future possible for our wildlife. As the UK report stressed, "During the next 50 years, global agricultural expansion threatens to impact worldwide biodiversity on an unprecedented scale that may rival climate change in its significance". I'm hoping our government will follow the lead of European countries by encouraging and supporting organic farmers as stewards of the land. Our individual lifestyle choices make a difference too, and where we choose to get our food is one of the most important. Organic farming done conscientiously fulfills multiple goals; it's better for the land, better for wildlife, and better for us!

by Mia, Bird-nerd for sure

BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP

4 T unsalted butter
1 onion, chopped
1 medium tomato, cored, seeded and diced
2 garlic cloves, minced
1-2 jalapenos, stemmed, seeded and chopped
1 red bell pepper, chopped
½ lb green beans, slant-cut to 1/2"
1 1/2 lbs butternut squash, peeled and cubed
3 C stock or water
1 tsp coarse salt
2 C whole milk
1/4 C grated Parmesan cheese



BUTTERNUT

Melt the butter in a large stockpot over moderate heat. Add the onion and saute until soft, about 5 minutes. Add the tomato, garlic, jalapeno and salt and cook 1 to 2 minutes longer. Add the squash and stock and simmer, covered, for about 20 minutes, or until the squash is falling apart and soup is thickened slightly.

Puree soup with a blender and return soup to a clean pan. Saute green beans and bell pepper briefly (2-3 minutes) and add to soup. Heat milk gently; add to soup. Stir in the cheese and adjust the seasonings.

Grazier's Organic Beef

Brochures are still available online & at your site. Please note there's been a modest 5% price increase which reflects the increased cost of organic grain, processing and transportation. Any orders we have already received at the spring price will be honored.

Order early, we always sell out!

(NOT YOUR GRANDMA'S) GREEN BEAN CASSEROLE

Adapted from Martha Stewart Living – Serves 4

3 T unsalted butter, plus more for dish
1 medium onion, cut into 1/4" dice
1 red bell pepper, seeded & cut into 1/2" dice
1/2 lb button mushrooms, stems trimmed, quartered
1 tsp coarse salt
1/4 tsp freshly ground pepper
3/4 lbs green beans, trimmed & cut into 2" pieces
1/4 pound sweet corn kernels
3 T all-purpose flour
1 C milk
Pinch of cayenne pepper
Pinch of grated nutmeg
1/2 C grated Parmesan cheese
1/4 C breadcrumbs
1/4 C canola oil
2-3 onions or shallots, cut crosswise into 1/4-inch rings



1. In a large skillet over med. heat, melt 2 T butter. Add onion & sauté about 4 minutes. Add bell pepper & mushrooms, & cook about 8 minutes. Season with 1/2 tsp salt & 1/8 tsp pepper. Let cool.

2. Fill a large bowl with ice & water; set aside. Bring a saucepan of water to a boil. Add beans; cook until bright green & just tender, 4 to 5 min. Drain, & plunge into ice bath to stop cooking. When cooled, toss drained beans & sweet corn with mushroom mixture; set aside.

3. Melt the remaining butter in a medium saucepan over med-low heat. Add 3 T flour, whisk constantly until mixture begins to turn golden, about 2 min. Pour in milk, & continue whisking until mixture has thickened, about 3 min. Stir in cayenne, nutmeg, & the remaining tsp salt & 1/8 tsp pepper. Remove from heat, & let cool to room temp, stirring occasionally. Pour over beans; toss to combine.

4. Butter a 9"-by-9" glass or ceramic baking pan. Spread half the green-bean mixture over the bottom. Sprinkle on half the grated Parmesan, & spread with the remaining green beans. Combine the remaining Parmesan & the breadcrumbs, & sprinkle over casserole. Cover with foil, & refrigerate until just before serving.

5. Heat canola oil in a medium skillet over med-high heat. Toss shallot rings with the remaining 2 T flour. Fry the shallots in batches, turning frequently, until golden brown. Transfer to paper towels to drain. Place in an airtight container, & set aside until ready to serve.

6. Heat broiler, positioning rack about 8" from heat. Cook casserole, covered, until bubbly & heated through, about 10 min. Uncover; cook until top is golden brown, about 30 sec. Sprinkle fried shallots over top; serve immediately.