



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993
Local & Madison Edition

January 7-8, 2011

EXTENDED SEASON Veggies were a separate purchase!

Look at the Customer Checklist closely to make sure you are listed for one before you pick one up!

Farmer Richard's Ramblings about the Birds and the Bees

Winter is here to stay for a while and all across the northern part of the country, farmers are looking back and taking stock of the season's successes and/or failures. Farming has never been a lucrative business. If an astute farmer really looks at the investment in machinery, supplies, seeds, fertilizer, etc needed to produce each year, he'd see how risky it is to get a return on that investment! In addition, ask for a reasonable wage for an 80+-hour workweek for 50 weeks of the year? We would have far fewer farmers unless there were some other reasons that they continue. I have heard many farmers at this time of the year, exhausted and underpaid, say "Never again. I'm quitting." Yet year after year the seed catalogs arrive, the enthusiasm returns, and they are back in the field by spring! What is it? The love of growing, living plants and working in a natural setting. Somehow the undying optimism of the farmer has continued food production despite the abuse from nature and the "market".

Personally, I have always been optimistic and never even thought of quitting. But I must admit to some brief periods of depression and despair after the major flood events of 2007 & 2008, and this year after multiple rain events, minor flooding and generally difficult weather.

Fortunately, we grow food for real people, not a subsidized commodity market. We have a responsibility, we have concerned customers, we have support, and we have employees who are dedicated. We can't quit, there's not even time to despair. We have to make the best of it and do the best we can – replant and carry on. When crops to harvest were reduced, we had a choice: Lay-off employees to save money (and hope they had money saved) or have hope for the future and pull out the list of "extra" jobs, since we had the time. We chose the latter.

We had enrolled in two USDA programs through NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service), a lesser known agency of the USDA – almost a well kept secret. They oversee the EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program) and CSP (Conservation Stewardship Program) programs, among others. Through these programs, we were able to get funding for improvements we make to our farm

Our Extended Season veggie boxes are full of delicious and nutritious root vegetables. They are all items that will store well for several weeks and in some cases, possibly several months. In general, store garlic and onions in a cool, dry place. The remaining root veggies should be stored in the crisper drawer of your refrigerator, loosely wrapped in plastic. If you store them for more than a week, you'll want to check them periodically to make sure they haven't lost too much moisture. If they start to look a little water deprived, just soak them in a bowl of water in the refrigerator and most veggies will be just fine. You can also just toss them into a soup or stew—they'll be floating in moisture! Refer to the back of your CSA calendar/manual for more detailed storage instructions.

THIS WEEK'S BOX

CELERIAC: One of the few veggies we tell you to peel. Remove the knobby outer bits and use the creamy interior in soups, stews or even raw in a slaw. Like most roots, store in the crisper drawer in a plastic bag..

CARROTS: For long term storage, pack carrots in a barrel or bucket with moist sand and keep in a cool location. Carrots can also be blanched and frozen, or of course, pickled.

PURPLE TOP TURNIPS: Many CSA members find that roasting a mixture of roots can satisfy a mixture of preferences at the dinner table. There are lots of variations on roasting roots, but all seem to result in mellower, sweeter flavors than when roots are steamed or boiled. Roasted roots can be quite different if you add different flavorings – mix up your spices, vinegars, heat levels and other additions (Worcestershire sauce, soy sauce, horseradish, sour cream etc). Try roasting turnips, celeriac, parsnips, carrots, potatoes (regular or sweet), and even squash, together!

BEAUTY HEART RADISHES: Store radishes in a plastic bag in the fridge. If they seem soft & dehydrated, soak in a bowl of water in the fridge.

DAIKON RADISH: These beg to be pickled and put on a Vietnamese style sandwich – check out this week's recipe!

GREEN OR RED SAVOY CABBAGE: High humidity and low temperatures are key when storing most produce. Store your cabbage as is, without removing the outer leaves until ready to use. The possibilities for cabbage cole slaw are endless: creamy, vinegary, spicy, with fruit or nuts, or even fermented.

PORCELAIN GARLIC: Whisk mashed garlic with minced onion, vinegar, buttermilk, sour cream or yogurt and a pinch of sugar. Whisk in olive oil, s & p to taste. Dress your shredded cabbage!

SWEET POTATOES: Never refrigerate potatoes. Like squash, they suffer in the cold and prefer storage temps around 60° F. Try Sweet Potato Pie!

FESTIVAL OR KABOCHA SQUASH: Keep it simple or jazz it up: Simply steam or bake & top with a pat of butter, or top with your choice of ethnic ingredients: Tex Mex with black beans, onions, ground beef & cheese or Asian with soy sauce or fish sauce and curry.

RED ONIONS: Batter fried onion rings, braised, raw or roasted.

SHALLOTS: There is nothing to compare with the delicious garlicky onion flavor of shallots. Store like onions and garlic: Cool, dry and with good airflow.

GUAJILLO CHILES: They are a mild-medium heat pepper. To use the peppers, you can either slice them thinly with a sharp knife, or chop them into small pieces in a blender or spice grinder. The dried pieces can be added to pizzas, tossed into chili, used as a coating for meats. You can also make a tasty sauce for tacos or enchiladas. Soak the chiles in hot water until soft. Blend the chiles along with the soaking water as needed to make a puree. Blend the chile puree with sautéed garlic, onions, and spices including cumin, coriander and oregano.

that are beneficial for the environment. We signed up for field roads, stream bank repair, and bumblebee habitat under EQIP and bird & wildlife habitat enhancement under our CSP contract.

So this fall, rather than lay off employees that were not needed to harvest washed out crops, we diverted talent to our road and habitat improvement projects. We used our bulldozer and skidsteer with brush puller to clear invasive box elder trees and prickly ash around our fields, then prepared for our NRCS funded gravel field roads. Working with our close neighbor who has a construction business, we removed soil and replaced it with 12"x12' rock roads which will prevent erosion and which will allow us to actually get to our fields to harvest – even after a heavy rain!

The excess dirt from the road project presented an excellent place for native grass and flower plantings, which will provide habitat, pollen and nectar for some of the 13 species of bumblebees found in WI. The bees provide excellent pollination for our crops! We are also ordering fruit and nut producing shrubs (hazelnuts, elderberry, plums, cherries etc – birds love them!) that will be planted this spring. We will add some blue bird and tree swallow houses to make a cornucopia of wildlife friendly habitat on our farm.

Our CSP payment will not cover all the costs of these improvements, but will cover enough so that we can do them without going broke. This is our (yours & mine) tax dollars at work! Our CSA members are welcome to visit the farm and enjoy the new walking paths, the birds & the bees, and witness all the projects that have helped keep your farmer from despair. It has been very exciting and gratifying to see the landscape change from a mess of tangled trees, bushes and over grown weeds into a work of beauty in progress. The mud holes have turned into passable roads. The clogged drainage ditches are open and in the spring, they'll be covered with new growth of grasses and flowers.

The vision will continue to evolve over years to come as the new shrubs and trees take root and eventually start producing fruit and nuts. The beautiful river is now accessible and an excellent place to take it all in. So in the midst of a difficult year, I had found a mission that has kept a smile on my face and has given me yet another reason to get up every morning. I really hope you'll make a trip to the farm this coming summer so I can show you myself what we have been doing.

2011 CSA Sign Up Forms!
Online and at your site!
Pick one up for yourself and
one for a friend - spread the
word about the farm!

Banh Mi Sandwich—This is a Vietnamese sandwich that often has many versions, here's one of them to try.

Recipe adapted from Maria Locke's recipe at Cabbagetown Market in Atlanta, GA

1 pound ground pork
1 shallot, minced
1 stalk lemongrass (outer husk removed), sliced paper thin
1 tbsp fish sauce
A dash of Asian five-spice powder
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
French Bread, for serving
Lettuce or Cabbage, sliced very thin, for serving
Pickled Daikon, for serving
Sliced Red Onion, for serving
Cilantro Mayonnaise, for serving

1. Put pork, shallot, lemongrass, fish sauce and Asian five-spice powder into a large bowl and mix to thoroughly combine. Form 4 ounce patties and grill or fry until well done.
2. Place 2 patties into lightly toasted soft French bread cut with a hinge along one slice. Top with lettuce or cabbage, a generous helping of pickled vegetables, onion and cilantro mayonnaise.

Sweet Pickled Daikon Radish

1 cup rice vinegar
1 cup water
1 cup sugar
¼ tsp turmeric
1 pound daikon radish
¼ cup kosher salt

1. In a small saucepan over medium heat add the vinegar, water, sugar and turmeric. Bring to a boil, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Remove from heat and allow it to cool.
2. Meanwhile, peel the daikon radish and slice into ¼-inch thick rounds (If your daikon is very large, slice the rounds into semicircles.) Place in a colander with salt and mix well. Place the colander over a bowl and let drain for 1 hour. Rinse the salt off with a couple of changes of water and dry the daikon well. Put into a sterilized glass jar. Pour the cooled brine through a coffee filter or a cheesecloth lined strainer into the jar to cover the radish slices. Refrigerate at least 4 hours, preferably overnight. Will keep for about 2 weeks.

Cilantro Mayonnaise

1 bunch cilantro leaves, roughly chopped
1 cup mayonnaise
-Simply mix the chopped cilantro with the mayonnaise and refrigerate.

UPCOMING DELIVERY DATES:

January 21-22, 2011: Extended season veggies, fruit, coffee & cheese.

May 6-7, 2011: First delivery of the season!