



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

April 16, 2015

Spring Update

By Andrea Yoder

Spring is always an exciting time in our valley and this year is no different. While we're grateful for the bounty of fall root crops which nourish us through the winter months, we always breathe a sigh of relief when we finally have something fresh and green to eat again! Last week we pulled the row cover off the overwintered spinach and were happy to see a sea of green leaves! Couple that with the pretty little ramps growing in the woods and thus marks the start of our spring season.



Every year we anxiously await the transition from winter to spring. It seems like nothing is happening and then suddenly everything is happening! We're excited to be attending our first farmer's market in Madison this weekend and our first CSA delivery is only 3 weeks away. This week we're harvesting the first of our overwintered spinach and the first ramps of the season! Soon the asparagus will be poking through the ground and before we know it May will roll into June and we'll start picking strawberries! Here's a little snippet of just a few things happening on the farm.

Last week our first group of field crew members returned after spending a few months in Mexico with their families. The pace and energy of the farm changed overnight and we're thankful that everyone made it back to Wisconsin safely. Juan has been staying busy managing repairs in the shop. Rafael got right to work spreading minerals on fields. Jose Ramon wasted no time subsoiling some of the fields that were still a little wet so they'd dry out faster. Rogelio has split his time between helping Juan with repairs in the shop and spreading compost on the dry days. We've also taken advantage of these first few weeks of spring to put fresh coats of paint on our harvest wagons and to some of the rooms in our employee housing. We managed to squeeze in a few safety trainings including how to use a fire extinguisher and an entire day devoted to chainsaw safety.

Chef Martin Clark, our summer farm chef for the 2015 season, joined our team this week. The crew is anxious for him to start preparing lunch next week. We're excited to share all of our wonderful vegetables with Martin to see what kinds of creative things he can make with them!

The greenhouses are quickly filling up. This week we're transplanting celeriac and pepper plants into larger trays. The jicama just

Spring Produce Plus: Maple Syrup & Ramp Cheese!

Maple Syrup is BACK!

We are happy to be working with the Alvin Miller family again to offer you certified organic, premium Grade A, medium-amber syrup! Quantities are more limited than previous years, so be sure to order early as we will sell out fast!

Maple syrup is shelf stable until opened, will keep for years if refrigerated after opening, and it is not just for pancakes! If you use the syrup for more than just pancakes, a small family can consume a gallon in a year. It is a great natural substitute for white or refined sugar, and it's not only sweet, but it also has a great maple flavor.

**Certified Organic, Grade A, Medium Amber Maple Syrup -
1/2 gallon glass jug: \$32**

Harmony Valley Farm & Castle Rock Organic Dairy's Ramp Cheddar Cheese

Enjoy a taste of spring in our one-of-a kind ramp cheddar. This is one of our unique specialty vegetable cheeses made through our partnership with Castle Rock Organic Dairy. This cheese was made last May with ramps harvested in the spring. It's a pretty tasty cheese with a bit of sharpness to it and a full ramp flavor. This cheese will only be available through this produce plus offer this spring!

Last chance to get HVF cheese until our Winter Cheese Share starts in November.

Ramp Cheddar-2 pound pack for \$24

Note: Each pack will include 4 pieces of cheese, 1/2# each for a total of 2 pounds of cheese.

To order, email csa@harmonyvalleyfarm.com or call (608) 483-2143 x2

When ordering, include:

Full Name

Item

Quantity

Delivery Site

Preferred Delivery Date

(listed to the right)

Delivery Dates

Twin Cities: May 28 (brown) and June 4 (green)

Local: May 29 (brown) and June 5 (green)

Madison: May 30 (brown) and June 6 (green)



started poking through & I'm happy to say the ginger plants are the healthiest looking sprouts I've ever seen! Within the next several weeks we'll be planting the herb packs so they are ready to send to CSA members in May!

While we were able to plant some things last week, the rain held us back from doing very much. We're anxious to get some important plantings done this week. Beets, carrots, peas, chard and even onion transplants are on the list for Friday and Saturday. The guys have been busy preparing the fields and we have our fingers crossed that the rain will hold off until we can get some more seeds into the ground.

Earlier this week the harvest crew finished the overwintered sunchoke harvest and quickly moved onto planting potatoes. The packing shed crew has been diligently moving through each of our packing areas as they do our annual spring cleaning. Every corner gets cleaned, equipment is being repaired, and

we're getting everything ready to start a new season. There's nothing that makes me happier than a clean, neat and organized packing shed!

As for the pasture update, we're happy to announce the birth of our first little baby goat of the spring. He's a healthy little guy who had enough strength to walk to himself from the pasture where he was born to his cozy little goat house! Juan Pablo & Angel are back as our resident animal care-takers. The chickens were so happy to see Juan Pablo that they laid 17 eggs one day last week!

Needless to say we're staying busy. We're happy to be back in the swing of farming and are looking forward to the growing season. Thank you for your continued support of our farm and we look forward to growing delicious food for you this season!



Juan Pablo & our first kid of the season!

Overwintered Spinach & Ramps.... What's all the hype about? Andrea Yoder

Why do we make such a big deal about these two vegetables every year? Well, for starters they are the first green vegetables available to us after a long winter! They mark the start of spring and the return of fresh, green food. But more than that, it's their special characteristics that set them apart from the rest of the season.

We plant overwintered spinach in the fall, watch it start to grow, but don't harvest it. Winter comes and the spinach is covered with a blanket of snow. We cross our fingers and hope it will survive the winter. When the snow melts away, we anxiously check to see if the plants have strong, healthy roots and are still alive. If so, the plant will start to produce new leaves. This is what we harvest first in the spring, well before the first spring-planted spinach is ready. Overwintered spinach is the best-tasting spinach of the season. The leaves are thick & tender with a unique sweetness you won't taste in any other spinach throughout the season.

Ramps are also known as wild leeks. They are a wild crop we're blessed to have growing in the woods on some of the land we own and rent. They are amongst the first plants to come up in the woods every spring. While they are similar to a green onion or garlic, they are special in their own way. The best way to describe their distinct flavor and scent....well, they're ramp-y!

Both of these spring treats are only available for a few weeks, so when we have them we eat them nearly every day! While we're always looking for new ways to enjoy these two vegetables, we often turn to some of our favorite recipes from the past that we enjoy every year. In this week's newsletter we've included two simple recipes you can find in the recipe archive on our website.



Where can I get Spinach & Ramps Now?!

Looking for a taste of our sweet, tender overwintered spinach and delicious ramps before the first CSA season? If you're in the Madison area, stop by our farmer's market stand at the Dane County Farmer's market starting this Saturday. Product will also be available at the Willy Street Co-ops in Madison, Wedge Co-op in Minneapolis and the Viroqua Food co-op by the end of this week. By the end of next week, several other food co-ops in the Twin Cities and Lunds & Byerlys will be stocking our spinach and ramps as well. Check with your local store to find out when it's on their shelves!



Ramp Butter

Chef Andrea Yoder, Harmony Valley Farm

Yield ½ cup

1 stick unsalted butter, softened
½ bunch ramps

1. Soften butter to room temperature.
2. Clean ramps and remove the root end. Roughly chop the ramps (white bulb and green tops) into 1-inch pieces. Place ramps in the bowl of a food processor and process until they are finely chopped. Scrape down the sides of the bowl.
3. Add the butter to the ramps and process just long enough to evenly incorporate the ramps into the butter.
4. Put into a covered bowl and refrigerate until ready for use. Will store for about 1 week in the refrigerator, or put some in the freezer to enjoy this winter!

This is a super simple, yet delicious way to enjoy the flavor of ramps and can be used in a lot of different ways. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Melt ramp butter in a saute pan and cook your morning eggs in it.
- Put a pat of ramp butter on top of a grilled steak.
- Spread ramp butter on bread and bake it in the oven until the bread is toasted. Serve it as a side with your favorite soup!
- Melt ramp butter on grilled asparagus spears.



Creamed Ramps and Overwintered Spinach

Chef Andrea Yoder, Harmony Valley Farm

Serves 4

2 bunches ramps, ½ lb.
4 oz spinach
3-4 quarts water
1 teaspoon vegetable oil
1 pint cream
1/3 cup Parmesan cheese, freshly grated
½ tsp salt, or to taste
¼ tsp ground black pepper, or to taste

1. Bring 3-4 quarts of water to a boil. Cut ramps into 1-2" pieces keeping the bulbs separate from the leaves. Blanch the ramp leaves by boiling just until wilted and bright green. Remove from water and put in a colander. Rinse with cold water and squeeze off excess water. Repeat the same procedure with the spinach.
2. In an 8-inch oven proof skillet, heat oil. Saute ramp bulbs just until slightly tender. Remove from heat and top with ramp leaves. Season with ¼ teaspoon salt and a pinch of black pepper. Layer spinach on top of ramps and season with ¼ teaspoon salt and pinch of black pepper. Pour cream over vegetables and top with cheese.
3. Bake in a preheated 350°F oven for 20-30 minutes or until cream is bubbling and has thickened, and the top is golden brown.