



# Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com

August 4-5, 2017

## ONIONS: A Healthy Basic

By Farmer Richard

This week has been a big week for us. In addition to our regular weekly tasks, we've been trying to get all of our onions pulled, dried and safely stored in the greenhouse. We have been blessed with several days of dry weather which allowed us to start our harvest last week. We brought some onions in on Saturday, then pulled more and left them to dry on top of the bed in the field before we brought them into the greenhouse on Tuesday for the final drying, cleaning, etc. But now we're faced with chances of rain the rest of the week. Yes, there is an anticipation as well as some apprehension and nervousness that goes along with the excitement of every onion harvest. I sleep at night because I'm simply tired, but I won't sleep soundly until all the onions are harvested and safely under cover. Two-thirds of this year's crop are harvested and so far, they look great!

Onions are an important crop on our farm. They aren't one of our big dollar crops, in fact they are probably one of the most labor intensive crops to handle with a higher overall cost of production. However, we firmly believe that daily consumption of plants in the onion/garlic family is one key to good health and they are a staple ingredient that we, and many other families, include in our daily meals. Thus, we plan to include an onion and/or garlic selection of some sort in every CSA box over the course of our thirty week season.

With the above goals in mind, we start the season with ramps, wild-harvested from our woods. Ramps are followed or accompanied by several perennial selections including chives and our overwintered Egyptian walking onions and potato onions. These selections give us a jump start on the season while we are hustling to grow onions from seed to cover the remainder of the year and get us through the winter until the next spring when we start again with the perennial crops. The

## What's In The Box?

**SWEET ONIONS:** Read more about onions in Farmer Richard's main newsletter article and Chef Andrea's vegetable feature.

**FRESH ITALIAN GARLIC:** Mince cloves of garlic finely or use a garlic press to prepare garlic for use in fresh salsa.

**GREEN BEANS:** We only have one more planting of green beans remaining after this week, so this is the week to make your favorite green bean dish!

**ITALIAN OR GREEN ZUCCHINI OR SCALLOP SQUASH:** All of these varieties are classified as "summer squash" and may be used interchangeably in any recipe that calls for zucchini or summer squash.

**ORANGE CARROTS:** Check out this week's "Cooking with the Box" article on our [blog](#). You'll find a link to a simple carrot salad.

**BROCCOLI:** Broccoli production is starting to taper off. We'll have more broccoli coming for late summer and fall.

**WHITE CAULIFLOWER:** Wow, we have had a pretty big week of cauliflower harvest this week! Cauliflower may be eaten raw, lightly steamed, boiled or roasted.

**JALAPEÑO:** Make sure you find your one little jalapeño in this week's box. It's just the amount you'll need for a batch of pico de gallo. If you don't use it this week, put it in a bag and freeze it to use later.

**SUN ORANGE OR RED GRAPE OR CHOCOLATE SPRINKLES TOMATOES:** Sun orange tomatoes are similar to the well-known sungold tomato, but they do not split like the thin-skinned sungolds. They are round with a golden orange color. Red Grape tomatoes are firm, yet juicy with an elongated shape like a grape! Chocolate Sprinkles is a new variety that is rounded, but slightly elongated with a teardrop shape. They have a darker skin that almost looks chocolatey. The flavor is sweet with some acidity.

**GREEN BELL PEPPERS:** Green bell peppers have a blocky base as well as blocky shoulders. They are classified as a sweet pepper, so will not have any heat.

**GOLD POTATOES:** This is a "waxy" variety of potato which are best used for potato salad, roasted potatoes, soups, etc. I would not recommend trying to mash these potatoes or they may get too sticky.

**SWEET SARAH MELONS:** This is our favorite cantaloupe variety and the ones we've sampled so far this year have been quite good considering it's only the first week of harvest! How do you know if it's ready to eat? Trust us...they're ready to eat! We have a crew of well-trained guys picking the melons. It's their job to read the signs of the plant and pick accordingly.

**CUCUMBERS:** We did our first sizeable harvest from the second crop Friday morning. Over the next few weeks we should see some pretty hearty cucumber harvests....although we could use a little higher temperature to push them along.

**CHOICE--SWEET ITALIAN BASIL:** Thank you for taking just a small handful of basil per vegetable share. We will continue to offer this item as a choice when available throughout the remainder of the summer....and in the meantime, don't forget your own basil plants from the herb packs! Keep them picked down so they don't flower and will keep producing.

beauty of onions is that they are "in season" every season of the year!

Whether red, white or yellow onions, there are a wide variety of choices to select from and we consider the genetics of a seed to be very important. We look for varieties that have disease resistant tops that will survive long

enough to produce a full sized onion. The sweet Spanish onions you've been receiving in your boxes the past few weeks are an early season variety that is very mild when eaten raw and super sweet when cooked because of their higher levels of sugars.

*(See our [blog](#) for the rest of Richard's article)*

### Cooking with This Week's Box!

Yes, it is really the month of August which means we are in the peak of summer vegetables and cooking! The tomatoes are starting to ripen and while the picking is a little slim this week, I'm sure we'll have more next week. Pull out all those recipes and ideas you've been saving for fresh tomato season...it's time!

This week we are very focused on onions around here. It's a race against Mother Nature to get them out of the field. Nonetheless, we're thankful for all we have and have really been enjoying the sweet onions packed in this week's box. My recommendation for this week is to give the recipe for pizza in the newsletter a try. This recipe for "**A Pizza in the Roman Way**" (see below) is very simple. You will need to set aside time to patiently wait for the dough to rise and the onions to slowly stew....but it will be worth the wait. The weekend is perhaps a good time to prepare this recipe. Take your time and enjoy the process.

(See our **blog** for the rest of this article & Chef Andrea's suggestions for utilizing every item in your box!)

### Featured Vegetable: Onions

In this week's main newsletter article, Richard walks you through what it takes to produce an onion. Onions are a staple ingredient that, in my opinion, you can never have too much of in your kitchen! Onions are used as the base of cooking all around the world and are revered for their role as an "aromatic". In French cooking, they are part of traditional mirepoix, a blend of diced carrots, celery and onion that is an important base for making stock and soups. In Spanish cuisine, onions are included in their version of "mirepoix" which is called sofrito and includes tomatoes, onions and garlic. In culinary school I had a chef instructor, Chef Chang, who was a master chef in China. One of our first lessons about Chinese cuisine was how important it is to start each dish with garlic, onion, ginger....I suppose this is kind of like the Chinese "mirepoix."

(See our **blog** for the rest of this vegetable feature article to learn more about cooking, using and storing onions!)

### Lazy Cucumber and Onion Pickle

Yield: About 3 cups "These need about three hours for their cure and will stay fresh in the fridge for about a week."

¾ pound cucumbers, unpeeled	Freshly ground white pepper, to taste	1 tsp yellow mustard seeds
1 sweet onion	1 Tbsp sugar	½ tsp celery seeds
Sea salt to taste	1 cup rice wine vinegar	¼ tsp ground turmeric

1. Slice the cucumbers thinly crosswise, or at an angle if they are very slender. Slice the onion into thin rounds.
2. Put ½ tsp salt, a few twists from the peppermill, and the sugar in a bowl large enough to hold the vegetables. Add the vinegar and 1 cup water and stir to dissolve the sugar and salt. Add the cucumbers, onion, mustard seeds, celery seeds, and turmeric. Press on the vegetables to immerse them in the liquid. (A plate set over the vegetables can help.) Cover and refrigerate for at least 3 hours.

This recipe was borrowed from Deborah Madison's cookbook entitled *Vegetable Literacy*. You may eat these as a salad or as a condiment with sandwiches or wraps. We'll be picking our second crop of cucumbers by the end of the week, so if you don't have any cucumbers available this week hold on to this recipe for next week!

### A Pizza in the Roman Way

Yield: One pizza, 8-9 ½ inches: There will be enough for two to four, depending on appetite and what else you have for the meal.

"In the pizzeria where I used often to eat when I spent a winter in Rome 25 years ago, by far the best pizza was spread only with onions stewed in olive oil and seasoned with oregano. The Romans themselves claim this as the only true pizza, and dismiss the tomato and mozzarella version of Naples as a fanciful upstart." —Elizabeth David from her cookbook, *Elizabeth David on Vegetables*

#### For a 8 ½ to 9 ½ inch pizza, the ingredients for the dough are:

1 generous cup plain unbleached bread flour  
1 tsp of salt

¼ oz fresh yeast  
2-3 Tbsp olive oil  
4-5 Tbsp milk  
1 whole egg

#### For the filling you will need:

1 ½ pounds of onion cut into fine rings  
Olive Oil  
Salt  
Oregano

1. Make sure the flour is at room temperature and mix in the salt.
2. Mix the yeast to a cream with 2 Tbsp tepid milk. Break the egg into the center of the flour. Pour in the creamed yeast and 2 Tbsp of olive oil. Mix to a light soft dough. If too dry, add the rest of the milk and another tablespoon of oil. Form into a ball. Cover with a sheet of plastic wrap and leave in a warm place to rise. Allow 2 hours.
3. While the dough is rising, stew the onions slowly, slowly, in fruity olive oil until quite soft and yellow. Season with salt and a good sprinkling of fresh oregano.
4. When the dough is ready, that is when it has just about tripled in volume and is light and puffy, break it down, shape it into a ball, and pat it out into an 8 ½ inch disk on a perfectly flat, oiled fireproof baking stone or baking sheet.
5. Spread the warm onions on the dough, leaving a little uncovered around the outer edge. Scatter a little more oregano and a little more olive oil over the filling and let rise for 15 to 20 minutes before putting it into the center of the oven to bake. Temperature should be fairly hot, 425°F, and the pizza will take 20 to 25 minutes to bake.