



BLUE HOUSE FARM

CSA Newsletter

Growings On

11.04.11

This is the third to last week for this year's CSA season. The last days will be Nov. 18/19th. This week we have been especially busy planning and planting for next year's 2012 CSA season. The tractors have been running around from the different fields, mowing old crops and planting cover crops. Compost has been delivered and spread where over-wintered crops will be. Over an acre of strawberry beds have been made and covered with drip tape and black plastic mulch, ready for December planting. Beets and carrots are seeded and are sprouting from the wet ground right now. Broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbage seedlings wait in the greenhouse to be planted in the next week. Garlic, leeks, and onions need to be planted as well!

And in the office, we have been busy too. We've made some changes that we think will improve the CSA season and make it run more smoothly. Next year we will be extending the CSA season from 26 weeks to 30 weeks. The start date will be about the same time as this year, which will be mid-May and it will continue until mid-December. For years, I've wanted to stretch the growing season longer in effort to bring more local produce to the Bay area/peninsula region. I've also wanted to provide more employment for our field crew during the winter months. Next year I've decided to step in that direction by extending the CSA season one month.

The sign-up procedure for 2012 is basically the same as this year. Just go to our website and follow the directions. If you have cash credit from this year, you can apply that to next year's membership. We are offering an early-bird discount of \$23/box if you sign-up for the whole season before the 1st of January; the price will be \$24/box for the whole season if you sign-up after January 1st. New for 2012 is a 4-week trial membership; we wanted to offer a way for potential members to try out our CSA and see if a membership is something they would enjoy, as well as continue to provide an option for members who cannot afford to pay for the whole season at one time. The cost for the 4-week trial is \$24.50/box with no early or referral (see below) discount.

We are making an effort to grow the size of the CSA next year and would like your help. If you refer a new member, we will offer you a \$1 discount per box for every member that refers you. And we will offer a .50 discount/box for that new member as well. Until we get this systematically programmed into the sign-up procedure, new members need to send us an old-fashioned email referencing your name as a referral and we will discount both of you on our end.

Anticipated Harvest

Romaine Lettuce

Fennel

Red Beets

Parsnips

Celery

Rainbow Chard

Pac Choi

Apples

Oregano

*Your box this week contains an ancient vegetable. Okay, technically the **Romaine Lettuce** in your box was harvested less than 24 hours ago, but it is certainly the oldest-known variety of lettuce still eaten today. Indeed, it is perfectly and recognizably rendered in Egyptian paintings dating back five thousand years! Our farmer forefathers in the Antique Mediterranean cultivated this lettuce for its strong-ribbed and firm scoop-like leaves because the lettuce leaves were used as edible spoons for humus or tabbouleh-like dishes (this remains a good idea today). In later years, it's hearty rib and juicy, fine-bitter crunch made it the go-to lettuce for hearty dressings like the famed Caesar Salad. Unlike some of its more watery cousins, Romaine Lettuce is actually a powerhouse of nutrition, rich in Vitamins A, C & K as well as Folate, Manganese, Chromium, Potassium & Dietary Fiber. It's even a good source of Omega-3 Fatty Acids, the nutrient that is most difficult for Vegans and Vegetarians to obtain in a no-meat diet. And don't limit yourself to raw salads! Romaine hearts are hearty (ha!) enough to be grilled; they can even be braised in butter and stock with a little carrot and lemon juice.*

We plan on offering the same great flowers, bread, honey, coffee and egg add-ons, and may add some other items as well. The add-ons will become available once the 2011 season is finished; check the website in a few weeks to sign-up for them.

Due to the early and significant costs of labor, seed, and materials, the farm depends on those of you who can afford to pay in full (and make the same early commitment that we are making by planting the crops for you) to do so. These early memberships carry us through the lean winter months when expenses are high and cash flow is low. Many farms deal with this by taking out loans during the winter. I prefer to avoid loans and have always appreciated the Community Supported Agriculture model, where members show their commitment to regional foods by purchasing it pre-season. I would rather owe you vegetables for 30 weeks next spring than owe the bank money!

Thanks for everything, Ryan



Preparing beds for strawberry planting.

Garlic-Chard Flatbread

1 Bunch Chard, Finely Chopped
6-8 Cloves Garlic, Finely Minced
2C Flour & More For Rolling & Dusting
1tsp Turmeric
1T Oil
1T Cayenne Pepper
2tsp Garam Masala (optional)

Combine all the ingredients in a large bowl. Press the ingredients gently as you combine; the chard and garlic will release some water, helping the dough blend. If the dough seems too dry, and a little water, up to half a cup, until you can form a dough that holds together. The dough should be soft, not sticky; dust with flour if the dough sticks.. Knead the dough with your hands for about 5 minutes.

Divide the dough into 8-10 portions and roll them with your hands into balls. Gently press them to slightly flatten the balls., then roll each dough-ball into flat circles with a rolling pin .

Put a cast-iron skillet over a moderate flame. One at a time, carefully place each round of dough on the hot skillet, cook for a minute (just until tiny brown spots appear), then flip with a spatula and cook for another minute. Repeat for each dough round. Drizzle a tiny amount of oil onto each side of the bread rounds, then return them to the skillet and cook for another minute or two on each side, until they crisp up slightly and brown a little more.

Serve with raita or any curry dish.

Parsnip & Quinoa “Rösti”

1lb Parsnips
1C Quinoa, Cooked
4T Butter
Salt & Pepper

Steam the parsnips whole until they are easily pierced by a knife but not mushy, about 10-15 minutes. Remove from heat and cool.

In a large bowl, combine the freshly cooked quinoa with 2T butter and a pinch each of salt and pepper. When parsnips are cool enough to handle, remove the skins and finely chop or grate the parsnips. Thoroughly mix the quinoa with the parsnips.

Over a moderate flame, melt a tablespoon of butter in a skillet. Add the quinoa-parsnip mixture and spread it out evenly in the pan. Lower the heat to medium-low and let cook undisturbed for 10 minutes. Check to see if the bottom is browned, then slide the rösti onto a plate and flip it back into the pan. Cook over medium heat for another 10 minutes.

A Mark Bittman Recipe

Braised Celery

1 Bunch Celery
1T Unsalted Butter
1/2C Broth or Stock
Salt & Pepper

Slice the celery into 1-inch thick pieces.

Heat the butter in a skillet over a moderate flame. When the butter has melted, add the celery along with a generous pinch each of salt and pepper. Sauté until the celery just begins to become soft, no more than 5 minutes.

Add the broth or stock (don't use water, the extra flavor from the stock is important. In a pinch, you could substitute white wine) and stir. Reduce the heat to low and cover the pan; cook for another 5 minutes or so, until the celery is tender but not mushy. Remove the lid and raise the heat to medium or medium-high and cook for another few minutes until the liquid is reduced to a glaze. Serve at once.

An Alton Brown Recipe