



BLUE HOUSE FARM

CSA Newsletter

Fallow & Goodnight

11.17.11

This is the last week of the CSA. It is always bittersweet preparing the last CSA boxes of the season. This season has had its significant challenges, as I mentioned in last week's newsletter, but the crew and I have also had a real fun, interesting, and gratifying experience growing food for you all. And I think that for the most part we were able to provide really nice, full boxes. I can be my toughest critic and at times I wished that we had more of a certain item, but sometimes you just make the best of what you have. This week, for example, I really wished that the parsnips were bigger; but they just aren't, so baby parsnips it is. Farming is inherently humbling. We love farming (even when the weather is cold) and we love farming for people who have an appreciation for well-grown food. It is especially meaningful to grow for people who have a desire to better understand the complex relationships between the growing and eating of food: the interactions between soil, water, weather, fuel, equipment, labor, compost, seasonality, fertilizer, seeds, transportation, cost of supplies, cost of produce, pests, disease, beneficial insects, deer, sun, fog, weeds, and more...

And now, it is time to focus on next year. Every year around this time, I have a long list of things that I'd do differently built up in my head [mental note: plant parsnips one month earlier]. Over the next few months I'll condense this list into tangible changes by making additions to the planting schedule, tinkering with tractor equipment, etc... I'm always asked what I do over the winter and my answer is usually the same: "I do all the things that I don't have time for between the months of March & November." On the rainy days, I'm usually organizing things in the office, either wrapping things up from the previous year, or preparing for the next. On the dry days, I usually fix things up outside and when it is dry enough I do some tractor work, like make beds for early plantings.

This is also the time to give us feedback and let us know how we are doing. We aim to provide the highest quality fresh produce possible and to include a useful and interesting mix of different vegetables, herbs, and fruit. Each year we try and improve our growing, harvesting, washing, and packing systems. We also try and improve the timing, selection, and volume of the contents of the CSA boxes. This is the part that you can be most helpful with. In the next week or two you will be receiving an email with an online survey. The results of this survey influence the planting schedule for the following year. For example last year, it was clear that we gave out too much cabbage and not enough fresh beans, so this year you may have noticed less cabbage and more

Anticipated Harvest

Candy Onions
Red Beets
Carrots
Leeks
Celery
New Potatoes
Rainbow Chard
Baby Parsnips
Green Leaf Lettuce
Oregano
Apples

*What better way to end the season than to discuss that most underappreciated yet ubiquitous of vegetables: the humble, noble **onion**. Let's set aside the onion's role as an aromatic, making almost anything you cook taste better. Onions and the fantastic nutrition they supply have been a constant companion of mankind since time immemorial. That's no hyperbole: scientists speculate that prehistoric humans the world over dined regularly on wild onions, and onions were one of the first, if not the first, wild plant cultivated by human agriculture. Evidence suggests onions were grown in Egyptian, Chinese and Sumerian gardens over 5,000 years ago. Mummies were stuffed full of onions, as the Egyptians revered the plant as sacred. Ancient Greek athletes would subsist on nothing but onions prior to a match, even anointing their bodies with onion juice. Onions are repeatedly cited in the earliest extant cookbook, that of Apicius the Roman. Medieval peasants paid their rents in onions. The Pilgrims brought a large store of onions with them to the Americas, only to find the Indigenous peoples already eating onions in abundance. Why the fuss? Maybe because onions are known fighters and preventers of cancer, heart disease & osteoporosis with potent anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory qualities to boot!*



JJ & Nina the Chicken say: "Thanks for a great season!"

fresh beans. It's tricky finding a balanced combination that appeals to a broad amount of people, but it's far easier to do so with your feedback.

Thank you again. From the field 'til next spring,
Ryan

Already Thinking About Next Year? So Are We!

Early Bird Discounts: Just another friendly reminder that you can sign-up today for next year's CSA season and receive a discount on a full season membership. Renew by Dec. 31st to receive the reduced price. Although it always lifts my holiday spirits to see the last minute rush of sign-ups, the farm does depend on some of you to pay between now and then. Early cash flow allows for us to better prepare for next year in the purchasing of seeds and equipment, and also the ability to afford more field work for our employees during the winter months.

Referral Discounts!: Help us find more CSA members, and we will lower the price of your CSA boxes! For every friend that mentions you as a referral, you will receive \$1 off every box and they will receive \$.50 off every box (discounts not available for trial memberships). So if you sign up at the early bird price of \$23/box and have five friends mention you as a referral you will only have to pay \$18/box!

Evelyn's Onion Tart

For Pâte Brisée

1½ C Flour
1 Stick Butter, Cubed Pea-Sized
4 T Water
¼ tsp Salt

For the Onion Filling

2lbs Yellow Onions
4 T Butter
2-3T Fresh Thyme or Rosemary
Salt & Pepper

For Pâte Brisée: Whisk flour & salt in small bowl. Add butter and rub with fingers into flour, until a coarse mix is obtained. Add water, then work into mix with fingers until dough just comes together. Form into ball, wrap in plastic and refrigerate for 1 hour. Then roll out *pâte brisée* dough and place in 8-in cast iron skillet.

For Tart: Preheat oven to 375°.

Slice the onions very thinly. In a large skillet, melt the butter, then add the onion slices, herbs and generous pinch of salt. Stir to ensure the onions get evenly coated in fat; reduce heat to medium-low and cook onions uncovered for 30 minutes, so that the onions are very soft and succulent. Remove from heat and let cool for 10 minutes.

Spread cooled onions in skillet lined with *pâte brisée*. Bake for 50 minutes.

Adaptation of an Alice Waters recipe.

New Potato Smash

1lb New Potatoes
3 T Unsalted Butter
1 Clove Garlic, Minced
2 T Chives, Minced
Salt

Preheat oven to 350°

Put potatoes into a medium-sized, oven proof pot with a lid; a dutch-oven or large casserole would work well. Chop up 1T of butter and add it to the pot, then cover and bake for 20 minutes.

Remove the potatoes from the oven and give them a stir to coat all the potatoes evenly with butter. Sprinkle generously with salt and return to oven; continue baking for 30-45 minutes, or until a fork easily penetrates a potato.

When potatoes are done, remove from oven and toss with garlic and remaining butter. Then smash with a potato masher, large spoon or fork, or other concussive device. Sprinkle with chives and serve.

Roasted Beet & Carrot Salad with Toasted Cumin Vinaigrette

1 Bunch Beets
1 Bunch Carrots (Peel optional)
1½ tsp Cumin Seeds
1T Fresh Thyme or Oregano
1 Medium Onion, Very Thinly Sliced
Juice of 1 Lemon
3T Red-Wine Vinegar
1C Fresh Italian Parsley
Olive Oil
Salt & Pepper

Preheat oven to 400°. Clean and trim the beets, then place in a roasting pan or casserole and drizzle with 2T Olive Oil and sprinkle with salt. Cover with aluminum foil and roast until tender, approx. 45 minutes. Cut carrots into thirds cross-ways, then quarter them lengthwise. Place carrots on a baking sheet; drizzle with 3T Olive Oil and sprinkle on herbs along with salt and pepper, then toss to coat. Roast until carrots are browned and tender, turning carrots once, approx. 20 minutes.

Put cumin seeds in a dry skillet and place over medium-heat. Toast until they become very fragrant, stirring frequently, about 2 minutes. Take about half the seeds and grind finely in a mortar or spice mill. Place the ground seeds along with the remaining whole seeds, the vinegar and 1/2C oil in a small bowl. Whisk together.

When beets are cooked and cooled, rub of peels with your fingers and cut into wedges. Place in a large bowl with carrots, onion, parsley, lemon juice and cumin vinaigrette. Toss to blend, then taste and adjust for seasoning.