

Holcomb Farm CSA

Newsletter

October 29, 2007

In Good Supply This Week

Butternut Squash

Turnips

Rutabaga

Kale

Brussels Sprouts

Fennel

Arugula

Some Shares May Also Have

Cabbage

Carrots

Onions

Leeks

Potatoes

Spinach

What's Happening on the Farm?

Most of the farm is a verdant green after the warm early fall has made for lush cover crop growth. Since mid-August, we've been diligently seeding down oats, vetch, and rye as we finish harvesting each food crop. A few crops, such as the field tomatoes, already had white clover planted in them while they were still growing. Once the crop was done, we mowed back the vines to give the clover more sunlight, letting it spread over the field. This undersowing technique effectively overlaps the food crop and the cover crop and eliminates the need for extra tillage when establishing a cover crop. Some fields get an extra gift this time of year in the form of compost.

This is also the time for a good deal of farm cleanup. We are finding the time to make numerous dump runs with all the junk that seems to accumulate around here every year. In one of the nastier jobs on the farm, we've spent a good amount of time the last few weeks culling all the rotten potatoes, onions, and squash from these storage crops. Even more unpopular is pulling up the plastic mulch. Not having taken the plunge on a fancy plastic mulch lifting machine, there is no slick way for us to do it; we just have to grab and pull all the little bits until they're gone. The general misery of plastic pulling and the pile of landfill food we generate at the end are a definite check on the amount of plastic mulch we decide to lay in the spring. We only use it when other weed control strategies have proven ineffective. We've trialled the new corn based biodegradable mulch with mixed results. When we use

it outside the deer fence, deer hooves make lots of holes in it and it breaks down too fast and is not an effective mulch. Inside the deer fence, it worked great as a mulch and then, presto!, we harrow it in and it goes away. That seems as good a use of biotechnology as anything!

Even as we wind down the distribution season and tie up loose ends in the field, there are still new beginnings on the farm. We've planted arugula, pac choi, spinach, and other greens in the greenhouse for the winter share. I love walking into the warm greenhouse and seeing vigorous new growth separated only by a thin layer plastic from the cold fall winds and the changing autumn leaves.

Movin' On

Next week is the last week for the apprentices. They have been the backbone of the farming season, with endless hours of tractor driving, irrigation pipe hauling, weed pulling, greenhouse watering, crop picking, crop washing, crop packing, transplanting, distribution monitoring, tomato trellising, etc, etc, etc. They've shown up day after day and have sown remarkable good humor dealing with the treadmill of crop production, the challenges of living and working with each other, and the sometimes bizarre things that come from the farmer. They've gamely picked up the systems we have going here and breathed their own personalities into the life of the farm. Hopefully they've picked up new knowledge about farming and some of important perspective that can come from bringing forth food from the earth. Certainly, their questions have made me a better farmer and a better teacher. Now in what is probably the biggest shift of the farm year for me, they are leaving. Deb is moving to New Hampshire, Matt is moving to Boston where he might get into teaching, Scott is planning to move wherever he can find a good job doing something with farming and kids and community, Laura also plans to stay on the farming path and she is weighing her options for her next move.

Thank You!

We've reach the last week of distribution for the regular season. We hope that everyone has enjoyed the produce, the farm, and your experience as a member. We greatly appreciate your support and enthusiasm. It's a pleasure to know or at least recognize many of the people who are eating the food grown here and seeing you return week after week and year after year. One of my favorite parts of my job is seeing members fanned out across the pick-your-own field, happily munching on green beans or strawberries.

We are not going to have a formal member survey this season, but we always welcome any feedback from our members about the distribution system, the farm shop, pick your own crops, or anything else.

In addition to our members, we'd like to thank the following people for their contributions to another successful farm season:

- Heather Lerch, administrative wizard, who makes solutions appear with a wave of her hand.
- Bill Ryan, whose generosity with his time and equipment has been a big boost to the productivity of the farm.
- Catherine Slattery and Robert Bystrowski for the incredibly generous gift of the use of their farmland.
- Marshall Griffin whose timely mechanical advice is second only to the pleasure of his stories about the last 70 years of life in Granby.
- Barbara Jaroch, for being the queen of Saturday distributions.
- Our hard-core workshare members whose diligent work and good energy gave us a big boost all season: Doug, Greg and Marylou, Kellie, Wendy, Erica, Chris and Magda, Melissa, Aisha, Porsche, Gib, Varsha, and Cathy
- Jen Olynyk, chiropractor, for helping to keep the farm crew bodies in good working order.
- Leora Berns and David Schonfeld, for offering their home for the West Hartford distribution site.
- Joe Barber, who made sure that all the leftovers from the West Hartford distribution went to good use at a soup kitchen.
- Jerry Jones and Marisol Irrizary, for crucial behind the scenes administrative support.
- All the volunteers who made produce deliveries to the agencies who receive our produce.
- All the members who pitched in to help build the new greenhouse and to harvest onions and potatoes.
- All the angels who donate generously, bring us treats, send kind words, put newspapers in the pick your own cart, pull weeds in the basil, and do a myriad of other little things that help make the farm a better place.

Winter Roots

Rutabaga is one of the most underrated vegetables in my opinion. It's hearty savoriness is just what I want on many cold nights. It lends itself well to lazy cooks

like me. I eat large quantities of rutabaga as a component in the ever shifting winter staples of roasted roots or mashed winter veggies. For roasted roots, I'll just chop up some potatoes, onions, garlic, celeriac, sweet potatoes, carrots, turnips, whatever – and douse it with some olive oil and salt, chuck it in the oven at 450 degrees and forget about it for 45 minutes or so. When I'm slightly more ambitious, I'll make a mash. It's just mashed potatoes with a twist. Potatoes or sweet potatoes form the foundation, but I'll add in some turnip, rutabaga, parsnip, or celeriac to add their own distinctive flavor. I usually peel everything, cut into chunks, steam, and mash. I'll add generous amounts of butter and salt and a dab of milk or soymilk for consistency.

For those wanting something a little different than these basics, I found the following interesting recipe in Farmer John's Cookbook. For a good source of local pears, check out Lost Acres Orchard in North Granby.

Rutabaga and Pear Puree

1 small rutabaga, peeled, cubed
1 large ripe pear, peeled, cored, cut into chunks
¼ cup sour cream or plain yogurt
1 tablespoon of butter
pinch nutmeg
salt
black pepper

Steam rutabaga until almost tender, about 15 minutes. Add pear, continue to steam until rutabaga is tender, 5 to 10 more minutes. Drain well.

Puree rutabaga mixture with blender, food processor, or hand mill.

Add sour cream, butter, nutmeg, salt, pepper and mix in.

Reheat in saucepan over medium heat until heated through.

Serves 2 to 4. Makes a nice side dish to pork or lamb-chops.

