

CSA Newsletter – Week 1

Dear CSA members,

Welcome to the 2012 CSA season! I know it seems like it's been a long time coming, but we're actually starting the season earlier this year than we have in years past. I think it's mostly due to the incredibly warm March we had which kind of kick started things (even things we didn't want kick started). Then the hoop house really allowed us to grow some of our favorites early to have in the first boxes. Beets, carrots, Swiss chard and kale are not usually seen at the beginning of the season, but they will be this year! So we are excited to begin the season with our first CSA newsletter.

What's growing on at the farm?

Well, you've all been hearing about everything we have been growing in the hoop house all spring, but here's some of the other things we have planted directly into the fields: onions, leeks, carrots, red kale, lettuces (leaf and head), 3 kinds of summer squash, 6 kinds of winter squash, Charantais melons, 3 varieties of watermelons, 2 varieties of cucumbers, garlic, 4 varieties of potatoes, 6 varieties of peppers (sweet and hot), 2 varieties of eggplant, celery, sweet potatoes, red cabbage, green cabbage, pumpkins, 16 varieties of tomatoes, beets, Swiss chard, turnips, radishes....there's probably a few other things out there that I'm forgetting, but suffice it to say, there should be plenty of variety this season.

For our new members: how this all works

When you initially signed up, you either signed up to pick up at the farm on Monday or Thursday, or at our drop off location in Gurnee or Crystal Lake. I will send another email out separately to each group to verify with you where you will be picking up your veggies. At that time, if you want to change where you pickup, just send me an email to let me know your preference. Otherwise, full share members will pick up their vegetables every week at the location you selected and half share members will pick up every other week at your selected location. IF YOU ARE A HALF SHARE MEMBER: We have divided the pickups this way: Last name beginning A-L, you will pick up your box on ODD weeks (weeks 1,3,5,7...) If you last name begins with M-Z, you will pick up a box on even weeks (weeks 2,4,6,8...). So this week, only half share members with last name beginning A-L will pick up a box.

When you come to the farm to pick up, just pull into the long driveway - you won't see the house or barn from the street, but once you get to the house you'll see where to park. Your box will be already filled with your veggies, and you'll come into the pole barn and pick your box. If you are picking up at Gurnee or Crystal Lake, you'll go to your designated pick up location and do the same - pick a bag and leave your empty bag from the previous week.

This year...bags, not boxes

In the past, we've packaged your veggies in a produce box which you would pick up and take with you, then each week bring back your empty box and swap for a new box with veggies. Because the boxes are such an expense to replace, and because we always end up each year with a large number of boxes not being returned, we're trying a new system this year. Instead of picking up a box of veggies, you'll be picking up a **bag of veggies**. Dr. Jill Shaw from JBS Wellness (our Gurnee drop off location) has generously donated large, reusable shopping bags for our produce this season. So for the dropoffs in Crystal Lake and Gurnee, you will pick up a bag of veggies, and each week you will bring your empty bag back with you to swap out for a new, full bag. At the farm, your veggies will still be *displayed* in our boxes, but once you pick your box, we'll transfer your veggies from the box to the reusable shopping bag. We think this system will be easier for everyone - you can easily leave your empty bag in your car so you won't forget to bring it back each week, and they will take up hardly any space at all in Crystal Lake and Gurnee, where having 10-15 empty boxes each week was a real storage problem.

Thanks so much Dr. Shaw for your generous donation to our CSA to help make the system work better for everyone!

We have eggs!

If you would like eggs in your box this week, please send me an email to let me know. If you are a farm pickup, you can pay for them when you pick up your bag, and if you are a Crystal Lake or Gurnee drop off you can leave a check which I will pick up the following week. If you have not tried our true free-range, organic eggs, you are missing a special treat. Our eggs are \$5.00/dozen. You can also purchase during the week by stopping by the farm.

The nutritional value of root vegetables

We grow many root vegetables: carrots, beets, turnips, potatoes, sweet potatoes, radishes, daikon radishes, and onions. Each one has its own set of nutritional values and benefits, but they all have several things in common. Root vegetables are a great source of fiber, and are all considered complex carbohydrates, meaning the body digests them slowly, so you feel full longer and they don't give your body a sudden rise in blood sugar levels. They actually promote stable blood sugar levels. They are all also most nutritious when eaten with their skins. Yes! Don't peel your carrots, potatoes, sweet potatoes, turnips and beets! Their outside skin is loaded with vitamins and minerals.

Beets detoxify and cleanse the blood. They're rich in potassium, calcium, selenium, zinc, vitamin C, iron and more, plus loaded with fiber. Onions contain 80% water along with their vitamins, minerals, carbs, fat and protein. They help lower the symptoms of diabetes and they help prevent asthma, osteoporosis, cardiovascular diseases and even cancer. Radishes have anti-bacterial and anti-fungal properties. They're rich in vitamin C, potassium, folate and dietary fiber. They help improve liver and stomach health.

All root vegetables (except potatoes) are great sources of beta carotene, which has been proven to prevent abnormal growth of cells that may lead to cancer. It's a great source of antioxidants, and it slows down the process of aging, prevents cardiovascular disease, strengthens the immune system, supports eye health, healthy skin and strong hair.

So love your root veggies, eat the entire vegetable, which includes the skin and the greens (beets, turnips), and enjoy not only the delicious taste, but the healthy benefits! (to read more about root vegetables: <http://www.buzzle.com/articles/root-vegetables-nutrition.html>)

Recipes for Week 1

Glazed Turnips

- 3-4 turnips
- 1/2 cup broth (beef, vegetable, chicken)
- 1 lg. Tbl. honey
- salt & pepper

Cut the greens from the turnips. These can be stored and used in another recipe, or sauteed and served with the glazed turnips.

Wash turnips and cut in half, then cut each half into slices.

Put in frying pan with broth.

Cook on low heat until turnips are crisp-tender and most of broth has been cooked away.

Add honey and mix well. Add salt and pepper

Stir on low heat until turnips are coated with honey, salt & pepper

Serve immediately, either along or with sauteed turnips greens or alone.

Roasted Beets on Sauteed Beet Greens

- 2-4 beets

- 1 onion
- olive oil
- basil (fresh or dried)
- salt & pepper to taste

Cut beet greens from beets, wash greens and set aside. Wash beets - do not peel.

Cut into bite sized chunks - place in small roasting pan. Drizzle with olive oil, basil, salt & pepper, cover with foil and bake at 350 until tender.

When beets are almost cooked through, remove stems from greens and chop stems and put in frying pan. Add chopped onion and enough olive oil to cover the bottom of the pan only.

Sautee beet stems and onion until tender.

Add chopped beet greens and continue sautéing until tender.

To serve, place sauteed greens & onions on a serving plate and place roasted beets on top.

A variation if you don't wish to use the beet greens:

Arrange roasted beets on a plate with parsley and orange slices

sprinkle blue cheese and cooked crumbled bacon on top

Drizzle with olive oil and salt & pepper to taste

Make a salad a meal

One of our favorite summertime meals when we are loaded with lettuces, greens and salad makings, is to turn our salad into a filling meal by adding meat. Just make a large salad with whatever ingredients you want.

Pan fry your favorite meat (marinated round steak, chicken, shrimp, pork)

Cook meat in olive oil and favorite seasonings and cook down until the meat is good and browned, and a little crusty.

Mix meat into salad and serve with your favorite dressing and warm bread.

Thanks everyone...have a great week!

CSA Newsletter – Week 2

Dear CSA members,

We hope everyone enjoyed their veggies last week. I read several great posts on our Facebook page of how folks used our produce in their meals. If you are on Facebook, and haven't "liked" our Green Earth Farm page yet, please do! It's a great way to see pictures from the farm, read what our other members are doing with their veggies, and post your own suggestions!

We got a nice soaking rain yesterday afternoon and last night, and our fields drank it all in thirstily. The great thing about yesterday afternoon's rain was that after it stopped and the sun came out, the top of the soil dried very quickly. But all the rows where we had been watering with our new drip line irrigation, stayed nice and dark and wet, showing how saturated the ground was from our watering. This is very exciting for us, for as our returning members know from past years, going for 3 weeks like we just did with no rain would have been devastating to several of our crops. So while a good soaking rain is still needed - not just for us but for everyone - we love not having to be glued to the radar. Now we're glued to our watering spreadsheet so we know when to turn off one set of rows and turn on another!

What has been going on around the farm? A note from Farmer Scott

It is always wonderful to see our members' faces as they pick up their vegetables, and I thought it would add some value to share what has been put in to that final product, what we have planned, and how the last week was spent farming for that final product to be presented to you.

This week, we spent long days laying the final lines of the irrigation system, weeded about 1000 feet of onions, 500 feet of carrots, and hundreds of feet of other rows. The weeds are definitely a huge challenge as we don't have the ability to whack them with weed killer. The potato bugs took up a couple of days as we went from plant to plant (6000 feet), removing them into a bucket one by one; whatever it takes to make sure our four varieties of potatoes are a success this season.

Numerous hours were spent with a hoe, a push cultivator, and our old Farmall cultivating tractor defining the rows and cultivating squash rows, melons and cucumbers. The plants all got their first spraying of a mixture of fish meal and dried kelp to boost their fertility, with an addition of diatomaceous earth (prehistoric shells) for a natural protection for some of the pests.

Three of our days were almost completely consumed with picking and boxing your produce, which could have never been done without the help of my sons Avi and Tomi, and of course Kathy.

And to add to all of this, we had 2 tractors break on us, Big Yellow with gas pump issues, and Little Allis with a broken piston rod (you will probably see the engine apart in the pole barn this week).

As you can see, farming isn't all about driving around whistling with a piece of straw in your mouth - no wonder there are so few farms remaining. To all of you who have been working relentlessly promoting our CSA, I would like to thank you very much, and I plea to you all, please continue doing so: we are still about 20 members short of filling our membership for this season, and we truly believe that by you keeping us alive, you ensure the presence of local, sustainable, fresh produce in your neighborhood, a thing that we can no longer take for granted!

If anyone has some free time, the desire to do so, and the ability, you are most welcome to come by, help with the weeding, picking, hoeing, and help make this venture a true community success for us all.

Green leafy vegetables - one of the most nutritious veggies available

Green leafy vegetables are arguably one of the richest sources of nutrition and have numerous health advantages, including cancer prevention and detoxification. It is no secret that greens are good for the body but surprisingly, despite their large number of nutritional advantages, they are one of the most under-consumed foods in the average person's diet. There is such a wide variety of green vegetable with different textures and tastes that including one or more as part of a balanced diet need no longer be a point of contention. They can easily be incorporated in recipe favorites.

Nutritional Content - What is it that makes leafy green vegetables a veritable superfood? One reason is the rich assortment of nutrients that can be found in them; vitamins A, C, E, and K feature heavily in salad greens, kale and chard while many of the B vitamins can be found in broccoli, bok choy, mustard greens and many other varieties of leafy green vegetable, including the greens of beets and turnips. These same vegetables also contain an abundance of phytonutrients (or phytochemicals) such as zeaxanthin, lutein and beta-carotene; valuable chemicals which protect cells from damage.

Green leafy vegetables also contain high levels of dietary fiber, magnesium, potassium, folic acid, calcium and even Omega-3 fatty acids, which serve to maintain eye health, aid in digestive regulation, increase bone strength and boost the immune system.

Read more at: <http://suite101.com/article/leafy-green-vegetables-and-their-health-benefits-a174971>

Recipes for Week 2

Fresh Beet Salad

3 medium beets
1 tablespoons red wine vinegar
1/2 tablespoon olive oil
1/2 garlic clove, minced
1 teaspoons sugar
1/8 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon pepper
1 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley
Mixed greens

Cover beets with water, and bring to a boil. Boil 30 minutes or until tender. Drain and cool. Peel beets, and cut into wedges. Whisk together vinegar, olive oil, minced garlic, sugar, salt, and pepper in a large bowl; add beets, tossing to coat. Sprinkle with parsley; serve over mixed greens.

Kale with Pecans (and beans)

- 1 bunch kale or chard
- 1/4 cup chopped pecans or pistachios
- Extra virgin olive oil
- 1 garlic clove
- Sea salt to taste
- beans or lentils (optional)

Mince garlic and set aside. Rinse your greens and place them all on a cutting board oriented in the same direction. Chop stems and set aside. Cut leaves into big pieces.

Using a pan with a lid, add the nuts and turn it on medium heat. Lightly toast the nuts, stirring regularly with tongs. After 2-3 minutes, add olive oil to the pan and allow it to heat up. Add your chopped stems to the pan, sprinkle generously with sea salt and toss with tongs. Cover. Stir the stems occasionally so they don't burn, and cook until tender. Add the leaves and continue cooking the greens as they wilt and turn dark green. If they start to burn lower the heat, add 1-2 tbsp of water and cover again to steam.

Kale is done cooking when it is dark green and the stems are tender. Before turning off the heat, use tongs to clear a space in the center of the pan and add your minced garlic in a single layer. Allow the garlic to cook until it becomes fragrant, about 30 seconds, then mix it up with the kale and nuts.

If desired, add half cup of beans or lentils at this point and heat until warm.

Continue to cook greens uncovered for another minute or two. Taste test a leaf for saltiness and adjust to taste (be careful if you are using chard, it is naturally salty and easy to over-season). Serve immediately.

Thanks everyone...have a great week!

CSA Newsletter – Week 3

Dear CSA Members,

I apologize for the lateness of getting this week's newsletter out. We had our son's high school graduation party on Saturday, which turned the whole household upside down, and Sunday I spent recuperating by weeding four rows of sweet potatoes. Long story short: great party and now beautifully growing weed-free sweet potato plants! I hope everyone enjoyed the beautiful weather this weekend. While we were happy to not have David's party rained on, we are still looking skyward for the next rain shower, with nothing in the forecast for the foreseeable future.

While our vegetables continue to grow, thanks to our irrigation system, the heat and dryness has had an effect on some of the plants. Sugar snap peas do not tolerate the extreme heat, and the plants dried up in spite of our watering efforts. We will be replanting those again shortly for a late season crop when the temperatures begin to cool off. Romaine lettuce is another plant that doesn't tolerate extreme heat and dryness so we will be picking those this week before they have a chance to bolt.

We were very happy to begin the season with large boxes and a good variety - not often seen at the beginning of a CSA season. This week's bags will be somewhat smaller due to the combination of new plants still growing and those that couldn't take the heat. I know we will have beets, bunching onions, head lettuce, and kale, and not sure what else is out there right now. We have new crops of carrots, radishes and Swiss chard growing, and we saw the first of the golden zucchini's on the vine this morning. Our cabbages are now the size of softballs, and the potato plants are all flowering. The peppers and eggplants have recovered from the shock of being transplanted and are growing beautifully. We also planted our fall crop of broccoli and cauliflower this weekend - which is always a better harvest in the fall than in the spring. We still have cauliflower growing nicely in the field, unlike the broccoli which flowered at the first hot week we had in early June.

Thank you for spreading the word!

In the past week or so we've had several new sign ups and several calls of interest about the CSA, and all from our CSA members spreading the word. Thank you so much for helping us to fill up our membership this season. We're not quite there yet, but getting closer and we wanted you to know how much we appreciate your comments on Facebook, talking to co-workers, taking flyers to your church and just generally putting the word out there. It's a great example of community working together!

Beets...so healthy, so delicious...are you eating your beets?

I only ask because several of our members, when they saw the beets in their box again on week 2 said they hadn't eaten their beets from week 1 yet. Beets are one of those vegetables that evokes a childhood memory of your mom heating up a pan of canned beets, boiling in their deep red juice, almost pink from all the color being processed out of them. OK - well that's my childhood memory at least. But if it is also yours, please give your beets another chance! While beets are the world's sweetest vegetable (so sweet they are used to make refined sugar), they are still low in calories - only 75 cal. per cup. They are loaded with antioxidants, help fight colon cancer (according to [The World's Healthiest Foods at whfoods.com](http://TheWorld'sHealthiestFoods.com)), and decrease inflammation.

Don't peel your beets - it will make them "bleed" and you will lose precious nutrients that are in the skin. Beets can be cooked or raw, can be roasted, steamed, stewed, boiled, grilled and juiced. My personal favorite is roasted with a little olive oil, salt and pepper. As the natural

sugar cooks out, it caramelizes the beets and gives it a wonderful caramelized coating. Tossed with sautéed onions....can't be beat (no pun intended)!

So if you haven't eaten your beets yet - try them in a variety of ways until you find your favorite way to prepare them. And we would love to share any beet recipes you find. Let's all make our moms proud!

Honey and bee by-products by Annie's Apiary

We are almost into the honey season, and soon will have wonderful raw, unprocessed "vegetable honey" to sell our members. We call it vegetable honey (rather than clover, or orange blossom or one of the more popular store varieties) because our bees are out there pollinating our vegetables - and doing a great job of it. We will let you know when we have honey for sale, but in the meantime, Anne, our beekeeper has brought us the first of our other bee products - Beeswax lip balm. She will also be bringing us soap and solid beeswax, but for now, if anyone would like to purchase organic lip balm, we have it here at the farm for \$3.00/tube. While our beeswax is in this balm it also includes wax from other local farms in the region. It was so popular last season Anne had to put the farms together in order to make a big enough supply to fill the demand.

As a side note...a study was done at Texas A&M and found that 75% of store bought honey isn't actually honey at all anymore because the bee pollen has been removed, which takes out all the healthy nutritional benefit. Store bought honey is overprocessed, overheated and nutritionally deficient (where have we heard all this before??) So stay tuned and be patient - our bees are doing their thing and we should have natural, organic, raw honey soon.

Recipes for Week 3

Grilled Beets in Rosemary Vinegar

- 1/3 C. balsamic vinegar
- 1 tsp. chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 clove garlic - peeled and crushed
- 3 medium beets - sliced into 1/4" rounds

In medium bowl, mix vinegar, rosemary, garlic. Place beet slices in marinade for at least 20 minutes. Lightly oil the grill grate. Place beets and marinade mixture on a piece of foil, large enough to wrap all ingredients, and seal tightly. Place the foil packet on the hot grill, and cook 25 minutes or until beets are tender. Remove beets from packet and place directly on grill grate for 2-5 min. Serve hot.

Orzo with Kale

- 1 tsp. ground turmeric
- 2 cups uncooked orzo pasta
- 2 tbl. olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic, sliced
- 1 bunch kale, stems removed and leaves coarsely chopped (or use the stems and just cook them for a few minutes first)
- 1 large lemon, juiced
- 1/4 tsp. ground nutmeg
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese (or to taste)
- Salt & pepper to taste

Bring large pot of water to boil, sprinkle turmeric over the boiling water and stir in the orzo. Cook about 11 min. or until al dente. Drain and set aside.

Heat olive oil in large skillet. Cook garlic in oil for a few seconds until it begins to bubble. Stir in the kale, cover skillet and cook for 10 min. Remove cover and continue cooking and stirring until the kale is tender, about 10 min. more. Stir the kale mixture into the orzo along with the lemon juice, nutmeg and Parmesan cheese. Season with salt and pepper. Serve warm.

Thanks everyone...have a great week.

CSA Newsletter – Week 4

Dear CSA members,

I hope everyone is staying cool in this oppressive heat. I keep looking at our empty pool, just needing a little cleaning before we can fill it up. I'm hoping my boys will see cleaning the pool as a sweet deal to get out of weeding, and take on this challenge, because a nice cold pool of water sounds very enticing right now! Luckily our plants are not in the same boat - our watering schedule is working great and keeping everything alive and growing - although growing slower. As farmers, we tend to watch Mother Nature more closely and learn how the weather affects things - in ways that non-farmers would probably not take notice. You know how when it's really hot, you just don't feel like moving? You get lethargic and it's hard to get motivated to do anything outside in the heat? Well, we're not the only ones! The chickens, who had started laying more eggs again, have now slowed down again because of the heat. The plants, while staying alive thanks to the irrigation system, still have to reserve their energy to survive, and they do that by growing slower. Working out in the fields - we definitely don't move as fast in this heat as we do when we're out there planting in the spring!

We're watching the radar for some possible thunderstorms to give us a little bit of a break on the heat, but thankfully it looks like the 100 degree weather we had this past week will at least be replaced by the 90's this week. How crazy is that to be thankful for 90 degree weather?

So how are things looking out there? Well, the tomatoes are flowering and many plants have small tomatoes. Still several weeks away from tomato season, but luckily they love the hot weather, and as long as they're watered, they'll be happy. They're actually one of the few vegetables who suffer from too much water. Excessive water will make the tomatoes burst and crack and dilute their wonderful flavor. So they're happy right now. The pumpkin plants are looking really good, knock on wood, the best plants we've seen in several years. After getting all the sweet potato plants weeded last weekend, they're taking off and looking beautiful. Sweet potato plants are one of the most beautiful plants in the garden. They look like ivy, with dark green and purple leaves and they spread over the ground into a wonderful ground cover. In the upper fields the onions, who also don't suffer from lack of water or excessive heat, continue to grow and we'll know they're ready for harvesting when their green stalks turn brown and fall over. Then we dig them up, cut off the dead stalks and lay them in a single layer over an open shelving system where they "cure" or dry for a few days. That way, once you get them in your bag, they will last for weeks with proper storage. The garlic has started to turn brown and the stalks die, so we will be pulling them in the next week or so. With the garlic we hang them in bunches by their dead stalks until they are cured, so they too will last a long time with proper storage. And I'm just finishing my last bag of frozen minced garlic from last season, so I hope the garlic is ready soon!

Peppers, eggplants, cabbage, cauliflower, summer squash and green beans - all looking good with flowers and healthy plants and hopefully we'll be picking those in the next few weeks. We saw our first pepper this afternoon - a good sign when small plant are flowering. This week we will have to pick all the head lettuces (Nevada, butter crunch and Romaine) because they won't last much longer in this heat and even if they're smaller then they'd normally grow, we want you to have them before they start to turn bitter. Turnips are still growing strong - we gave you a break from them last week, but you'll see them again this week, and we'll see what else is harvestable this week when we walk the fields early tomorrow morning.

We've been waiting for cooler weather to transplant the celery from the hoophouse out into the field, but we may just have to go ahead and do it, because they're out of room in the hoophouse. We've planted the fall broccoli and cauliflower and hopefully on Tuesday we'll get some more lettuces and salad greens planted, as well as kohlrabi and brussel sprouts - also fall crops.

Holiday Pickup Schedule

The only day affected by the 4th of July holiday this week will be the Wednesday Crystal Lake pickup which we will do on Tuesday, July 3rd. Please remember if you are not going to be in town this week to pick up your bag, to let us know so we can plan our harvesting schedule accordingly. Otherwise, the pick up schedule will remain the same for everyone else.

Turnips - Bitter or Flavorful?

We've had a few members vocalize their dislike of the turnips - the bitter flavor not being a favorite. Turnips are one of my personal favorites, so I never thought of it as bitter, so much as just really flavorful. And cooking them with the honey glaze gave it a nice offset to the "flavorfulness." However, I started researching turnips online, and yes, it appears that turnips are considered a bitter root vegetable. (However I still stand by my opinion that it's just a mouthful of flavor!) So I searched for ways to cook turnips that might take the bitterness out of them, and below are some tips I found:

- If boiling turnips, add a potato to the boiling water. It will absorb the bitterness from the turnip and the boiling water.
- Combine mashed potatoes with mashed turnips to dilute the strong turnip flavor, and enhance the mashed potato flavor.
- Sautee turnips with apple slices to sweeten the flavor.
- Some ingredients that complement turnips are: brown sugar, butter, carrots, chives, cinnamon, garlic, ginger, lemon, mushrooms, onions, paprika, parmesan cheese, potatoes, salt, sherry, veggie broth, vinegar, white wine vinegar - try some of these ingredients to create your own turnip recipes

Organic pork available at the farm

Our returning members from last year may remember that Anthony Keisling of Brother Jon's Farm, our friend and an organic hog farmer from Woodstock, used to come to the farm once in a while on Mondays and Thursdays to sell his organic, free range, heritage breed pork. Well this year Anthony is not able to make it to the farm every week, so he has brought a freezer full of his pork over to the farm, where we can sell it to our members every week. He will have different cuts available at different times, but we should have something to offer each week, beginning tomorrow. For those of you who have bought Brother Jon's Farm pork in the past you know how tasty it is. For those of you who haven't, it is something special. Our own "pet" pig, Lottie is from Anthony's stock. We hope you'll take a look at what he has to offer and give our free range, organic pork a try!

-- Thanks everyone once again for your support in helping to keep local farming alive! We are working our hardest to bring you the best harvest possible this season!

Have a safe and happy holiday week!

CSA Newsletter – Week 5

Dear CSA members,

Again this week, my apologies for getting our newsletter out late. After spending all day yesterday clearing the weeds from our new batch of growing beets, my fingers had nothing left to offer the computer keyboard. But at least sitting in a breezy field of mid-80 temps seemed like a day at the beach compared to the preceding days of upper 90's and 100's. We are so thankful that this hot spell has broken, and we hope it's the last we'll see of its kind this season. Now if it would just rain!

I'd like to thank you all for your patience and understanding as we've struggled with this killer heat, which as evidenced by the bags these past two weeks, seriously hampered the growth of your vegetables. We remained diligent in our watering, which appears to have saved all our plants, and now with the cooler temps we expect to see all those blooms start to produce. We have lots of nice green tomatoes on the vines, and the squashes are making an appearance - we will have some zucchini this week, and if not enough for everyone, by next week there should be. While the normal temps will start the veggies growing again, it won't happen overnight, and this week will be a very telltale week to see exactly how the plants survived and move ahead.

One of our members asked us last week about our farming process, and how we work within the confines of Mother Nature in such extreme conditions. It prompted me to write a short piece about how exactly we do run an organic farm, pretty much exactly how farms were worked way back before the advent of chemicals and GMOs. I have shared it with you here as this week's newsletter. As soon as I know what we will be able to pick this week for your bags, I will follow up with a separate email with some recipe ideas.

Organic Farming 101

There are many factors in how successful a harvest is, and each individual vegetable variety has its own set of needs to produce an abundant crop. But overall, the main variables are water, soil, insects and temperature. I guess we can also put animals like rabbits and deer there also, but that is more of a problem for small backyard gardens where a couple of rabbits or a deer or two can completely decimate a garden.

We solved our watering problem this season with the installation of our drip line irrigation. We have spread 35,000 feet of drip lines on every row of vegetables and we have a timing spreadsheet for each week so we can keep track of what has been watered, and for how long. If we hadn't had this right now, I think we may have lost our entire crop of vegetables. So we are very thankful we are able to water, and water in such a way that the water goes deep into the soil and doesn't evaporate as it would from a sprinkler (which would also get the leaves wet and burn them in the hot sun).

The soil is also very important to good crop production. It needs to have certain levels of nutrients to sustain the plants. We add lime to all of our fields every year which helps the Ph balance of the soil. We also add tons of mulch which we get from local horse farms, which adds organic matter into the soil. Our mulch is a combination of horse manure/urine and wood chips, which composts into what we call "black gold." We also grow cover crops in the winter, like rye, which is basically a grass that keeps the soil from eroding, then when we plow it under in the spring adds nutritious organic matter back into the soil. Another important aspect of maintaining rich soil is to rotate our crops. So we never plant the same thing in the same place two years in a row. Even when we have a hugely successful crop of something, and it's tempting to plant it in the same place again the following year in hopes of another bumper crop - we don't do it.

Insects are the scourge of every organic farmer. Some plants never seem to be bothered by them, and some are a huge challenge every season. You've heard us talk about the potato bugs -probably our most devastating insect if we don't control it. They multiply fast and they can eat an entire potato plant in a day. We manually pick the bugs off the plants, and have to do it every day until their reproduction cycle is broken and there aren't enough bugs left to damage the plants. With twelve 500' rows of potatoes you can imagine what a time consuming job it is. Squash/cucumber bugs are our second most damaging insect and can also take out an entire squash and cucumber harvest. These are small flying bugs so can only be eliminated with an organic spray called Pyganic that we use. Pyganic is a botanical liquid derived from a chrysanthemum flower. Scott has to spray all the plants every day for several weeks while the plants are growing in order to keep them under control. He actually sprays all the plants in all the fields with Pyganic, which he mixes with an organic fertilizer made of kelp and fish meal (the fields smell like a beach when he's done spraying). The fertilizer gives the new growing plants an extra boost and the Pyganic helps give the plants a chance to grow big enough without insects to a point where they can fend for themselves. Because the Pyganic is organic, it has to be reapplied over and over. Unlike Roundup or other poisonous sprays, which seep into the soil and keep killing anything that it comes in contact with, the Pyganic washes away in the rain or dissipates in the watered soil.

That brings us to temperature - which has been our big farming challenge this year. Most plants thrive in a certain temperature range, and the vegetables we plant are meant to grow within that range. We live in "Zone 5". Zones are based on the coldest temps that are normal in the winter. They are also based on sunlight, normal water supply, number of days without frosts and soil quality for that zone. When we choose our seeds every winter, we choose seeds that are meant to grow in Zone 5. This means we won't be planting citrus trees or cactus plants. But luckily in Zone 5 we can grow almost anything else. And even in Zone 5, our plants can tolerate above average temperatures. And every year we get a few days in the upper 90's and even hit 100 once or twice. But when you have almost 3 weeks of consistently upper 90's and 100+ temps, we can only expect so much from our plants. Even with daily watering, most plants go into "survival mode." Some just wither and die - our sugar snap peas being a prime example. They are a cold hardy plant, meant for early spring and late fall. So they didn't stand a chance in the heat. The other plants that suffer the most are our lettuces. Lettuce leaves are very thin and tender, and the ongoing blistering heat and sun browns the leaves and makes them taste bitter. But those plants that can survive the heat go into a state of dormancy. This means they are putting all their energy into growing their roots down into the soil to look for cool and moist soil. They also tend to curl up their leaves in an effort to preserve energy and take in less sunlight. They stop growing their fruit, which is a big energy consumer for a plant. So while we have squash plants with 3" squash, and tomato plants with hard green tomatoes, until the temps cool down, they won't put their energy into growing these any further. And we as farmers just have to hope that the plants will hang on and come back to life and continue their cycle of growth, once we get back into normal temperatures for our zone.

In the meantime, we continue to water daily, pick and squash insects and weed, weed, weed (they don't seem to ever go dormant). On the converse...If we chose to not be organic, we could spray our chemical pesticides and all the insects would be gone (including the beneficial ladybugs, grubs and worms). We could spray our Roundup weed killer and not have to spend hours and hours in the hot sun pulling them by hand. But your vegetables would be poisoned, along with the soil and the stream that runs through our property into the Nippersink. And who knows what would happen to the few deer that do wander through our fields and munch on our poisonous leaves. We could use Genetically Modified Seeds (GMO) that are scientifically created in a lab to withstand temperature, insects and weeds, but at the cost of flavor, nutrition and the environment. So we have chosen to work a little harder to provide our family and yours the freshest, healthiest, and tastiest vegetables possible, working within the confines of what Mother Nature has to offer. And we feel it is important to make a socially conscious statement that we demand to have a choice in what we feed our family. Small family sustainable farms

must continue to thrive if we want to continue to have that choice. To that end, we thank you for your support of our local, sustainable, family run farm.

Thanks everyone...have a great week!

CSA Newsletter – Week 6

Dear CSA members,

It was a busy week around the farm but as we sat down this evening and looked over our list of "things to do" we were happy to be crossing several things off our list - always a good feeling. We plowed under several rows of "finished" crops (either finished from the hot weather, or finished because we harvested everything). After plowing and tilling those rows, we replanted some new crops. We planted a new crop of Nevada head lettuces which and a new crop of Rocky Top Salad mix. Unfortunately, this delicious blend of different leaf lettuces didn't survive June's desert weather and the whole crop bolted before we could harvest it for you. It actually bolted before the season even began. This time you should see it in your bags sometime in August. We are also planting a new crop of European Mesculin Salad Mix which also bolted from the heat before we could harvest it for our members at the beginning of the season. The kohlrabi and celery we planted last week are poking through the soil, along with a second planting of cucumbers. We also planted a third crop of radishes, the second planting you should see in your bags this week.

I spent a good part of today weeding carrots and Swiss chard, and was happy to see both looking good, as well as the radishes I weeded yesterday and the sweet potatoes from the day before (needless to say it will certainly be autumn before I get all this dirt out of my skin and nails). We made an executive farm decision this weekend and bought some NEW farm implements to help us keep a handle on controlling the weeds. I capitalize NEW, because as any of our members who have been to the farm and seen us working know, most of our equipment comes to use very used, often from retired farmers, and always in constant need of maintenance, which takes Scott away from being a farmer to being a mechanic. So we bought a field trimmer, which is like a weed eater on steroids. We push it between the rows like a push mower and it cuts down pretty much everything short of a tree. We also bought a new back tilled rototiller, which we can use between the rows once the field trimmer has done it's job. The end result is a nice clean row, which makes it much easier for us to just concentrate on hand pulling the weeds between the plants. So while we hated the added expense, we think it will make a big difference in not only controlling but conquering the unwelcomed plant life in the fields.

Judging by the much watched radar this past week, it looks like some of you got a good dose of rain. We, of course, were not so lucky. Had a little drizzle on Saturday morning, which if nothing else was nice to give the plant leaves a nice little rinse, but that was about it. Hopefully this week Mother Nature will feel a little more generous. Again, because everything is coming back to life at it's own pace, we won't know what will be in tomorrow's bags until we walk the fields in the morning. I'll send some receipts or food tips out once we see what's out there for the week.

Honey coming soon!

Many of you have been asking when our bee hives will start producing their delicious organic "vegetable honey". I spoke to our beekeeper, Ann, over the weekend and she will be coming over this week to extract the honey and bottle it up and should be bringing it to us later this week. Our honey is pure, raw, unprocessed and delicious. I'm not sure what size bottles she is putting it in, so I don't know the price yet, but will let you know as soon as we know. We should also have the other bee products also, like beeswax and soap, and we already have the lip balm here at the farm for sale.

Spotlight on Community Supported Local Businesses

Just as you support our farm through the CSA, we would like to support our members who also have locally owned businesses. You have been spreading the word about Green Earth Farm, and we'd like to spread the word about you! If you own a family business that is locally operated and open to the public, we would love to spotlight your business in our newsletter. Our

members may be looking for exactly what you have to offer! Just send me an email with a short paragraph about your business and I'll put it in the newsletter to share with all our CSA members. Here are a couple of shout outs for this week:

Wholesome Harvest Meals - Jaclyn Trimble

I am a local Personal Chef, located in Twin Lakes, WI, and I just wanted to give everyone a little information about what I do. This is my first year as a Green Earth Farm CSA member, and I am very excited about it! I graduated with a Culinary Arts degree from Milwaukee Area Technical College, and I started Wholesome Harvest Meals about a year ago. I offer custom created meals prepared fresh right in your home (weekly/biweekly/monthly). I have always had a love for food, but my other passion is the beauty of nature. From that, my specialty of using local, sustainable ingredients in my cooking has blossomed.

I offer a no cost consultation, where we discuss your likes and dislikes, as well as any special nutritional requirements. After a menu is agreed upon, we can choose a 'cook date' most convenient for you. I will come to your home with my equipment as well as all of the groceries needed. Your meal will then be prepared exactly the way you requested. I then package up and label all of your meals with proper heating instructions, and then place them in your refrigerator or freezer. After I clean up, your kitchen will be spotless (yet smell delicious!!) and your refrigerator/freezer will be filled with delicious, nutritious meals using the finest local ingredients!

To set up your no cost consultation, please call me at [414-405-8168](tel:414-405-8168), or email at wholesomeharvestmeals@gmail.com.

Heal 'N Glow - Joanna Puciata

Joanna was a CSA member last year, when her new holistic, organic skin and health products took off, and put her on the road traveling to promote her products. She is a Certified Holistic Health Coach and Board Certified Drugless Practitioner who has created a line of skin and health products, and also does personal health coaching. Here is a description of the product she offers: "I believe that what one puts into the body is equally important as what one puts on the body. The chemical additives, preservatives, colorings and fragrances, methyparabens, sulfates to name a few commonly used in food and cosmetic industries, disrupt hormonal and enzymatic activities creating spikes in all sorts of unnecessary and preventative diseases and deaths. They all contribute to human moods and depressions, creating an unhappy and unhealthy nation." Joanna will be leaving some of her products with us at the farm and anyone interested can purchase them on Mondays and Thursdays. You can learn more about her and her business at www.healandglow.com.

Thanks everyone....have a great week!

CSA Newsletter – Week 7

Dear CSA Members,

Well, we finally got that rain we've all been praying and dancing for for so long! I think we got about 3 inches here at the farm, and it was wonderful to walk the fields the next morning and see how vibrant and healthy the leaves looked again on the plants. All clean from weeks of dirt and dust, they looked as happy as we felt. The only casualty we saw from the heavy wind was that the delicate flowers on the pepper plants blew off, so now they will have to reproduce their flowers. But the plants themselves looked like they grew six inches overnight, and we see the first of the banana peppers coming out. The other casualty from the storm was my office. One side of our roof has been due for replacing and we've had a few leaks over the years. Well, this past storm brought all those leaks to a crescendo and the ceiling in my office collapsed. Luckily I happened to get up around 3:00 a.m. and noticed my office light was on. I went to turn it off, saw the dripping bowed ceiling, woke Scott and we scurried to get my computer, printer and the rest of my office equipment moved out, just before the ceiling caved in. So needless to say, Scott put a new roof on that side of the house yesterday. And now we just have a gaping hole in my ceiling to fix, and in the meantime I'm working out of the kitchen. So what else is going on around the farm...

Onions are pretty much done growing and we will be pulling them this week. How do we know when the onions are done growing? The green tops fall over and lay on the ground. From that point, the onions won't grow any bigger. What we've been giving you is fresh out of the ground onions. Now we will pull them, cut the stems and dry them so they are cured in such a way that when properly stored will last a long time. We are also pulling the garlic this weekend, and will do the same thing with it. We hang them in bunches to dry for about a week, then cut the stems, wipe off the dirt, and they too are cured for longevity. We will probably start digging up the potatoes next week, and are keeping our fingers crossed as to what kind of crop we have. It's the one vegetable we have no idea how it turns out until we actually dig it up. The other root vegetables start growing over the dirt so we can see how they are looking. The potatoes are 4-6 inches under the dirt, so until we plow them up, won't know how the drought affected them. Because we continuously mound dirt over the plants (so the potatoes don't become exposed) we're not sure how far down the water from the irrigation system seeps - but we have twelve 500 foot rows of four different potato varieties, and we can't wait to see what's out there. The tomatoes are growing beautifully and I hope by next week you will start seeing those in your bags.

The second planting of carrots is almost ready, and the turnips are done for the season. The cucumbers are flowering but were really dormant from the heat so the second planting of cucumbers may actually surpass the first planting. The eggplants are flowering and I saw one little finger length eggplant out there, so they are still a ways from coming to harvest. And the summer squash....well read on to learn how they are doing.

It's squash time!

You saw the beginning of the summer squash last week, and from walking the fields this morning, it looks like there's going to be a lot more where that came from. We have four different varieties of summer squash this season:

Black Zucchini - This is your typical green zucchini - some will be larger than others, but they will all have the same thin, edible skin. The larger ones will have a little larger seed - but totally edible. If you get a large zucchini, these are great for slicing and grilling or for stuffing. See recipes below for stuffed zucchini.

Golden Zucchini - Looks like the green zucchini, only a bright yellow. Sometimes they may come out a creamy color, or a variegated yellow and green. You can do anything with this variety as you can with the green zucchini.

Yellow Crookneck - This is the bright yellow squash that has the narrow curved "handle". Again - anything you do with a zucchini you can do with this squash. My favorite way to cook the crookneck is to slice thin and sauté in a little olive oil with onion and garlic. Seasoned with salt and pepper and fresh basil. Because of the heat, some of the crooknecks have a thicker, bumpy skin. If you get one with this bumpy skin you may want to just use a potato peeler and peel off the bumps, getting down to the more softer part of the skin. The bumpy part might be a little tougher when cooking.

Patty Pan / Scallop - We grew this variety for the first time last season, and people really enjoyed it, mostly because of the unique shape. This white, round "scallop edged" squash can also be cooked just like a zucchini (seeing a pattern here?). They're great sliced and grilled or sauteed. You can also cut out the middle and stuff them for a really fun looking dish.

From Asparagus to Zucchini - A Guide to Cooking Farm-Fresh Seasonal Produce

I came across this cookbook by accident when I was looking for new ways to market our CSA. It's produced in Wisconsin, and is a wonderful resource for recipes for the veggies you are getting from us, as well as a short "bio" on each vegetable, plus storing, preserving and canning tips. There is also information about the importance of buying and eating locally grown in season food (in case I haven't dumped enough of that info on you!), and I think it's really a "must have" book for anyone who is a member of a CSA. I can order the book in bulk (10+ copies) and get a discounted price. If you are interested in ordering this book, let me know and I'll be happy to order for our CSA members. The cost would be \$16.00. I'll have my copy out on Monday and Thursday so farm pick up members can look at it if they'd like before ordering. (I got the Chocolate-Beet cake I emailed last week from this book.)

Recipes for Week 7

Stuffed Zucchini

Take any large zucchini, cut lengthwise and scoop out the seeds. Bake at 350 for about 20 min. - just until the squash meat starts getting soft. In the meantime, prepare any kind of stuffing you like. My favorite is to brown a pound of ground beef, and add taco seasoning mix, according to package directions. When the squash is ready, fill it with the taco meat, and sprinkle with shredded cheddar cheese. Return to oven for another 10-15 minutes, until squash is thoroughly cooked and cheese is melted. Serve with sour cream and salsa.

Other variations you can stuff with is a regular bread stuffing, or a mixture of cooked veggies, like tomatoes, onions, garlic, and basil. Stuff and sprinkle with your favorite cheese.

Baked Garlic

You'll be getting a lot of garlic for the remainder of the season - probably 1-2 full bulbs in each bag. While in my opinion, nothing should be cooked without garlic, garlic cooked all by itself is also a delicious treat. Just place a full bulb of garlic in a covered dish and bake at 350 until soft to the touch. It will be different cooking times depending on the size of the bulb. Cool for about 10 minutes, then gently pull the cloves apart from each other. Squeeze a clove of soft, warm garlic onto a cracker or french bread.

Savory Zucchini Bake (taken from Asparagus to Zucchini)

Ingredients

3 cups peeled and grated zucchini (or any of the summer squashes)

1 cup Bisquick

1 cup chopped onion

1/2 tsp. each salt and pepper
1 tbl. minced garlic
1/2 - 1 1/2 cups grated Parmesan or Swiss cheese
2 tbl. chopped fresh parsley
1/2 tsp. seasoned salt
1/2 tsp. dried oregano
1/2 cup oil
4 eggs, beaten

Heat oven to 350. Grease a 9 by 13 pan. Mix all ingredients and pour into pan. Bake 30 minutes.

Kale Chips

Wash kale and pat dry with paper towels. Cut off stems. Cut kale leaves into large "potato chip" sized pieces. Place in a single layer on a lightly greased cookie sheet. Spray the kales pieces with a vegetable spray, and salt or season to your liking. Bake at 350 for 10-15 minutes, checking often to take them out just as they feel stiff or crisp to the touch. Let cool in cookie sheet. Store in a zip lock bag.

Thanks everyone... have a great week!

CSA Newsletter – Week 8

Dear CSA members,

It almost seems like a normal Chicago summer with the nice rainfall and lower temps that we've had these past couple of weeks. While a couple of 99-100 degree days snuck in again, overall it's been more pleasant to work outside, even with the higher humidity. The plants are all looking great and the summer and winter squash plants have pretty much taken over a good part of the upper field. Picking the winter squash won't be such a chore when they're ready because we pick them all at the same time so it doesn't matter if we step on the plants. But the summer squash is a real challenge because we pick them only on pickup or delivery days and the plants have spread so much that the rows are no longer visible and we have to carefully walk between the plants without stepping on any of the vining arms. This past week Scott made a "walk in cooler" so we can have more time to pick carefully by picking earlier in the morning, then putting your produce in our cooler to keep it fresher. He took a window air conditioner and put it in our small barn office, which when blasting on high, keeps the room nice and cold.

I know everyone is waiting for tomatoes (as are we - I have several pounds of bacon, just waiting to fry up for those first BLTs). The vines are covered with green tomatoes and the plants are filled with flowers, and we're just waiting for the tomatoes to start turning color. We've picked 3-4 at a time that have turned, but obviously we need a lot more than that to provide to our CSA members. And when tomatoes start turning - they turn fast. So we won't know in advance when they're going to be ready, they'll just be ready.

Our second planting of carrots is almost ready as are the potatoes and the first planting of cabbage. Some of you will have cabbage this week, and those of you who don't should have it in the next couple of weeks. It looks like the green cabbage is growing faster than the red, so that will come first. The pepper plants took a huge leap in growth in the past two weeks from the rain and we may be picking some banana peppers this week. The Anaheim peppers are close behind, and as usual, the bell peppers are the slower growing and are still several weeks away.

The eggplants look great, full of flowers and a few have small purple fruit on them. Believe it or not we still have beets from the first planting that you've been seeing, and today I'll spend the better part of the day weeding the second planting of beets. I think it's safe to say that this season is the year of the kale and the beets.

Mini-Vacation for the Mors

For our **Thursday farm pick up members**, this coming weekend is our annual mini-vacation where all my family gets together in Michigan at my brother's lake house. We will be leaving on Thursday, Aug. 2, as soon as the boxes are picked and ready for pickup. So when you come, we won't be there, but we will have all the boxes on the front porch (still drying garlic in the pole barn), so as usual, just pick your box, and fill your bag. If you could do us one favor, and once you've filled your box if you could turn the box over, that way if it rains over the weekend, the box won't get ruined. I'll send out a reminder on Thursday morning too.

Summer squash won't stop for a while!

If any of you have read Barbara Kingsolver's book, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* you might remember the chapter about zucchini season when all the church goes in a small town roll up their windows and lock their car doors when they go to church, otherwise when they come out their cars would have a pile of zucchini sitting in the front seat - a gift from well-meaning neighbors who have more squash than they know what to do with.

So what do you do with all the squash you are getting in your bags? It won't be stopping any time soon. Of course eating it every night is one solution - I know we have been. Grilling, sautéing, stuffed and baked, dipped in bread crumbs, baked and dipped in ranch dressing, zucchini bread of course, and in stews, soups and casseroles. If after all this you still have left over squash, just grate and freeze for future use. Once summer squash is frozen and thawed it's perfect for soups, stews and zucchini bread. Just wash the zucchini and if it is a large one

(which will have bigger seeds) just scoop out the seeds then grate - skin and all. Measure into 2 cup portions and freeze in a ziplock bag. One thawed for use, there will be a lot of juice in the bag. Use that also in your baking or cooking as it is still part of the squash and would be considered in the ingredients when using fresh. When storing zucchini fresh before use, store it at the front of the refrigerator shelves rather than the back, as the back is colder and zucchini tends to freeze easily, then won't be as good to use fresh.

2012 Farm Bill Update

Usually once a season I put on my activist hat, get on my soapbox and share information either about the evils of GMO and Monsanto, or something going on in Congress that will hurt farmers like us. Some of you keep abreast of the Farm Bill that comes up for change and new passage every five years, the next one being in 2012. (I know you do because you send me news tips that you see about the Farm Bill, which helps keep me informed). Republican leaders are pushing to extend the current bill as is for another year, using the drought that is covering much of the U.S. as a reason for not making any changes. There are several programs that are up for passage in the 2012 farm bill that would be a significant boost to small family farms and sustainable and organic farmers such as ours. Some of the new programs threatened to be put on hold for another year are:

- Rural Microentrepreneur Assistance Program
- Rural Energy for America Program grants and loans
- Conservation Reserve Program – Transition Incentive Program
- Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program
- Outreach and Assistance to Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers
- Organic Agriculture Research and Extension Initiative
- National Organic Certification Cost Share Program
- Specialty Crop Research Initiative
- Farmers Market Promotion Program

If this bill is indeed put on hold for a year, it would be the first time in history that a law has been passed to extend the farm bill, setting a dangerous precedent for letting it happen from year to year for various insignificant reasons. This would keep important reforms out of the bill - reforms that would help small family farms stay in business and offer what we do as an alternative to what Monsanto would like to see on everyone's dinner table. How can you help? Send an email to our state representatives and say NO to extending the Farm Bill. You can email Dick Durbin at <http://durbin.senate.gov> and Mark Kirk at www.kirk.senate.gov.

Asparagus to Zucchini Cookbook

In last week's newsletter I mentioned a great cookbook that I had found online and offered to buy in bulk for our CSA members at a cost of \$16.00. One of our members found the same book online at magazines.com (the link is below) and for a little bit less, with a 10% off coupon through the end of July and free shipping. The code for the discount is "books10off". Magazines.com has it listed for \$15.96 before the discount. I've really enjoyed the recipes from this book (and thank you to our member Linda who shared with me a couple of slices of the chocolate beet cake she made from this book. I thought it was delicious) and recommend it to any of you looking for new recipes for your CSA vegetables and who are interested in learning more about storing and prep tips also. I will still be happy to buy the book in bulk if we have 10 people who would like it, or you can buy it yourself online at the link below.

<http://www.magazines.com/from-asparagus-to-zucchini/28322-BK-287622.default.pd.html>

Recipes for Week 8 (I'll send some more when I know what we are harvesting)

Lemony Kale Salad

- 1 T fresh lemon juice
- 1 T olive oil
- ½ t sugar
- ½ t pepper
- ¼ t salt
- 4 C torn kale leaves
- 2 C torn Swiss chard leaves
- 4 T unsalted pumpkin seed kernels
- ¼ C sliced green onions (about 2)
- 1 oz shaved pecorino Romano

Combine first 5 ingredients, stir until sugar dissolves. Add kale and chard, toss and let stand 10 minutes. Heat skillet over medium heat, add pumpkin seed kernels, cook 5 minutes or until brown stirring frequently. Add kernels, onions and cheese to greens and toss.

Vegetable Grilling Sauce

- 3 T olive oil
- 2 T oregano
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ¼ t rosemary

Mix together well and brush on vegetables on each side as they grill - about 4 min. per side.

Thanks everyone...have a great week!

CSA Newsletter – Week 9
August 5, 2012

Dear CSA members,

We are having a very relaxing break from the farm, the veggies and the weeds (and yes, the newsletter too). We'll be back later this evening to get ready for week 9, and will send out an email with some recipes when we see what's out there ready for harvest this week. Thanks everyone! Hope you're all having a great weekend.

CSA Newsletter – Week 10

August 12, 2012

Dear CSA members,

I can't believe we are already beginning week 10 of the season. This summer seems to be flying by, even though working in the fields during those long hot days of June and July made us feel like the days and weeks dragged on forever! If the remainder of the summer continues with the upper 70's and low 80's predicted for this coming week, you won't hear a complaint out of us. Scott and I took a long walk through all the fields yesterday looking at what we will harvest for this week and how the remainder of the season is looking. I know everyone is getting a major overdose of the summer squash, and I hope you're finding creative ways to prepare it. I did a Google search this morning to look for information on exactly why zucchini (and all the summer squash varieties) are so prolific. I didn't find an answer to my question, but I did find a ton of blogs from backyard gardeners and other small farmers looking for ideas of what to do with their own inexhaustible supply of zucchini. It made me feel a little better knowing that others are out there drowning in a sea of squash. I was at the hair stylist the other day, flipping through a magazine and saw a headline "More Zucchini Recipes!" I immediately turned to those pages, looked around to make sure no one was looking and quietly tore the pages from the magazine and tucked them into my purse. We are all that desperate to find ways to prepare rather than dispose of our summer squash. It looks like last week might have been the peak week, and they might start slowing down, but we'll for sure continue having it for several more weeks.

The good news is, right around the corner is the winter squash season, and we have six varieties this year: buttercup, acorn, jumbo banana, spaghetti, butternut and delicata. The difference between summer and winter squash is that where all the summer squash varieties basically taste the same, each winter squash variety is unique and different. Spaghetti squash comes out in long noodly strands, buttercup is creamy, like eating a cup of butter, acorn is more meaty - they are all delicious in their own right. And the best thing about the winter squash is that when it's stored properly, it can last into the winter. We will do the initial "hardening" of the squash before you get it in your bag, then we will give you storing instructions for longevity. I'm saying this because after walking the fields yesterday, all indications are that the winter squash harvest will be just as prolific as the summer squash - which is more exciting to us because we'd love for the CSA season to end this year with all our members having a good storage of fresh produce to last into the winter.

Other veggies looking good are the carrots, which we will begin pulling this week, green beans - which some of you had in your bag last week, and now that we pulled the initial beans they're growing back in greater quantities and we hope everyone will see them this week. We will finish pulling the onions this week and should have those for several weeks to come. The leeks didn't grow like they did last year, but we have a lot out there. Last season's members may remember that they saw leeks in their boxes every week for more than half the season, and we had to really scramble to find what to do with all of them. This year, they're smaller, but will still be just as tasty, and you may start seeing them this week. We still have beets to pull from the first planting, and the second planting now has ping-pong ball sized beets. Our third planting of radishes should be ready this week (the second planting completely failed and we had to plow them under). Cabbages continue to grow and we'll have those for a couple more weeks, and we are very excited to give you potatoes this week. We planted four varieties of potatoes this year, 2 red varieties, white and russets. The reds are the first to be ready, so that's what we will have for week 10. We also replanted the European Mesculin salad mix after the first planting bolted before the season even began (thank you hot temps in March), so it's coming up again now, and hopefully we can get out there to get it weeded while it's still small, so we'll have that in a few weeks. We will also be planting bok choy and more head and leaf

lettuces for the fall, so we'll keep our fingers crossed that the weather behaves so they'll have a fair shot at harvesting.

We continue to be very pleased with the season thus far given the weather challenges, and we'll continue to do our best to bring you a choice variety of produce each week.

Anyone want to play in the dirt?

This week is our last week of having the boys at home to help in the field. Avi and Tomi start back to school on Friday, and next Tuesday we take David down to U of I in Champaign where he will begin college, majoring in Acting and Theatre. Our farm hand, Martin also goes back to school after next week. He works in the Chicago school system and this is his last week with us before heading back to his "real job." So if anyone out there has a hankering to get their hands dirty and work a few hours pulling weeds...well, you know where to find us and we welcome any and all volunteer weeders!

Inspection Volunteers

Each year, in order to maintain our Certified Naturally Grown certification we have to have an inspection done of our farm and fields. We can either have a triangle of three farms each do a farm inspection, in which case we only have to do one inspection. The other option is to have three individuals, not farmers, do our inspection. The farm we had hoped to have do our inspection hasn't been able to send anyone over yet and we're getting to the time when CNG will start pushing to get our inspection in. So we are looking for three volunteers who can give an hour of their time to come by and walk around the farm completing our inspection form. If anyone would like to help us, just email me and we'll work out a time that's convenient to you. Your help would be greatly appreciated.

Thinking ahead to next season

As our returning members know, we're coming up on the time of year when we open up the CSA membership for the next season. Opening up the membership so early allows people to make monthly payments, and it gives us up front capital to start planning and purchasing for the next season. Our ultimate goal is to have about 90% of our membership be returning members. We would love to be your farmer every year. This year we were at about 50% returning members which was a huge jump from previous years. Beginning in September we will start marketing the farm and CSA through flyers placed in different locations, exhibiting at green fairs and any other creative ways we can think of to market the CSA. Any suggestions are welcomed, and if anyone would like to place flyers at their place of business, we'll be happy to send you some. We may also decide to add another drop-off location if that's what it takes to fill the membership in 2013. We hope we will see you all back as members of the farm again next year.

Recipes for Week 10

Fast and Easy Zucchini

Preheat oven to 350. Slice zucchini (or any of the summer squash) into quarter inch slices and place on a cookie sheet. Sprinkle with parmesan cheese and seasoning salt and bake for 20 minutes. To eat, dip in ranch dressing or sour cream.

Hot Cabbage Slaw

- 2 bacon strips (or one Tbl. vegetable oil)
- 1/4 cup chopped onion
- 6 cups shredded cabbage
- Chopped fresh dill to taste
- Pinch of sugar

- salt & pepper to taste
- 1 Tbl. vinegar

Chop the bacon, fry in skillet, remove and drain on paper towel (or heat oil if using vegetable oil). Add onion to oil and sauté until soft, about 5 minutes. Add 2 Tbl. water, cabbage, dill, sugar, salt and pepper. Cover and simmer until wilted but still crunch. Add bacon and vinegar and toss. Serve warm.

Banana Pepper Appetizer

Cut banana peppers lengthwise and take out seeds and membrane. Put on a cookie sheet and stuff with feta cheese. Sprinkle with fine bread crumbs and bake at 350 for about 15 minutes.

Sweet and Spicy Summer Squash

- 2 Tbl. olive oil
- 3-4 cups summer squash, cut into 3/4 inch pieces
- 1/2 cup diced onion
- 1 leek, chopped
- 2 Hungarian peppers (or any pepper in your veggie bag), seeded and chopped
- 3 Tbl. honey
- salt & pepper

Heat oil in skillet; add squash, onions, leeks, and peppers, and saute until tender. Drizzle honey over vegetables. Stir in salt & pepper to taste. Turn off heat, cover and let stand 3-4 minutes.

Thanks everyone...have a great week!

CSA Newsletter – Week 11

August 19, 2012

Dear CSA members,

We hope everyone enjoyed the big beautiful bags of veggies last week. It's amazing what a little rain and seasonal temps will do for food production! We hope this week's bags will be just as big. We have really been enjoying this milder weather and trying to take advantage of it to work a little faster and a little longer to catch up on those never ending weeds. Thanks to everyone who has emailed or mentioned when they picked up their bags that they'd like to come out and work in the field a bit and help us with the weeding. As I mentioned - we are almost always here, so just give me a call or send me an email and let me know when you'd like to come out and we will get you set up. Any of your own personal weeding implements you should bring, as well as gloves or a wheel cart if you like to use one. I do have one cart here but it doesn't work very well (I think I finally wore it out this season).

Organics and Weeds

For those of you pick up members who are dismayed when you drive down the driveway and see how weedy the upper field looks - don't be! This is actually what an organic field usually looks like. Most small farms like our focus on the weeds that grow right up next to the plant - those are the weeds we have to get out because they're taking growing room and soil nutrients away from the vegetables. Then as time allows, we clean in between the rows of vegetables with our field trimmer and small rototiller.

Unfortunately, those are the rows where the big tall weeds stick out and make everything just look weedy. At some point in the season most of the veggie plants are so big and well established they can actually hold their own among the weeds and we don't have to worry about them so much. We do our best to keep it weeded at that point just to make it easier for us to pick your vegetables. This year, because the summer and winter squash plants and pumpkins are so incredibly healthy and vining all over the place they are actually killing the weeds themselves by just growing over them and keeping them from getting light. The rest of the onions are ready to be pulled and dried, so we won't have to worry about weeding those anymore.

We will also be pulling the leeks every week until they're gone, so we won't have to worry about weeding them anymore either. We got all the eggplants weeded this weekend and were thrilled to see how many beautiful fruit are on the plants. Hopefully some of you will see those in your box this week. Right now our weeding focus is on the new carrots coming up, the European mesculin salad mix that is growing and the bok choy and head lettuces we just planted this week. Now, as those little plants start poking through the soil, they'll become consumed with weeds almost overnight if we're not vigilant about keeping them weeded. And I'll be spending the majority of today in the tomato field, weeding the final row of tomatoes. Once that row is finished we won't have to weed the tomatoes anymore, as the plants are so large at this point that by the time the weeds start to be a problem the tomatoes will probably be finished for the season anyways. And while I'm weeding the tomatoes, I'll be enjoying seeing all the pumpkins growing right next to them.

Turkey lottery coming soon

It looks like again this season we will have to do a lottery for our holiday turkeys. We started out with about 100 eggs - many of which never hatched for some unknown reason. Then with those poults who didn't make it, we ended up with about 20 turkeys to sell this season. We can't predict the full grown size of any of the birds, but I would guess they'll be about the same size as last year, which is 7 - 12 lbs. Oddly enough when we have a large flock they seem to

grow bigger and when we have a small flock they don't grow as large. And we don't know if the heat and drought will have had any effect on their growth rate.

The harvested birds will again be \$7.50/lb. and you can let us know what day you'd like to pick up your harvested bird - usually the week of Thanksgiving or Christmas. If you'd like to be in the lottery, let me know and I'll put your name in the "hat". We will draw the names around the beginning of October. If you've never tried a heritage, free range organic turkey, it is a special treat. It is a juicy, meaty bird with incredible flavor. We will try to find other providers in the area for anyone who would like one but doesn't have their name drawn in our lottery.

Hackmatack Wildlife Refuge

After eight years of hard advocacy work the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge has become a reality. The 11,000 acre refuge was officially designated in a ceremony at Glacial Park on Wednesday, August 15th, with Senator Dick Durbin and Secretary of the Interior, Ken Salazar making the announcement. This is the first and only refuge in northern Illinois, and with it not only will native plants, animals and birds be protected and allowed to flourish, it will bring an economic boost to the region as more people come to enjoy the recreational and educational aspects of a nature preserve.

The Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge is a donut shaped area of land in northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin, including land in McHenry County and Walworth County. Green Earth Farm sits right in the middle of this donut. For more information about the exciting new refuge, go to: www.hackmatacknwr.org.

Recipes for Week 11

Asian Cabbage Salad

- 1 head of fresh raw cabbage, cored and sliced fine
- 2 oranges, sectioned and cut into chunks
- 1 cup of cilantro leaves
- 1 tbsp sugar
- 2 cups shredded/diced chicken
- 1/4 cup sliced almonds, toasted
- Salt and pepper to taste

Toss all ingredients. Drizzle vinaigrette over top.

Asian Vinaigrette (makes enough for several servings)

- 1 tbs Dijon mustard
- 1/2 tbs soy sauce
- 2 tbs rice wine vinegar
- 1/2 tbs sesame oil
- 1/4 cup peanut oil
- 1 tsp sugar

Greek Style Grilled Squash

- 2 small yellow summer squash, thinly sliced
- 2 small zucchini, thinly sliced
- 1 medium tomato, seeded and chopped
- 1/4 cup pitted ripe olives
- 2 tablespoons chopped green onion
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 3/4 teaspoon garlic salt

- 1/4 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1/8 teaspoon pepper
- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese

Place the yellow squash, zucchini, tomato, olives and onion on a double thickness of heavy-duty foil (about 17 in. x 18 in.). Combine the oil, lemon juice, garlic salt, oregano and pepper; pour over vegetables. Fold foil around mixture and seal tightly.

Grill, covered, over medium heat for 30-35 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Open foil carefully to allow steam to escape.

Transfer vegetables to a serving bowl. Sprinkle with cheese. **Yield:** 4 servings.

Eggplant, Zucchini, and Tomato Tian

- 1 pound eggplant, cut diagonally into 1/4-inch-thick slices
- 1 pound zucchini, cut diagonally into 1/4-inch-thick slices
- Cooking spray
- 1 pound tomatoes, peeled, seeded, and cut into 1/4-inch-thick slices
- 1 1/2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 1/4 teaspoon salt, divided
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, divided
- 4 ounces French bread baguette
- 1 cup (4 ounces) grated fresh Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh oregano
- 1 1/2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/4 cup fat-free, less-sodium chicken broth

1. 1. Preheat oven to 375°.
 2. 2. Arrange eggplant and zucchini in a single layer on a baking sheet coated with cooking spray. Lightly coat vegetables with cooking spray. Bake at 375° for 15 minutes. Arrange half of eggplant in a single layer in an 11 x 7-inch glass or ceramic baking dish coated with cooking spray. Top with half of zucchini and half of tomato. Drizzle 2 1/4 teaspoons oil evenly over vegetables. Sprinkle vegetables evenly with 1/8 teaspoon salt and 1/8 teaspoon black pepper.
 3. 3. Place bread in a food processor; process until coarse crumbs measure 2 cups. Add cheese and next 4 ingredients (through garlic) to processor; process until combined. Sprinkle 1 1/2 cups breadcrumb mixture evenly over tomato. Repeat layers with remaining eggplant, zucchini, tomatoes, oil, salt, pepper, and breadcrumb mixture. Pour broth over top. Bake at 375° for 1 hour or until vegetables are tender and topping is browned.

Thanks everyone - have a great week!

CSA Newsletter – Week 12

August 27, 2012

Dear CSA Members,

Here we are, entering week 12 of our CSA season, and we're excited at what is still growing out there! Scott checked the sweet potatoes yesterday, digging into the ground around the first plant to see how things looked, and came up with 2 huge sweet potatoes! (see picture on my Facebook page). Hopefully this is an indication of a good sweet potato crop - with no little piggies to dig them up this year! Winter squashes will continue growing until the plants start to die. Once the leaves have turned brown and died, we'll be able to see all the squash out there which is now hiding under the canopy of leaves.

The tomatoes are still looking good and producing so we should still have them for several weeks. Our leeks never grew to the huge size they did last year, but they're still as tasty, and you'll see those in your box this week, probably the last of them for the season. The new planting of beets and carrots are ready for harvesting and the peppers are becoming more abundant. Some of you saw eggplants in your bags last week, and hopefully those of you who didn't, will get them this week.

The newest planting of head lettuces, daikon radishes (looks like a white carrot) and bok choy has all come up and looks good - now to keep the weeks from growing faster than them. We are planning to dig up another couple of rows of potatoes for this week, but we'll have to wait and see how much rain we get today to determine if we can get the tractor into the field. I don't think anyone had kale in their bags last week - after 10 weeks (and actually even more than that because it was ready back in March!) the kale is finally starting to slow down. We may do a final picking of it this week. However, the Red Russian kale in the upper field that burned out from the heat looks like it's coming back to life, so we need to get out there and cut off the dead leaves and new leaves may come back. It would be awesome to have kale the entire season! If the rain stops I will be out weeding the kohlrabi today. It didn't look like it was going to grow, then when the temps cooled down a bit they popped out of the ground. So we'll see what comes of those.

We hope everyone has been enjoying the season so far and able to use up all their veggies - especially these past couple of weeks where the bags have been pretty big. Canning is super easy and a great way to preserve almost any veggie to enjoy during the winter months. There are many online sites that

Labor Day pickup

I wanted to put out a feeler to see if we should keep our farm pickup on Monday - Labor Day (Sept. 3) or move it to Tuesday. We are good with either day. I haven't spoken to Dr. Shaw in Gurnee yet, but I'm assuming her office will be closed and we will do the Gurnee drop off on Tuesday or Wednesday. If you will not be able to pickup at the farm next Monday, please let me know. Or if you just prefer to pick up on Tuesday so you don't have to come out here on a holiday, let me know that also.

Weeding and inspecting

Thanks to all of you who offered to come and help us with our annual inspection. I'll be contacting you this week to see if we can schedule a time to get this completed. And also thanks to all of you who expressed an interest in coming to the farm some sunny and not too hot day to spend a few hours helping us do battle against the enemy. Our motto here is: Weeders need not apply. Just come on over! We appreciate any and all help.

8 Ingredients you never want to see on a nutrition label

Every once in a while I come across an article related to nutrition that I feel compelled to pass along. You already care enough about what you feed your family by being a CSA member, so you undoubtedly are familiar with the ongoing debate about non-food ingredients in so much of the processed food available in the grocery store. Below is a link to an article that names and describes 8 ingredients we should all be on the lookout for, and when we see them - steer clear! Unless we only eat fruits, vegetables, grains and grass-fed organic meat or wild caught fish, it's practically impossible to avoid all dangerous (or at best questionable) ingredients in our food. But knowledge is power and the more we know, the better equipped we are to avoid undesirable food choices whenever possible. I hope you'll take a few minutes to click on the link below and read the article.

<http://health.yahoo.net/experts/eatthis/8-ingredients-you-never-want-see-nutrition-label#.UDeF0yJ6N8w.gmail>

Looking towards the 2013 CSA Season

I am in the process of printing out our flyers advertising the CSA for next year, the 2013 season. If anyone would be interested in taking some to your work, church, book club, fitness center, or anywhere else that you know people who might be interested in our farm and CSA are, I'd be happy to give you some brochures to take. Just let me know.

Recipes for Week 12

Zucchini Jam

6 cups peeled, seeded and grated zucchini
6 cups granulated sugar
2 tablespoons lemon juice
1 (20 ounce) can crushed pineapple, drained
3 small boxes apricot gelatin (or strawberry, orange or any flavor)

Combine zucchini, sugar, lemon juice and drained pineapple. (Add no liquid.) Cook and stir. Bring to a boil and cook an additional 5 minutes.

Remove and add gelatin. Pour into jelly jars and process for 10 minutes in boiling water bath.

The jam does not get firm until opened and refrigerated.

Easy Sauer Kraut

This is how many pioneers made sauerkraut.

5 pounds mature cabbage
3 1/2 Tbl. salt
Cold water

Remove outer leaves and cut clean cabbage very fine. Mix well with salt. Pack firmly into clean sterile quart jars. Fill jars with cold water. Be sure water goes to the bottom of the jars. Remove any air bubbles by inserting a knife where you can see bubbles in jars. Put on cap and screw the band tight. Kraut will ferment in 4 or 5 days.

When fermentation is over, wash jars, tighten bands, and store without processing. Will be ready to cook with pork or hot dogs in 6 to 8 weeks. This keeps for many months in a cool place.

Spicy Zucchini Relish

- 5 cups *shredded zucchini*
- 1 cup *grated onion*
- 4-1/2 teaspoons *salt*
- 1-1/2 teaspoons *cornstarch*
- 1-1/2 teaspoons *ground mustard*
- 1-1/2 teaspoons *ground turmeric*
- 1 teaspoon *celery seed*
- 3/4 teaspoon *pepper*
- 3/4 cup *white vinegar*
- 1/2 cup *finely chopped sweet red pepper*
- 4-1/2 teaspoons *chopped seeded Serrano pepper*

In a large resealable plastic bag, combine the zucchini, onion and salt. Seal bag and turn to coat; refrigerate for 8 hours or overnight. Rinse with water; drain.

In a large saucepan, combine the cornstarch, mustard, turmeric, celery seed and pepper. Gradually whisk in vinegar until blended. Stir in peppers and zucchini mixture. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, uncovered, for 30 minutes. Cool. Cover and refrigerate for at least 4 hours before serving. Yield: 3 cups.

You can also make this in large batches for canning - put in hot canning bath for 20 min.

Thanks everyone - have a great week!

CSA Newsletter – Week 13

September 3, 2012

Dear CSA members,

First of all, my apologies for not communicating to you sooner the pickup schedule for this week due to the Labor Day holiday. We will have the regular **Monday farm pickup tomorrow from 4:00-7:00**, and the **Gurnee pickup will be on Tuesday, Sept. 4 from 2:00-7:00**. Dr. Shaw's office will be closed tomorrow for the holiday. If anyone cannot make the Monday pickup at the farm tomorrow, just let me know and we will be happy to put your box in the cooler for pickup on Tuesday. If any of our Gurnee members would like to take this opportunity to come visit the farm, you could pick up at the farm on Monday from 4:00-7:00. I would just need to know by the end of today or early tomorrow morning so we know how many to pick for.

As we enter September, we are happy to see so many vegetables still growing strong, and coming up new. We pulled the remainder of the white onions, and they are on the drying racks so you'll be seeing them in your bags over the next few weeks. We still have red onions to pull, but they were a bit of a disappointment this year and didn't grow very large. The summer squash is beginning to slow down, so if anyone is looking for extra to freeze or can for the winter, now is the time to get it. And about the time the summer squash finally is gone the winter squash will be ready. The new crop of beets are big and beautiful as many of you saw last week, and the rest of you will see this week. Also our new crop of carrots should be ready to start pulling this week or next. Sweet potatoes are also coming up soon, and I know our returning members are really looking forward to them this year since they were deprived of them last year when our two month old litter of piglets got out of their pen, sniffed their way over to the sweet potato patch and dug up and ate every last sweet potato. Those pigs are no longer with us, so there will be no unapproved foraging in the field this year!

Daikon radishes are growing nicely and we have head lettuce and leaf lettuce that should be great to end the season with if the weather holds out and we don't get any more 100 degree days! Some vegetables are about to be finished, like the green beans and the leeks. We dug up two rows of beautiful white potatoes yesterday and I can't wait to see how our Russet potatoes turned out, but the plants are still green, so they're not quite ready yet. The tomato plants are starting to look a little thinner and drying out, but there are still plenty of tomatoes turning on the vines, so I hope we'll still be seeing those for a couple of weeks at least.

2013 Membership now open

I know it sounds way too early to be thinking about next year's CSA, but that's how we are able to start preparing in advance for the next season; by using the membership fees from the early signups to start budgeting for what improvements we will be able to afford next year. If everyone waits and signs up in the spring, we won't have the up front capital we need to be ready in time for the next season. And the benefit to you is that early sign ups can pay over several months instead of paying the entire amount at once if you sign up close to the beginning of the season.

We're happy to be able to keep our prices the same this year: \$475/full share and \$300/half share. Monthly payments will work this way: Sign up early and pay \$100 initial payment. The remainder can be paid in monthly payments with the minimum monthly payment of \$75. All shares need to be paid in full before the first boxes. We hope you will decide to join our farm and CSA again next year and allow us to be your farmer!

Spread the word!

Thanks to all of you who asked for brochures to hand around to friends, family, church family and co-workers. I will be happy to mail you hard copies if you requested, but some of you

asked for the file electronically to email to friends and family. I've attached here the two flyers we normally use. One is more of an interest grabber, which will lead people to our website where they can get more information, and the other is a more detailed explanation of the CSA and how it works. Feel free to use one or both as you see fit. We truly appreciate your help in spreading the word! If you'd like hard copies of either one of these mailed to you, just let me know.

Heal 'N Glow back at the farm

Earlier in the season we had a display of assorted Heal 'N Glow products that we've been selling for one of our past members, a certified nutritional consultant who created this line of organic skin products. Joanna's product line consists of lotions, oils, soaps, masks, teas, bath salts and scrubs and all her products are made and sold fresh, using locally grown plants whenever possible. Joanna will be here at the farm on Thursday of this week and Monday of next week to talk to any members with questions about her products and how they can benefit you.

We love to help promote any of our members' own businesses, and will be happy to plug your business if you send me a short paragraph of what you'd like your fellow CSA members to know about you and your business!

Recipes for Week 13

Vegetable Pancakes

- 2 cups shredded veggies (things like white potatoes, sweet potatoes, zucchini, yellow squash and/or carrots...whatever you have on hand)
- 2 eggs
- 1 tablespoon whole-wheat flour
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- Olive oil for cooking
- Optional garnish: sour cream and/or applesauce

Combine the shredded veggies with the eggs, flour, and salt. Mix thoroughly. Heat a thin layer of olive oil in a sauté pan over medium heat. It is important that the heat is the right temperature because you want the pancakes to cook all the way through the middle by the time they are brown on the outside. Once the oil has heated up add pancake size dollops of the veggie mixture into the pan. Cook for several minutes until the bottom starts to brown. Then flip and repeat. Transfer cooked pancakes to a plate lined with paper towels. Serve warm with sour cream and/or applesauce.

Cabbage & Ground Beef Casserole

- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1/2 cup uncooked minute rice
- 1/2 cup onion, chopped
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. pepper
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 8oz. can tomato sauce
- 1 15 oz. can tomato sauce
- 8 cups cabbage, cut into 1 1/2" pieces
- 1 Tbsp. brown sugar
- 1 tsp. lemon juice

Bring 3 qts. water to a boil. Add cabbage and cook for 3 minutes; drain and rinse with cold

water. Then let cool (cabbage will not be completely cooked). Mix raw ground beef, rice, onions, salt, pepper, garlic powder, and 8 oz. can of tomato sauce. In a large casserole dish, layer 1/2 of cabbage and drop Tbsp.-size pieces of meat mixture on top; cover with remaining cabbage. In a small bowl, mix 15 oz. can of tomato sauce with brown sugar and lemon juice; pour over cabbage. Cover with foil and bake at 350 F for about 1 hour or until cabbage is tender.

Note: You can mix the red and green cabbage

Thanks everyone, have a great week!

CSA Newsletter – Week 14

September 11, 2012

Dear CSA members,

As we begin Week 14 of the season, we still see lots of good food growing out in the fields. We have some pumpkins that are so big it will take several of us to carry them out of the field when they're ready for harvesting. I also saw a few pink jumbo banana squashes that looked like it might take a wheelbarrow to get them out of the field. We will begin picking the winter squash this week as we say good bye to our bountiful harvest of summer squash. We still have plenty of zucchini and patty pan, but we figured if we don't start giving you the winter varieties, the season will end with a field full of unpicked squash. If anyone would still like zucchini or patty pans, just let me know and we'll be happy to pick you whatever you'd like.

The eggplants and peppers are still going strong - the peppers are actually quite abundant and we're probably giving you more than you can eat in a week. Below I'll give you some tips on how to store the extras to use into the winter. Our final harvest of carrots is almost ready to be picked and hopefully we'll have enough to have carrots in your bags for several weeks. The beets are still abundant and we have a couple of weeks' worth waiting to be harvested as well as the Swiss chard - which is my next weeding project to get the chard leaves in full exposure to the sun so they'll keep growing. The sweet potatoes are ready for harvesting, and to do that we need to get out in the field with a pitch fork and manually dig them up. Unfortunately, the way they grow and spread underground, if we use our potato digger to unearth them, they'll get chopped by the plow blades.

We still have two varieties of potatoes to dig up: Russet baking potatoes and red pontiacs. We have six varieties of winter squash: Delicata, Acorn, Butternut, Pink jumbo banana, Spaghetti and Buttercup. Each has its own flavor and I'll try to provide plenty of ideas on how to cook them. We may have tomatoes for another week or so, but the plants are starting to show signs of dying out. And the kale? Well, I think we can safely say this has been the year of the kale. The plants are still healthy and growing strong - these are the same original plants that we began harvesting back in March before the season began, where we invited our members out to the farm for some early harvest!

And the new plants we're hoping will be ready for harvesting before the season ends is the daikon radishes, kohlrabi, Nevada head lettuce and Romaine lettuce. We'd love to end the season with bags full of leafy greens! And we've been getting lots of inquiries into how much longer the season will last. We have no answer to that. We always expect the season to last a minimum of 16 weeks and a maximum of 20 weeks. It all depends on Mother Nature and how the weather holds out. Obviously an early hard frost would put an end to the season sooner, and a nice warm Indian summer will prolong the season. The nice thing about the end of the season bags is that most of the veggies are ones that when properly stored will last several months, so you can still have locally grown, organic produce into the winter!

How do the plants know when their season is over?

Several things determine when a plant has lived its natural life and it's time to stop flowering, stop producing fruit and die. Of course the temperatures have an effect, and an unexpected frost can kill a plant before it's natural time, but the first sign for a plant to know it's end is coming is the ratio of light to dark in a 24 hour period. So when the days start getting shorter, they sense that they're getting less light and they begin to slow their growing and production processes. When we begin the season it is still light at close to 9:00 p.m. By the time the season ends, it's almost dark by 7:00 when the last members are coming to pick up their bags at the farm. Not all plants live by this law, called photoperiod. Some sense the cooler temperatures and know that winter (and really cold temps) is coming, thus ending their season.

So while we may get a long, warm fall, the plants aren't fooled and still know by the shorter days that the end of their growing season is imminent.

Too many peppers? Freeze them!

Peppers are one of those foods that you can use in so many recipes that in our opinion you can never have too many. We grow several varieties from sweet to mild to medium hot to really hot, each variety having numerous uses. But when we have an abundant crop like we have this year, we understand we're probably giving you more than you can use in a week.

Peppers are easy to freeze and when thawed maintain their fresh picked flavor. Blanching is not necessary when freezing peppers. You can just cut them in half, remove the seeds and either cut into chunks or put in a food processor and chop into small pieces. Then put in a ziploc bag, pushing as much air out of the bag as possible, then freeze! When you need peppers for a recipe, just open the ziploc, take out how much you want to use and return the rest to the freezer. I just finished the last bag of chopped peppers I had from last year and they were still just as good as when I froze them last fall. The serrano peppers I just throw the entire pepper into a ziploc, then chop it up to use when I take it out of the freezer. The peppers are still growing strong and we will probably have them for several more weeks, so I hope you will take a few minutes to freeze whatever you can't use in a given week. Peppers are also great for canning and you can find several canning recipes at www.pickyourown.org.

Lake County Home Show and Remodeling Expo

Next weekend, Sept. 15 & 16th is the Lake County Home Show at the New Lake County Fairgrounds in Grayslake. They'll have hundreds of home related exhibitors. One of our CSA members, Rebecca Levine, will have an exhibit with Kitchen Craft Cookware. She will be doing cooking demos showcasing this 7 ply constructed cookware which allows for waterless cooking. She invites our CSA members to come to the demo and any of our members who purchase a set of cookware, she will give them an additional skillet. Just identify yourself as a Green Earth Farm CSA member. You can find out more about the expo at www.homeshowevent.com.

Sign up now for the 2013 CSA season

Thanks to so many of you who have let us know you intend to sign up for the 2013 CSA season. We're glad you have been enjoying the produce this season, and we're looking forward to adding even more variety to our harvest next year. We hope to increase our membership each year to a higher ratio of returning members. This year we had a 37% membership of returning members. We hope many more of you will allow us to be your farmers again next year and help us increase our returning membership to 50% for next year. If you do plan on signing up for the next season, please keep in mind that early signups help us tremendously by providing us some early capital to start planning for the next year and it benefits you also by giving you more time to pay for your share. We hope to see you all back next year!

Thanks again to everyone for your support! Have a great week!

CSA Newsletter – Week 15

September 18, 2012

Dear CSA Members,

Welcome to week 15! I can't believe the leaves are starting to change; it's almost dark when the last boxes are picked up at 7:00 and we're plowing under the rows that are finished for the season. I can tell we must be nearing the end of the season because each week I struggle a little bit more to find interesting things to write about in the newsletter without repeating myself (which I'm sure I've done already).

I hope everyone who received the first of the winter squash last week found creative ways to cook it and enjoyed this signature comfort food. I'm notorious for cooking winter squash only one way: baked upside down, then when soft, turn right side up and season with butter and brown sugar. In my opinion you can never go wrong with butter and brown sugar, but Scott likes the more spicy seasoning rather than the sweet. So I've included a couple of recipes below (one which I will be trying tonight) to take us (at least me) outside the box of preparing winter squash. We spent the better part of today harvesting the squash. Unlike the summer squash, which we pick the day you get it, the winter squash we pick it all at one time and then store it in the pole barn as we give them to you each week. Today we picked the delicata, acorn and buttercup squash and were amazed at how much we had. My aching back can attest to the quantity we harvested!

We also dug up the first row (of 4 rows) of sweet potatoes this weekend and were very happy with the quantity we yielded this year. If all the rows look this good, everyone should be getting plenty of sweet potatoes. Sweet potatoes actually get sweeter after they're dug up, so picking them early and letting them cure in the pole barn will help them sweeten up. We were disappointed to see that some of them have growth cracks - another result of this year's drought. Growth cracks occur when growing conditions go from poor to good. So the sweet potatoes grew slowly during the drought period, even with the irrigation, which mainly just kept the plants alive. Then as we started getting more rain, the potatoes swelled and cracked. The cracks heal and the potatoes are fine - they just don't look as pretty. But we had a couple for dinner tonight and I can tell you they will be just as delicious.

Welcome to our new CSA members

We've had several people join the CSA in the past couple of weeks to enjoy our harvest for the remainder of the season. We welcome our new members and look forward to sharing our harvest with you!

Time to sign up for your holiday turkey!

If you're interested in having a heritage, organic, free range turkey for the holidays, now is the time to add your name to the Turkey Lottery. If you would like a turkey, let me know and I'll add your name to the list. We will draw names in a few weeks and let you know if your name was drawn.

Still have honey available

We still have several bottles of our honey, and there should be one more batch coming. So we will have it out for sale when you come pick up your box, and if any Gurnee or Crystal Lake members would like a bottle, just email me and let me know.

Recipes for Week 15

Buttercrunch Topping for any winter squash

- 3 cups crushed cornflakes cereal
- 1 1/2 cups chopped pecans
- 1/2 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
- 1/4 cup melted butter

Stir together crushed cornflakes cereal, chopped pecans, brown sugar, and melted butter until blended. Sprinkle on top of any of the cooked winter squash during the last 10 minutes of cooking.

NOTE: This mixture will freeze well in a zip-top plastic freezer bag for up to 3 months. If when putting in the bag, flatten as you squeeze the air out, then it's easy to just break off as much as you need when using. It's also great on baked fruit.

ANOTHER NOTE: I mixed the corn flakes, pecans and butter together first, then split the mixture in two. I added the brown sugar (using half the amount the recipe calls for) to one half of the mixture and the other half I added sea salt, chili powder, and celery salt to make a spicier mixture. Both are delicious!

Winter Squash-Spice Bundt Cake

- 1 (1 1/2-pound) acorn squash
- 2 3/4 cups self-rising flour, divided
- 1 cup raisins
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 1/2 cups sugar
- 1/2 cup egg substitute
- 1/2 cup applesauce
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- Vegetable cooking spray
- Powdered sugar (optional)

Cut squash in half; discard seeds and membrane. Place squash halves, cut sides down, in an 11- x 7-inch baking dish. Add water to a depth of 1/4 inch. Bake at 375° for 35 to 45 minutes or until tender; cool slightly. Scoop out and mash pulp; discard shells.

Toss together 1/4 cup flour and raisins. Set aside. Combine remaining 2 1/2 cups flour, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves; set aside. Combine squash pulp, sugar, and next 3 ingredients; stir in flour mixture until blended. Stir in raisins. Pour into a 12-cup Bundt pan coated with vegetable cooking spray. Bake at 350° for 45 minutes or until a wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool in pan on a wire rack 10 minutes. Remove from pan, and cool completely. Sprinkle with powdered sugar, if desired.

Butternut Squash Soup

- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 carrots, chopped
- 2 celery ribs, chopped
- 1 Granny Smith apple, peeled and finely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 3 lbs Butternut squash - peeled, seeded, chopped
- 1 (32-ounce) container chicken broth
- 2 to 3 tablespoons fresh lime juice

- 1 1/2 tablespoons honey
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon ground allspice
- 1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/8 teaspoon ground red pepper
- 1/4 cup whipping cream

Garnishes: sour cream, ground red pepper

Cook bacon slices in a Dutch oven until crisp. Remove bacon, and drain on paper towels, reserving 2 tablespoons drippings. Crumble bacon, and set aside.

Sauté onion and carrots in hot bacon drippings in Dutch oven over medium-high heat 5 minutes or until onion is tender. Add celery and apple, and sauté 5 minutes. Add garlic, and sauté 30 seconds. Add butternut squash and chicken broth. Bring to a boil; reduce heat, and simmer 20 minutes or until carrots are tender.

Process squash mixture, in batches, in a blender or food processor until smooth.

Return to Dutch oven. Add lime juice and next 7 ingredients. Simmer 10 to 15 minutes or until thickened. Top with crumbled bacon. Garnish, if desired.

Thanks everyone...have a great week!

CSA Newsletter – Week 16

September 23, 2012

Dear CSA members,

Welcome to week 16! Well, what's left of it. My apologies for not getting this week's newsletter out on time. Crazy busy weekend and week, so this will be a short one, otherwise it may not happen!

This week of the season is always a milestone for us because when we advertise the length of the season we advertise it as 16-18 weeks long. So by getting through week 16 we feel like we've kept the minimum of our promise. We try to keep the season going as long as possible, but we always breathe a sign of relief once we've completed this week. And it looks like we still have plenty of food out there for you. We dug up the last six rows of potatoes on Sunday. So we will be rounding out the season with russet baking potatoes and red kennebec potatoes. We also have three more rows of sweet potatoes that we are slowly digging out of the ground. Because of the way they spread underground, the sweet potatoes we dig up "the old fashioned way", with a pitch fork. Time consuming, but keeps them all in one piece. Once all these potatoes are dug up, a majority of our picking will be done for the remainder of the season.

The winter squash has all been picked (and our farm pickup members have seen our abundant spread), the peppers may last only this next week as they don't like the cool temps so much and it looks like tomatoes are done. We do still have carrots and beets and hopefully the head lettuces out there will be ready before the season ends or a hard frost hits. They're about 4" high and beautiful, so we're keeping our fingers crossed. The bok choy is almost ready for picking and the kohlrabi may go in some bags this week. Daikon radishes are just about ready - hopefully next week. At some point, we will stop putting the bags together (except for our drop off locations) and just have baskets of whatever is available and let you fill your own bags. But at this point we still anticipate a few more weeks of veggies and will keep you posted on a week-to-week basis.

Thanks!

Thank you to so many of you who have been spreading the word about our CSA and farm. We are already getting some sign ups for the 2013 season from new folks, not current members. If anyone would like to take some CSA flyers to your office, church or community centers, just let me know and I can send you some or you can pick them up when you get your bag. And if you haven't signed up yet for next year, we hope to see you back again with us for the 2013 season.

Brother Jon's Farm - Organic heritage pork available

Anthony, our pork farmer, has some cuts of pork available for sale and will try to get his freezer back over here this week so we can offer pork again. What Anthony would really like to do is sell his pork by the half hog or whole hog, which is a much better deal cost wise. When you purchase by the half or whole hog you can pick the cuts you want and the butcher will prepare accordingly. Normally Anthony sells his hogs for \$3.50/lb. (plus processing) but for our CSA members he will sell it for \$3.00/lb.(plus processing).

If you are interested in more information about the pork from Brother Jon's Farm, you can contact Anthony directly at akeisling@hotmail.com, or visit his website at brotherjonsfarm.com. All of Anthony's pork is organic, free range and heritage breed hogs.

Pumpkins - They are not just for jack-o-lanterns!

The good news is, we have pumpkins. The bad news is we harvested 82 pumpkins this year and we have 100 members. So instead of being able to give everyone a pumpkin, we have been dividing them and giving members a large, wrapped piece of pumpkin. At least this way

you will be able to roast/bake a piece for a meal or two. These are sugar pumpkins (aka pie pumpkins) and not the flavorless jack-o-lantern pumpkins that we carve up for Halloween. There are many ways to use pumpkin, my personal favorite being pumpkin soup. Once you've baked the pumpkin so it's soft, you can scoop out the meat, puree it in a food processor, then use it in soups, pies, and pureed pumpkin also makes a great smoothie (see recipe below). Or you can just roast, sprinkle with cinnamon and brown sugar and eat as a side dish.

Not only does fresh pumpkin taste good, but it is one of the best sources of Vitamin A you can find, with 245% of the recommended daily allowance in 1 cup. It also provides 19% of the recommended daily allowance of Vitamin C and 16% of the recommended daily allowance of potassium. It's also a source of calcium and iron. Low in calories, fat free - it's a superfood!

Read more: [Nutritional Value of Pumpkin | eHow.com](http://www.ehow.com/facts_5278733_nutritional-value-pumpkin.html#ixzz27aGgVOur)
http://www.ehow.com/facts_5278733_nutritional-value-pumpkin.html#ixzz27aGgVOur

Recipes for Week 16

Pumpkin Banana Smoothie

1 cup ice
1 ripe banana
1/2 cup pureed cooked pumpkin
1/2 cup almond milk
1/4 cup plain non-fat greek yogurt
2 tsp. raw natural honey
Blend in a blender until smooth.

Spaghetti Squash and Meatballs

The oblong yellow/beige squash you had in your bag this week is a spaghetti squash

1 spaghetti squash
Homemade or jar red pasta sauce
1 lb. ground beef
1 med. onion chopped finely
1 green pepper chopped finely
1 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. pepper
1 egg

Cut spaghetti squash in half, lengthwise. Scoop out seeds and place cut side down on a lightly greased baking pan. Bake at 350 for about an hour - until soft to the touch.

Prepare your favorite red pasta sauce, heat and set aside.

Meatballs: Combine ground beef, onion, pepper, salt, pepper and egg. Make into 1 1/2" size meatballs and cook on stove until cooked through. Add to pasta sauce.

Take cooked spaghetti squash and with a fork, scrape out the meat of the squash. It will come out in long, spaghetti like strands. Add a little butter (or olive oil) and salt to flavor. Top with meatballs and pasta sauce.

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Thanks everyone - have a great remainder of the week!

CSA Newsletter – Week 17

September 30, 2012

Dear CSA members,

As we enter week 17 of the CSA season, we look back at what a crazy ride Mother Nature gave us this year, and how fortunate we were to make the season last this long and probably a week or two longer still. Not only were we able to provide you with vegetables every week of the season, but for most weeks provided you with a good amount of vegetables. When the heat and drought started in early June, really just as the season began, we held our breath to see how our new irrigation system would help us. As you all know by now, it literally saved the season. Without water so early in the summer, the plants wouldn't have had a chance to survive. While it gave us a few light weeks, the veggies caught up by the middle of the summer.

Our heroes of the field this year were the kale (15 weeks of kale plus the pre-season giveaway), cabbage, summer squash, winter squash, beets and peppers. The Swiss chard performed admirably, as did the eggplant, tomatoes, onions, carrots, turnips, sweet potatoes, potatoes and cucumbers. We had our best crop of pumpkins this season - but still fell short of our goal of two pumpkins per member. We have 100 members this season (not to be confused with 100 shares), so would have liked to have had at least 200 pumpkins. However our final count was 82. But at least we've had enough to give everyone large chunks of pumpkin which is plenty to roast and eat like squash, or puree for soup, pie or bread. (Crystal Lake and Gurnee will be seeing these in your bags this week). Pumpkins are such a wide spreading vine, that it takes a lot of room to grow a lot of them. Depending on the results of a short survey we'll be asking you all to participate in soon, we may plow up another field to dedicate to more pumpkins.

All in all, we have been happy with this CSA season and we hope you have been too. You'll see the bags get smaller over the next couple of weeks as we empty the fields of whatever is left harvestable. We still have carrots, beets, and possibly kale and Swiss chard to harvest, along with kohlrabi, daikon radishes, red radishes, bokchoy and we're still keeping our fingers crossed on the head lettuces we planted for the fall. We also have all the remaining potatoes, sweet potatoes and winter squash to give you and while we thought the peppers would be gone by now, everytime Scott goes out to the field he comes back with a big bushel of them, so who knows how long they'll hang on. I hope people are freezing or canning or drying all the peppers you got this season - I've been spending the weekend dehydrating our extra serrano peppers, and can't wait to enjoy some spicy food this winter with our own hot peppers! And speaking of peppers....

So how hot are our peppers?

Since we put in a few Ghost pepper plants this year, just as a novelty, we've had a lot of debates and conversations with our members about the hottest pepper and the variations of hotness between different peppers. Granted, one man's (or woman's) fire-breathing hot is another's mildly hot, and different growing conditions can lend a different hotness to the same variety of pepper. But there is a definitive scale - called the Scoville scale that measures the hotness of a pepper by measuring the amount of capsaicin in a pepper variety. Capsaicin is an oil in peppers that causes the burning sensation. And the more capsaicin in a pepper - the more burning sensation - aka the hotter the pepper. The Scoville scale is measured in SHUs: Scoville Heat Units. Below is a list of the more well known and popular peppers and pepper oils to give you a comparison of how hot our peppers are compared to other peppers you're familiar with: All numbers are SHUs: (the peppers in bold print are the ones we had this year)

0 Sweet Bell Pepper

100-500 Peppercini pepper (like our banana pepper)

500-700 Santa Fe Grande pepper (we had these last year as our "hot pepper")

500-2,500 Anaheim pepper

1,000-2,000 Poblano pepper

2,500-8,000 Jalapeno pepper

5,000-10,000 Chipotle pepper

5,000-23,000 Serrano pepper

30,000-50,000 Cayenne pepper

100,000-350,000 Habanero pepper

855,000-1,041,427 Ghost pepper (Bhut Jolokia)

2,000,000 Common pepper spray

5,300,000 Police grade pepper spray

16,000,000 Pure Capsaicin!

So we could have gone much hotter, but while I love hot peppers, I like them still edible. Our ghost pepper plants only produced maybe 10 peppers, and maybe next year we'll have fun with another really hot one, but for my liking (and I believe most of you), a hot spice is nice, but a lotta hot is not!

Meat chicken available

We now have meat chickens available for sale. This is a young flock of organic, free-range, heritage birds, so they would be good for roasting, grilling, frying - any way you like to cook chicken. The price is \$4.50/lb. and they will be harvested to order. If you'd like one or more chickens, please send me an email and let me know. We can then work out the details of when you'd like to pick up.

Turkey Lottery coming up

We will be drawing names for the turkey lottery on Monday, October 8 (Canadian Thanksgiving Day). If you've already given me your name, no need to do so again - you're on my list. If you're still interested in one of our heritage free range organic turkeys for the holiday, let me know before next Monday so we can put you on the list. All turkeys will be harvested and ready for the oven with the giblets and two heritage turkey recipes. Price is \$7.50/lb. Turkeys will run between 6 - 12 lbs.

Week 17 Recipes

Roasted Winter Squash

- Any of the winter squash - butternut, acorn, spahetti, delicata, pink jumbo banana or buttercup
- 2 Tbl. butter - melted
- 1 Tbl. honey
- salt & pepper to taste

Slice squash lengthwise, scoop out seeds. Place squash, cut side up, on baking tray. Combine melted butter and honey and blend together. Brush inside of squash with butter and honey. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Bake uncovered at 400 degrees for one hour or until soft. Take out of oven and let sit for 10 min. Cut into large pieces and serve.

Acorn Squash Polenta Stacks

- 2 small Acorn Squash, sliced lengthwise and cleaned of seeds and string
- Olive Oil Cooking Spray
- Sea Salt and Black Pepper, to taste
- 1 cup Ricotta Cheese

- 1 cup fresh kale or frozen kale, defrosted and squeezed of water
- 1 clove Garlic, chopped fine
- 1 jar Arrabiata Sauce (Trader Joe's)
- 2 packages Polenta, sliced into 24 1" rounds
- 1 1/4 cups shredded Mozzarella Cheese
- 1/2 cup grated Parmigan Cheese

Preheat oven to 375°F. Slice squash halves into 1/2" half-moon-shaped slices. Spray a large baking sheet with a light dusting of oil and sprinkle with a little sea salt and pepper. Place the slices on the sheet in a single layer. Lightly spray the tops and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Bake until the slices are tender, about 35 minutes. Remove from oven and set aside to cool; lower oven temperature to 350°F. Place ricotta, kale, garlic and 1/4 teaspoon salt into a bowl and combine. Set aside.

Assemble the stacks: Coat the bottom of a 9" x 13" baking dish with a light layer of sauce. Lay 12 Polenta rounds side by side and season with a little salt and pepper; cover with sauce. Next, top each round with squash slices facing each other, trim to fit neatly. Top each set of squash with the ricotta-kale mixture and smooth out. Top with more sauce, followed by a layer of polenta and the last layer of squash. Pour over the remainder of sauce and top each stack with Mozzarella cheese, followed by Parmesan cheese. Cover with foil and bake for about 40 minutes. Uncover for the last 10 minutes or until cheese is golden and bubbly. Remove from oven and rest 15 minutes before serving.

Beef and Butternut Squash Chili

- 1 pound extra-lean ground beef
- 1 green bell pepper, chopped (or the Sweet Marcony peppers)
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 (14.5-ounce) cans Mexican-style stewed tomatoes, chopped
- 1 (16-ounce) can chili beans
- 1/2 small butternut squash, peeled and cubed (about 1 1/2 cups)
- 1 cup beef broth
- 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 1/2 teaspoons chili powder
- 1 cup frozen corn kernels

Cook beef, bell pepper, and next 2 ingredients in a Dutch oven over medium-high heat until meat crumbles and is no longer pink. Drain well, and return to Dutch oven. Stir in tomatoes and next 5 ingredients; bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Cover, reduce heat to medium-low, and simmer, stirring occasionally, 15 minutes. Stir in corn, and cook, uncovered, 15 minutes or until squash is tender and chili is thickened.

Thanks everyone, have a great week!

CSA Newsletter – Week 18

October 7, 2012

Dear CSA members,

It wasn't that long ago when every home was also a homestead with a garden and livestock to support the family needs. As we have rushed into the modern era, simple elements of our lives have disappeared and become a nostalgic memory handed down by our grandparents, leaving us with the most basic lacks.

Having the choice of local, fresh, naturally grown, wholesome foods is no longer a given, and the fact that we do what we do is not a given either. As you know, we labor strenuously to provide you with the very best choice in vegetables available to you and your family. This labor is met with great feelings of purposefulness, and the opportunity to do something for our community. In addition, it brings us great joy to hear that your children, friends and family are now eating better, trying vegetables that you wouldn't have, that you are more connected to the source of your produce, and that you are part of a community that is taking a stand to make sure this choice is available in the future.

I wanted to share with you all my deepest gratitude for supporting what we do, for letting us be a part of your life, and for investing in our CSA (often totally as a leap of faith in us). It was wonderful to meet so many of you, to chat with you, and to work for you. I know it sounds like a cliché, but I truly see you as friends who share our farm with us fully, not customers, but part owners of the farm. I know that I do the weeding and picking, and a few other things here in the fields, but the bottom line is that without your support, and without your patronage, there is no farm.

I hope that this season's produce was to your liking; I am always open to ways to add, eliminate, and improve the program, and Kathy and I invite you to share your thoughts, suggestions and opinions for our consideration in attempting to always grow better and become the best we can for you.

This CSA is not a big budget business, and will never be. We depend on our CSA members to help us financially, and if you enjoyed this season, and feel that it is wise to support local farms like ours in order to ensure there will be organically grown, local fresh produce for you and your family, please consider continuing your membership with us, and share it with others as well.

Yours in health and appreciation,
Farmer Scott

Week 18 and beyond

For this coming week - week 18, we anticipate the pick up and drop offs as usual. This will be the last week that we will drop off at Gurnee and Crystal Lake and the last farm pickup where we will have boxes made, ready for you. After this week, if there is still produce available, I will send out an email to all members letting you know what we have and inviting you to come to the farm and help yourself to the remaining harvest. Looks like we have some pretty cold night time temps coming up, so we're not sure what there will be, but as long as there is still something in the fields to harvest for you, we will do so and invite you to come and take what you'd like.

Would you take a short survey?

As Scott mentioned above, we are always trying to improve our CSA to make sure we are the best we can be and provide you with the best food possible. While we think this year was an abundant and successful season, we know there are still ways we can improve to make it even better. If you wouldn't mind taking a short, 6 question survey, your comments will help

us decide what to grow next year (or not to grow!), how to improve and to make sure the CSA experience is something all of our members look forward to and enjoy every year. Please click on the link below to take this short survey – it is anonymous and will help us a great deal.

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RLCSP6W>

We'd love your comments

One of the things that attract people to sign up for something such as a CSA, is by reading reviews from previous members. We get a lot of our new members from a website called Local Harvest (www.localharvest.org). We have a listing with Local Harvest, and the purpose of their site is to help people looking for locally grown food to find it in their area. If you like us enough to write a short review in Local Harvest, we would greatly appreciate it. And of course we will happily take constructive criticism!

What's next?

So now that the season is coming to a close, we will no longer send out a weekly newsletter until the 2013 season begins. I will however, send a short farm update once a month, just to let you know what new things we are working on for the next season, what's going on around the farm, and maybe a few gentle reminders to sign up for 2013 if you haven't already. Once the new CSA season begins we only send out the newsletter to the 2013 CSA members, not to past members. If you know you won't be signing up again and wish to stop receiving emails from us, just let me know and I will remove your name from our email list.

If you do decide not to join us again next year, we hope you'll find some other venue to help support local farmers. The importance of continuing to have locally grown food and small, family owned farms cannot be overstated. It's a tradition that our country was built on and conglomerate agricorps and companies like Monsanto are trying to demolish that tradition.

We will continue to do everything we can to make sure our community has a voice in choosing what kind of food they have available to feed their families. Thank you for allowing us to be your farmer.