

BROOKFIELD FARM SHOPTALK

P.O. Box 227
Amherst, MA 01004

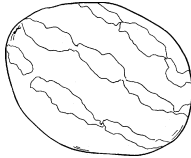
www.brookfieldfarm.org
(413)253-7991 info@brookfieldfarm.org

August 15, 2009
Distribution Week #11

WHAT'S NEW THIS WEEK

Sweet & Sassy

Melons: One of our favorite things about late summer is a sweet melon patch. We will have canteloupes (orange flesh) and watermelons (yellow & red flesh) for the next three weeks. The yellow melons will be somewhat limited due to lots of crow and deer damage a few weeks ago. The reds and lopes looks big and the taste, so far, is excellent. We try to pick only perfectly ripe melons - they are ready to eat now. If you want keep them, put it in the fridge and they will last for a while.



Onions: These are our sweet 'Ailsa Craig,' Spanish (Vidalia)-type onion. These are good for eating fresh, on sandwiches, or cooking. This crop is big & beautiful this year; We'll have these "Ailsas" for 2 weeks, and then move onto the reds and yellow storage onions in September.

WHAT'S HAPPENING ON THE FARM

Moving On

The sun shone this week. Enough, so that we actually wanted it to rain a little by the middle of the week. It did. Just a little. Which was just good enough to keep our newly planted fall greens looking okay. We picked. We weeded. We picked. And then we weeded some more.

As predicted, we also made good on the inevitable - turning in an entire years hopes for field tomatoes. My son Jacob & neighbor Gabe couldn't believe that they were just going to take down all fo the posts that they had put up only one month ago. And we had never even harvested a single red ripe tomato from the patch. Even at age 11 and 14, you didn't

have to tell them that this was farming. This was New England. They knew it. As sure as any kid knows the Red Sox kind of have a hard time sometimes in August.

We were all pretty matter of fact about it. Cut the strings. Free the rotted vines. Pull the posts. Stack them on the stake carrier. Then take the mower and pulverize them into oblivion. And then take out the harrow and wipe the earth clean of them. Bury them deep into a place were they will become something else. Then the harrow went through, at the end, and made a beautiful chocolate cake out of what was, just weeks ago, a hopeful look at 10,000 lbs of tomatoes. Well, that part took Lisa's breath away, just a little bit - maybe the finality of it all.

No time for that.

We've got stuff to do. We've got corn to pick. And carrots to dig. And melons to huck (and then recover so the crows won't eat them). And a Farm Shop to run. And garlic to clip. And on and on we go. So we did. Onto the next and the next and the next after that. The shares are going to be a little small for a few weeks. But we've got food. And it was sunny and warm. And the Red Sox took 3 of 4 from the Tigers. Sure, we tilled in our main season tomato crop. It's New England. We're farmers. We're over it already.

We hope you enjoy the harvest,

Farmer Dan (for Karen, Abbe, Adan, Kerry, Lisa, and Brigitte)

**WHAT'S
ON THE WAY**

*BROCCOLI
SWEET PEPPERS*

**BULK
PRODUCE**

*SWISS CHARD: \$2/LB
CARROTS, BEETS: \$1 / LB
SWEET CORN: \$3 / DZ*

FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

Pioneer Valley Heritage Grain Field Day

Aug 22 down at NESFI (Belchertown)
- <http://www.localgrain.org/fieldsandfire/2009/08/11/holy-smokes-its-in-the-bag/>
tours of the fields, local grain bread, and more.

Carrot Apricot Muffins

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 c all purpose flour 1/c sugar 1/4 c brown sugar 2 tsp baking powder 1/2 tspn salt 2 lg eggs 1/2 c butter 1/2 c buttermilk 2 tsp orange juice concent. 1/2 c chopped dried apricots 1 1/2 c grated carrots 1/2 c chopped walnuts | <p>Preheat the oven to 400F. Coat a 12-c muffin pan with butter or line with muffin cups. Mix the flour, sugar, brown sugar, baking powder, and salt in a large bowl. In a separate large bowl, beat the eggs. Beat in the butter, buttermilk, and orange juice conc. Slowly add the flour mixture, stirring lightly and briefly, until just combined. Add the apricots to the flour mixture. Stir in the carrots and nuts until combined. Ladle the batter into the muffin pan, filling each cup about 3/4 full. Bake until a toothpick inserted near their centers comes out clean - about 20-25 min. Cool for 10 min on wire rack before serving.</p> |
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From Farmer John's Cookbook- a great resource for CSA cooking & eating - for sale at the Farm Shop

HOW WE FARM

The Weeder Crew

Every year, the weeds grow. We plow the earth. Plant the seeds. And then the earth plants a few billion more. Deep down she's a very modest being - doesn't like to be naked at all. Wherever there's a clear spot.....Pop, goes a weedie! It's tempting to think that we could just coexist on the earth, that all living things can just "get along" together. We could grow plants. The earth could grow weeds. We could get our crops out. The earth could make a few more weed seeds. And we could all live in the sweet ever after. Heck, we could even stop working so hard and maybe take a few months off in the summer to sit under the tree and ponder our existence.

Just doesn't seem to work out that way out here on the farm. If left to their own, the weeds would grow and grow and choke out all of our crops. All of our human aspirations at survival would be choked with them. And we'd be left eating rough pig weed stems or hunting for wild boar.

Of course this is what has brought us the industrial agricultural chemicals of our time. They are *immensely* useful.

Imagine planting a field of onions. Then seeing some weeds emerge. Then spraying the crop once and seeing all of the weeds die while the onions magically live on. Now that seems like good magic. It's just that the earth doesn't usually let such force just go "unanswered." There usually is a balancing force that has another, unintended effect. Kill the weeds, but leave carcinogens that cause rampant growth in cells in other beings - causing unintended harm.

On our farm, we prefer to try and find a more balanced approach. Plow the earth. Plant a seed. Cultivate the rows (with a small 13 hp tractor). And that's where the weeder crew comes in. After we're done with the primary cultivation of our plants, we "crawl" the fields. Plucking (not so gently) all the remaining weeds that have emerged to compete with our plants. This can be very difficult, but mostly the weeds are in a very concentrated area (about 2" around the crops). Still, when you've got to keep 27 acres of vegetables clean, it can take a little while. 27 acres of crops, one row at a time, comes out to about 343,000 feet of row. That's why we need an entire crew.

Every year, we try to hire some folks who want to work hard, be

outside, and help us produce food that's good to eat! We're very fortunate to have lots of eager pre & post-college-aged people around who fit the bill. We only have them work from 8am to 12pm so that they can do other things with their time, and not get burnt out from too much of a good thing. You should know that these folks work their tails off for your food. We all simply couldn't be eating all of this without them.

We open our jobs to anyone who wants to apply. We pay competitive wages to other summer jobs (Dunkin' Donuts has nothing on us). And we have a good old time on the farm. We usually have a great crew of strong young people who keep us in business. This year has been not too different. Sophie, again agreed to be our "Leader Weeders" and she brought back her usual assortment of good friends - Jazer, Julia, Lily, Matt, Catie, and Chelsea. Lia and Will came back for their second season and

they were joined by newcomers Sasha, Rebecca, Jessica, Andrea, and Michele. And old timers Su & Scotti made lots of guest appearances to keep the newbies cranking..

They have kept our farm clean and abundant all summer long. Starting at the end of May, they've come and crawled the carrots, yanked pig weeds in the potatoes, and pulled

nutsedge from the celeriac. It was mostly cold and damp, and then hot and dry. Didn't matter - they came and they pulled, tugged, yanked, and just kept moving around the farm staying ahead of the earth's urge to wipe us out! And so far, doesn't look like there were too many lasting side-effects for them or for us. The next two weeks are their last as they will complete the rutabagas, fall spinach, and strawberries. So if you see them around the farm, give them a shout and say thanks for the corn. The carrots. The lettuce. The melons. The eggplant. Couldn't have done it without them.

Blight Update -

No news on the potatoes this week - we'll be digging next week - but the tomatoes were tilled in - a total loss... There is no risk to our fields next year of turning in the spores as they only live on growing tomato tissue and those vines and fruit will be long gone soon. For a really great perspective on all that went into this years "Perfect Storm of Blight" check out an article from last Sunday's NYTimes -

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/09/opinion/09barber.html?_r=1&adxnlnl=1&emc=eta1&adxnlnlx=1250328362-yB8CfGelrbpebrbu6AsHiQ