

BROOKFIELD FARM SHOP TALK

P.O. Box 227
Amherst, MA 01004

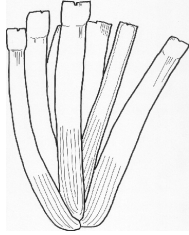
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September 5, 2009
Distribution Week #14

WHAT'S NEW THIS WEEK

A Whole New Mix

Celery: Our celery is smaller, more flavorful, and a bit tougher than what you will find in the store. We grow it because it's salty, crunchy, and flavorful. This is *not for juicing*, but it makes your soups delicious. To use, cut off tops (use later for soup stock) and pull off stalks. It will store well in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. We should have them through early November.



Leeks: Leeks are a subtle and buttery member of the onion family. They can be used in soup, stews, and main dishes. They store well in the refrigerator - place them in there unwashed, with roots still intact, and in an unsealed plastic bag. To use leeks, cut off roots and the thin green leaves. Slice in half, and wash thoroughly. Chop up and use like onion. They'll be a bit small at first, and then get bigger through the fall. We'll have them through Thanksgiving.

WHAT'S HAPPENING ON THE FARM

Still Waiting

What an absolutely glorious week of sun! Usually at this time of year, we start brining in loads of onions, to fill the back of the greenhouse, before we turn to the fill the front with winter squash next week. But after a very wet and cool June and July (can you even remember that anymore?), our crops, while looking good in the field, are at least a week later ripening than usual.

Nothing for a farmer to do but wait. You can't pull the onions in before their tops die back or else they won't "seal" and then they won't be able to store as well for the long months ahead. And you don't want to clip and bin your

squash until the vines have died back or else it won't have nearly the flavor you'd like and it also won't cure as well for fall storage.

So, we went around the farm looking for a few messes to clean up. Luckily we didn't have to look too far. We just went around and pulled the last weeds around the farm. We cleaned up next years strawberries, the currants, rhubarb, and the much-de-prioritized turnip patch.

Then we turned our attention to digging potatoes. After waiting for two weeks to see how the early dug spuds looked and being reasonably satisfied, we got the digger and picker into really good shape and hit the fields. All hands on deck! All ears protected! Let's get to it! Sure enough the spuds came

rolling up the digger chain, across the picker chain (where we culled the rotten ones), and into the burlap sacks. We started with the variety that showed the most rot - the white potato "Eva" - so we won't need to store them long. They dug nice, and didn't show much more rot than before. Into the bags, onto the truck, back to the farm, onto the pallet, and into the root cellar to hold while we distribute over the next few weeks. With our fear of total crop loss due to blight now revised, we have to say the potatoes look reasonable and taste great. Onto the onions and squash next week!

We hope you enjoy the harvest,

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

WHAT'S ON THE WAY

ACORN SQUASH
RED ONIONS
TOSCANO KALE

BULK PRODUCE

SWISS CHARD, RED KALE,
COLLARDS: \$2/LB
CARROTS, BEETS, EGG-
PLANT: \$1 / LB

Special Thanks to

Valerie Vaughan
for help keeping our perennial garden
looking great!

Greek Pasta and Leeks

12 oz uncooked spinach pasta
2 tbsp olive oil
2 leeks thinly sliced
2 tsp fennel seeds
6 cloves garlic, minced
1 lb tomatoes, peeled & chopped
1/2 c kalamata olives
1 tbsp fresh oregano
1/2 tsp salt
1 tbsp red wine vinegar
2-4 oz feta cheese, crumbled
freshly ground black pepper

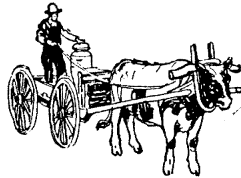
Cook the pasta & drain accordingly. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the leeks, fennel seeds, and garlic. Sautee until the leeks are soft ~ 20 min. Stir in the tomatoes, olives, oregano, and salt; simmer uncovered until there is very little liquid left ~ 20 min. Stir in the red wine vinegar. Remove from heat. Add the feta cheese and black pepper to taste. toss.

This came from 'Farmer John's Cookbook' a great seasonal eating guide now available at the Farm Shop.)

HOW WE FARM

CSA Distribution

As we settle into the big fall harvest season, we will be trying to fill your shares with a wide variety of produce to keep you well fed throughout the fall. I have been frequently asked how we go about figuring out just what goes into your share each week. And believe me, it's not always easy to decide. In general we want to put the freshest produce in the box each week - but how much? And which items?



Since there really were no CSAs around when we got started, we had to take a simple idea (you buy a share of the harvest) and come up with some specific guidelines to make it all work out in the real world of eaters and farmers.

The first thing we do each year is set specific targets for each crop, for each week that we want to provide it in the share and for the entire season. For instance, when we grow carrots we target 2 lbs per share per week and when we grow tomatoes we expect to pack 4 lbs per share. These targets are then used to determine whether the share will be light, heavy, or just right. If one crop is a little light (like the tomatoes this year!) we try to make up for it with other crops that might be heavier (did you notice the extra carrots in your shares?). And if we have a lot of everything then we go ahead and put it in "bulk" so that people can buy our surplus.

At our Farm Shop in Amherst we have also developed the "Mix and Match" system, where we group some produce together and let people choose their own shares, not by item, but by volume. In order to do this, we simply calculate how much total poundage we have for any given harvest day, and divide it by the number of shares that we expect to come to the farm that day. Then we translate that into an average bag size.

One thing we learned early on about distributing produce is the economic concept of "inelastic demand." That is, even if we have 40,000 lbs of surplus kale, it is of very little value to us, because people will/can only eat so much. The demand for the kale is "inelastic." Of course, we can try to stretch it out a little with a clever newsletter article or a few recipes, but let's face it, getting a box full of kale every week, would just not be very valuable for most people. In addition, we have found that people want a variety of items in the box each week so we try to put something new in the share every week.

We continue to refine our targets out by trying to keep listening to our shareholders year after year. The Suggestion Box, Surveys, and just watching what leaves the Farm Shop quickest in the "Mix and Match" have been good ways to find out what people want. Then at that point, we act just like any good-old American business - we try to give our customer what they want. Fundamentally, our farm has remained true to our initial idea - share the risks and rewards of local agriculture in order to let us grow and eat food that is produced in a manner that is in keeping with our deepest principles. Developing these techniques has been important in making this dream a reality.

FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS

LOCAL PAINTER (and our shareholder) CAPTURES SPIRIT OF VALLEY'S SMALL FARMS IN NEW SHOW

Matt Anderson's "The Harvesters"
at the New England Small Farm Institute -
www.growingnewfarmers.org
September 12 - October 17, 2009

Reception: Saturday, September 12, 7-10pm

Family Day: Sunday, September 13, 10am-1pm

Matt Anderson's painting can be viewed at mattspaint.com

First Annual - 5K for Farmland

Sunday, October 18, 10am Hadley

Sponsored by the Kestrel Trust

for more info: <http://www.kestreltrust.org/5K.html>

Here's an independent (but related) idea for those looking for more great ways to use your Brookfield Farm Share:

It's a CSA meal planner!

Check it out at
<http://mealplanner.EatRealGood.com>

NEWS FROM OUR PAST APPRENTICES....

There's a great picture of *Andy Szymanowicz ('07)* selling Sol Flower Farm produce at the Millbrook Farmers' Market in the NY Times:

<http://travel.nytimes.com/2009/08/14/travel/14Hudson.html?emc=eta1>

and this just in from *Amy Cloud ('01, '06)*

.....*Diego Owen Lara* was born August 11th (his actual due date--what a punctual little guy!!) at 11:44 AM at our home in Elshah. He weighed 5LB 10 oz (the size of a yellow doll watermelon, I'd say) and he is doing perfectly!!