

BROOKFIELD FARM SHOPTALK

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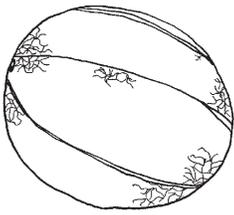
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August 13, 2016
Distribution Week #10

WHAT'S NEW THIS WEEK

Melon Time!

Cantaloupes and Watermelons: One of our favorite things about late summer is a sweet melon patch. We started with cantaloupes (orange flesh)



last week, and now add watermelons (yellow & red flesh) for the next 2-3 weeks. The crop looks like an average number of medium to small-sized fruit. They will taste delicious, but won't be as big as past seasons. We try to pick only perfectly ripe melons - they are ready to eat now. If you want keep the cantaloupes, put it in the fridge and they will last for a while. The watermelons will in a cool dry spot for weeks.

Sweet Onions: These are our sweet "Vidalia"-type onion, which are good for eating fresh, on sandwiches, or cooking. We have our old stand-by "Ailsa Craig" which is yellow, and a new trial "Sierra Blanca" which is very white. This crop is a bit small this year so we will only have them for the next two weeks.

WHAT'S ON THE WAY

SWEET CORN
RED PEPPERS
BROCCOLI

BULK PRODUCE

CUCUMBERS,
SUMMER SQUASH,
EGGPLANT: \$1 / LB
BEETS: \$2 / BU
TOMATOES: \$2 / LB

WHAT'S HAPPENING ON THE FARM

A Whole New World?

We figured our vacation was over on Monday morning. After a week without irrigating, we were well rested and ready to get back to this season as we remembered it. We geared up for a huge tomato harvest on Monday, sent someone to Adams Farm to pick up our beef, cultivated all afternoon, and laid pipe in the fall carrots. On Tuesday morning, the sprinklers were turning again as the sun shone high in the sky and we harvested another beautiful haul of eggplants and green peppers.

Then the forecast started taking a turn for impending storms, so we switched gears. Karen and Zoe kept the cultivators moving through the fall crops while Sunny and I started scurrying to put the fall spinach, lettuce, and greens in the ground and

preparing our last fields for plants to go in the ground.

I didn't cancel the weeder crew for Wednesday (just to make sure it WOULD rain), but by 9am it was raining hard enough that we transformed them into a harvest crew, as we found ourselves in a good-old rain-slog harvest of cucumbers and squash. As the rain kept falling, we took the time to remove the old cukes from the fieldhouse to make way for early-winter kale and spinach. In the afternoon, we planted kale, broccoli, and collards as the spinach seeds in the ground soaked up the free moisture. Wow, that was different!

By Thursday we realized that we had a whole new problem. Only one dry day left before a bunch more stormy weather on the horizon. And nearly all of the melons were ripe. And we needed to move our herd and their 3 new calves to a new field (that actually had grass!!). And the forecast for 95F. So we scrambled: We cancelled

the beef sale (no time to set up or re-stock). We moved the cows into their new pasture (a bit of a rodeo). And then, Karen, John, Zoe, and I piled all the melons and then brought over 5000 lbs home. Not exactly sure where we are, but by Friday all of the melons were in the barn, all of the plants were watered in the ground, all of the cows had grass, all of the tomatoes were sorted in the Farm Shop, and there's more free water in the forecast. Feels a bit like a whole new world out here.

We hope you enjoy the harvest.

Your Farmer,
Dan
(for Karen, Abbe, Zoe, John, Rebecca, and Sunny)

Tomato Bruschetta

4 medium tomatoes
1 T minced garlic
1/4 cup chopped basil (or to taste)
chopped parsley to taste
1 tsp olive oil
1 tsp lemon juice
salt to taste
hot pepper flakes (optional)
crusty bread

For best results, I like to chop tomatoes, lightly salt and let them drain for 1/2-1 hour. I put the strainer over the bowl and use the juice to throw into soup or stew. Add all remaining ingredients, except bread, and it is ready! It is great refrigerated too. If I am in a rush, it is also great with freshly chopped tomatoes. Delicious served on sliced sourdough or french bread that has been drizzled with oil and crisped in the oven AND with a slice of fresh mozzarella.

HOW WE FARM

CSA Distribution

As we settle into the big 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 greens this year?) we try to make up for it with other crops that might be heavier (did you notice the extra cucumbers 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 listening to you, year after year. The Suggestion Box, Surveys, and just watching what leaves quickest in the "Mix and Match" have been good ways to find out what people 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.



PUTTING FOOD BY TIPS

Tomatoes

Now's the time to make use of the abundance of tomatoes on the farm. We have tomatoes in bulk and this is just the early crop! So now's the time to get ready for winter. The traditional way is to put them up in glass canning jars. This is a tasty way to have tomatoes all year long. They taste great fresh out of the jar. Use a good reference like "Putting Food By" to get the scoop on how to do it right. This method is somewhat time



consuming but yields the best product. For those who want a quicker and simpler way, just put them in plastic bags and into the freezer they go. When you thaw them they can be used for cooking, but they are too mushy to be eaten fresh. The taste is great and for cooking they are ideal.

Tomato Sauce

Sauce now, smile later. Put your tomatoes in a big pot and add just a little bit of water. Bring them to a boil and then turn the heat down to simmer (don't let them burn - that's the trick!). After they've cooked for a lot of hours (like, all day) put the whole thing through the Foley Food Mill (to take out the skins, etc - You can also drop the tomatoes in boiling water for a minute before saucing them to take the skins off, if you don't have a food mill). Don't add any onions, peppers, garlic or nothing. Just tomatoes. All tomatoes. All the time. Put this brew in yogurt containers (leave an inch of head room) and into the freezer. Defrost this winter when you want to be happy. You can put this in jars as well, but make sure you follow the directions carefully since the risk of botulism is high with canned tomatoes. It's not hard to do, just do it right. Either way, you'll be happy with your sauce!

