

Celebrating
25 years of
CSA growing!

BROOKFIELD FARM SHOPTALK

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September 15, 2011
Distribution Week #15

WHAT'S NEW THIS WEEK

Seeing Red!

Red Potatoes: We dug our first real spuds this week and found a very nice crop of reds out there. They have some black spots on the outside, but they peel up easily, the size is big, and the overall yield looks great. These are great for mashing or roasting (and bake up okay as well). We should have a good crop all Fall.

Red Onions: This was the smallest of our onion crops this year and they also had some trouble "dying back" in the field (too much moisture late in their growth). There are some nice onions, but you might find a few with brown hearts - we tried to keep that to a minimum.

Beets: The fall crop looks great - good sized roots and decent greens. We should have these through the fall.

Kohlrabi: This crop (looks like a purple ball with leaves coming out the top) is in the Brassica Family along with its cousins broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, kale, etc. To use it, peel the purple skin and cut it up and eat fresh - tastes sort of like a broccoli-carrot. Or use it for cooking for a nice change of pace (see below). We'll only have it for one week.

Brussels' Sprout Tops: In order to get Brussels sprouts you have to take the tops off (to push the growing energy down the plant). We usually just throw these on the ground, where they compost. But this year they are such high quality food we decided to save them and distribute to you. Use them like collard greens, but enjoy the much superior (we think) taste!

WHAT'S HAPPENING ON THE FARM

Right On Time

I found myself wondering last week what would happen if it just rained every single day in the fall. What would we do? You can't harvest squash, potatoes, or onions. And pretty quickly the farm roads get so muddy that you can't get to the fields to get the other crops that are slowly turning to mush. Luckily, just before we might have to answer that question, the world stopped weeping, and we found ourselves drying out in the hot sun!

We piled a little squash on Friday, but the field was still too muddy to drive the wagons in with the harvest bins. So on Saturday, we turned our attention to the red onions, which were still in the field and having a heck-of-a-time drying down enough to cure well (see reverse). The field was dry enough to drive a truck and pick up our barrels, so we took our opportunity and brought the last 1700 lbs into the greenhouse to cure.

Then, right on time, the weather forecast decided to make it interesting. Sun was called for Monday through Wednesday, and the kicker was that 34F was forecast for Friday night. For those new to the farm, you might not know how intimate we are here with early frosts. Considering we are on the North slope of Long Mountain, this little hamlet is known as the coldest spot in the Pioneer Valley. When the forecast says 34F, we know we might get a frost. And squash doesn't like a frost. Doesn't like it so much, that it will just turn to mush if it feels any. Time to get to work!

WHAT'S ON THE WAY

CAULIFLOWER

BULK PRODUCE

EDAMAME - \$1/PLANT
RED PEPPERS: \$2 / LB
GREEN & TOSCANO
KALE, BRUSSELS'
SPROUT TOPS- \$2/LB

Couscous with Kohlrabi and Chermoula Dressing

- 2 tsp minced garlic
- 2 tbspc minced cilantro
- 2 tbspc minced fresh parsley
- 1 tsp paprika
- 1/2 tsp ground cumin
- salt
- 3 tbspc fresh lemon juice
- 3 tbspc olive oil
- 2-3 c cooked couscous, cooled to warm temp
- 2 c peeled kohlrabi
- 1/2 c diced radish
- 16 kalamata black olives (optional)
- 1/2 c crumbled feta (optional)

Mix garlic, cilantro, parsley, paprika, cumin, and salt to taste. Stir in lemon juice and olive oil. Toss in couscous. Bring to room temperature. Gently toss with kohlrabi, radishes, and olives (if desired). Serve as is, or sprinkle with feta cheese. Makes 6 servings

From 'Asparagus to Zucchini' a great guide to seasonal eating, available at the farm shop.

So, even though they changed the forecast to a low of 43F on Friday, we spent the rest of our time this week clipping, piling, and binning all of our squash. Then we brought the bins to the greenhouse where the contents can be protected from the weather. As of this writing we've got about 13,000 lbs in the greenhouse and the rest in the field ready to pick up on Friday afternoon. Looks like we might just make it. Keep your eyes on the Friday night forecast for Amherst. We plan on watching with restful eyes when it starts to feel like the season has changed for real out here.

We hope you enjoy the harvest,

Farmer Dan
(for Karen, Abbe, Kerry, Erin, Pete, and Tobin)

HOW WE FARM

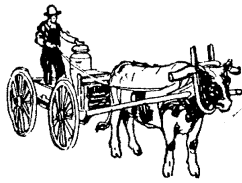
Fall Harvest & Curing

This month we started the process of bringing in the fall storage crops. While most of our spring and summer crops are harvested within 24 hours of distribution, the fall crops are sometimes more of a project that is done in one fell swoop (we call that "bulk harvesting").

This week we harvested the first winter squash which involves clipping every squash and then piling them in long windrows. We then bring wagons with large wooden bins to the field and throw the squash, "binning them up" into 1000 lb. lots. We can make quick work of 4000 lbs of squash; Five of us did the job in 1 hour. Then we drive the wagons, loaded with full bins to the greenhouse on Hulst Rd. where they are stored for distribution through the fall.

Our potatoes are dug with an old *digger* (if you haven't seen it work - come to the potato harvest party in October) that lifts the spuds out of the ground and then another that trails behind (the *picker*) where you can stand and ride along while you clean the debris from the spuds. The potatoes then fall into the bags held onto the back. The carrots and parsnips are lifted with a clever bottom blade that loosens them in the soil so they can be picked up easily. The other roots (celeriac, beets, turnips, radish, rutabagas) are simply pulled by hand. All of these roots are then put into 5 gal. buckets (what would we do without them?) and then two buckets are dumped into a burlap sack and brought on a truck to our root cellar in the bottom of the barn.

This cellar is designed to keep the crops that like moisture (all the roots and cabbage) in the mediating temperature and moisture of the earth; protected from frost as well as the warm air. We let cool air in through a fan at night and close the air off during the day. We fill this root cellar during early October and November



and distribute the crops through March with our Winter Share.

While many vegetables are best used straight off the field, there are a few that actually are more like fine wine and need to be cured before they achieve peak flavor or storage quality.

Sweet potatoes and winter squash just don't taste good if you cook them up right after harvest. We have tried this over and over again since they look so inviting, but they're just not ready. Instead they need to be put into a place which is about 80F for a couple of weeks and then slowly have the temps brought down to 55F and low humidity. After this two week curing period their sweetness comes out and stays for good.

The curing process - which takes starches and turns them to sugars - is a vital part of this process of winter harvest. Our greenhouse serves as a curing house in Late September. After the onions, which are pulled green, have dried for two weeks, they are joined by the squash, in mid-September and the sweet potatoes, in early October. The greenhouse is kept at 50F at night (to ensure that condensation is kept to a minimum) and around 80F during the day. By the middle of October they are all fully cured and then we try to keep the greenhouse at 50F all the time. In this dry space, we can then hold sweet squash, sweet potatoes, and storage onions through Thanksgiving. At that point, we turn off our walk-in cooler (making it a "walk-in warmer") and they have a nice, frost-free, and *low-moisture* environment where they store well through the winter.

All through the fall we will be transforming our hard work into loads of vegetables for you and your families. This is time of year when we work hard, but we have lots of rewards for our labor right in front of us. To see the greenhouse & root cellar filled up is one of the great comforts of the year. It's also a constant reminder of how much we can coax from the earth with a bit of work, skill, and luck. If you'd like to come give us a hand, we're always happy to share the fun!



Pumpkin Harvest Party!

Saturday, Sept 24, 10:30 am



Help us harvest all of our pumpkins from the patch from 10:30 -11am, (don't be late, this goes very quickly with lots of people!)

then pick out your pumpkin and take a wagon ride around the farm (you can do this anytime 'til noon).

A fun time for **all ages**

When Does Regular Distribution End?

We'll should have beautiful crops and continue the same schedule thru Thanksgiving

When Can I Renew My Share?

In two weeks!

We'll be giving you a renewal form at the farm or sending it in the mail (if we miss you!).