

BROOKFIELD FARM SHOPTALK

P.O. Box 227
Amherst, MA 01004

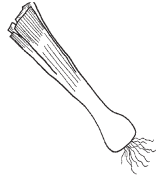
www.brookfieldfarm.org
(413)253-7991 info@brookfieldfarm.org

August 29, 2020
Distribution Week #13

WHAT'S NEW THIS WEEK

A Whole New Look

Leeks: A subtle and buttery member of the onion family, they can be used in soup, stews, and main dishes. To use leeks, cut off roots and the thin green leaves. Slice in half, and wash thoroughly. Chop up and use like onion. We expect to have a good crop available thru November.



Garlic: Our garlic is all "cured" now, so if you don't eat it all, leave it in a cool dry place and it will last for months.

Brussels' Sprouts Tops: In order to grow a great sprout, you've got to take off its top. This stops the plant growing upward, and encourages all the little sprouts on the side to grow big. Luckily the tops taste incredible, so we present them to you this week. Use them like collard greens - delicious.

where's my broccoli & kohlrabi? They are normally ripe by now, but for some reason (probably the droughty August) they are holding on. They still look good - just not getting to the finish line yet. Hopefully soon - we will keep you posted

WHAT'S ON THE WAY

BROCCOLI
KOHLRABI
POTATOES
CELERY

BULK PRODUCE

BRUSSELS' TOPS:
\$2 / LB

SWEET PEPPERS:
\$2 / LB

SHISHITO PEPPERS:
\$4 / LB

CARROTS: \$1 / LB

WHAT'S HAPPENING ON THE FARM

The Winds Of Change

Things are moving quickly at the farm these days from hot to cold, dry to wet, long to short, cuke to pepper, onion to leek. Monday was familiar. Hot & dusty. We finished the regular harvest by 10 and then hit the tomatoes. And they hit us back. After nearly 90 minutes we had about 1200 lbs - our biggest haul of the season. In the afternoon, after sorting in the shade, we moved the sprinklers and set them up for watering in the morning and took care of a little handweeding as well.

Tuesday was a little cooler and mostly absorbed with a big shishito pepper harvest in the morning, then some more irrigation and handweeding in the afternoon. By Wednesday we were rolling - with the temps barely pushing the mid 70's, we had a spring in our step and the harvest done by 11. So, we removed the old drip tape from the spent onion beds, set up new drip in the thirsty new raspberries, and cultivated the rest of the fall brassicas. In the afternoon we quickly packed our shares for Boston, finished handweeding the late red cabbage and lettuce, while getting the irrigation setups done in the fall kale and storage radish.

Then on Thursday, the world seemed to change a little. It was cloudy. All day. In the afternoon, the sky darkened. The wind blew hard. And it rained. Hard. It stayed cloudy. And cool. So we ripped the now-done early tomatoes out of the big fieldhouse to make way for the winter kale. Out went the vines, into the dump truck, and to the compost piles. Friday

dawned foggy and cool to find us digging the first leeks of the season. The weeders spent their last day finishing up the cilantro and then we all met in the West Field to all-hands the tomatoes before lunch. Then they went home to their rooms to go to school. We finished the last onion bed. Saw the rain forecast for the weekend and sunny and cool next week. Didn't set up any irrigation. Seem to be heading to a new place.

We hope you enjoy the harvest,

Your Farmer,
Dan (for Karen, Abbe, Ben, Jake, Joseph, Marlee, Serena, Anna, and Wally)

Tomato Leek Sauce

2 tbsp olive oil
2 c thinly sliced (white and light-green parts)
2 cloves garlic, minced
2 sprigs thyme
4 med tomatoes, coarsely chopped
1/3 c dry white wine

Heat the oil in a med saucepan over med-high heat. Once the oil shimmers, add the leeks, garlic and thyme. Stir to coat, and reduce the heat to med; cook for 8 to 10 min, until tender but not browned, stirring occasionally. Add the tomatoes plus their juices and the wine, then season with salt and pepper to taste. Cook uncovered for about 30 min, adjusting the heat as needed. The mixture will thicken and begin to look like a chunky sauce. Discard the thyme sprigs. Taste, and adjust the seasoning before serving or cooling and storing.

This recipe is adapted from the Washington Post. It is delicious and versatile. Serve it over any cooked grain, over potatoes, pasta, fish or chicken for an easy meal. Add a hot pepper for some heat or some fennel or fennel seeds for a change of pace.

HOW WE FARM

Fall Harvest & Curing

In late August we start the process (onions) 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").

Next week we will harvest 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 3000 lbs of squash; Three of us do the job in 30 minutes. 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 nifty digger that lifts the spuds out of the ground and drops them onto the the ground. Then we scrounge around and pick them up into buckets. The carrots and celeriac are lifted with a clever bottom blade that loosens them in the soil so they can be picked up easily. The other roots (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 grain 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 (except spaghetti 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 summer. After the onions, which are pulled green at the end of August, have dried for three weeks, they are removed to the cool dry barn and replaced 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 and sweet potatoes, 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, drop us a line and we'll plug you in, we're always happy to share the fun!



PIC OF THE WEEK

Joseph jumps for joy as the old tomatoes head to the compost pile!