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W eek two of the CSA season is upon us and for some of you, this is your first box of the year. Welcome aboard! We hope you are as excited as we are about the CSA season.

We are as pleased as ever with this week's box, which includes some items we weren't quite expecting to be putting in the box so early. For instance, the snap peas surprised us with an early flush. Every spring we plant peas around the same date: April 15th. Even though we had a super early spring this year, we stuck to this date out of fear of frost and cold soil temperatures causing the seed to not germinate. With a set plant date, experience has taught us that we can pretty much expect to be harvesting peas on the third week of the CSA season.

Yet, like mostly EVERYthing this year, the peas came in early. Not that we are complaining; I am just pointing out the fact that in many respects we truly are at the whim of mother nature when it comes to what we put in the box from week to week.

Obviously, we make all sorts of plans that include staggered seeding dates and succession plantings and what have you to ensure that each and every box gets both enough veggies, but also a nice variety. But it really does come down to what the weather decides to do.

This season, the weather has pretty much decided to be completely and utterly all -over-the-place bizarre. We've seen all sorts of craziness: 80s in March, highs in the 40s in April. A super wet early May, sustained wind gust of over 30mph for a week and half straight. And now we are going on 6 weeks with less than an inch of rain total. In many ways, we are reeling from all of this, harvesting what's ready, keeping an eye on what's almost ready, covering crops that are cold sensitive and now, irrigation nearly around the clock.

The weird weather has made for an interesting season to say the least. And it has reminded us of some of the joys and frustrations of seasonal vegetable growing in the Upper Midwest. And like seasonal growing, seasonal eating has it own sets of joys and frustrations, such as learning to eat the abundance of greens in the spring and having the patience to wait until August for your sweet corn.

Learning to eat seasonally is at the core of the CSA philosophy and something that is easier said than done. But, if you think about the fact that we are only the second or third generation ever that even has the *choice* to not eat seasonally, it kind of puts things into perspective.

Now, I am not saying that, you should ban tomatoes or peppers or whatever from your diet completely when they are not in season. I would have to say that eating *only* what is available in your area at a specific time is pretty difficult and frankly not very much fun. But, I do believe that we should all take steps towards eating *more* seasonally and that is exactly what you are all doing by joining our CSA!

• this week's box! •

• asian greens mix •
 • fresh garlic •
 • garlic scapes •
 • german butterball potatoes •
 • green butterhead lettuce •
 • kohlrabi •
 • pea tendrils •
 • potato onions •
 • radishes •
 • sage •
 • spinach •
 • snap or snow peas •

With learning to change your diet a bit, having to cook more of your meals from scratch and remembering to pick up your box on time, being a CSA member can be challenging. And for taking on this challenge I must thank you all. Because by doing so, you are supporting us, our 13 employees, and the local food movement as a whole. You guys are the best CSA members a farmer could ask for!

--Mike



Sunset irrigation on our newly seeded fall cabbage field

Hi there CSA folks – Mike’s wife, Dani, here. For all you newbies, this is the part of the newsletter where we give you descriptions of each of the items in your box along with storage tips & cooking suggestions plus a couple recipes. I usually write this page, being the resident produce nerd & cooking fanatic. You can find more information & lots of recipes on our website, www.driflessorganics.com. We welcome nice easy recipes that feature seasonal produce – if you have any favorites you’d like to share, please send them to Mike! The first couple CSA boxes, being composed mostly of what’s in season, are all about greens & herbs. We’re careful to save some storage veggies from last year, like the black radishes & potatoes in this week’s box, to beef the early boxes up a bit before the heavier crops start rolling in later in June.

Asian Greens Mix – this is a great slightly spicy mix for wilting in a sauté or stir-fry, or added to salad greens. They just take a few seconds to cook, so add them right at the end. Also delicious in Asian inspired soups. Get it into the fridge & use it within a day or two.

Broccoli – being the first harvest of the year, this nutritional powerhouse is extra tender & tasty. Eat raw, blanched, steamed, sautéed, stir-fried, or roasted. Store in plastic in the fridge & eat within a few days.

Fresh Garlic – this is what garlic looks like before it’s ‘cured’ (left to dry out in a well-ventilated environment for several weeks). It still has a high moisture content, so it’s easier to peel & a bit more mild than the garlic you’re used to – but can be used interchangeably. Will store fine on the kitchen counter for a few days, or for a couple weeks in the fridge.

Garlic Scapes – the flowering stem of the garlic plant, scapes have garlic flavor & lots of crunch. Trim the tip off right above the white bulbous flower bud & finely chop the bud & all of the stem & use anywhere you would normally use garlic, fresh or cooked. A mini food processor comes in real handy if you cut they pieces into 1” or 2” lengths first. They keep just as well in a vase of water on the kitchen table as in plastic in the fridge (just change the water frequently).

German Butterball Potatoes – our favorite all-purpose potato: delicious roasted, steamed, boiled, baked, fried, or mashed. Store in a cool, dark place.

Green Butterhead Lettuce – a nice sweet, tender lettuce for salads, sandwiches, or using as a lettuce ‘wrap’ or ‘boat’. Stores best in plastic with a paper towel in the fridge.

Green Top Red Baby Beets – green tops are super nutritious & delicious & can be used like you would chard or kale – steamed, sautéed, stir-fried, or simmered in soups or curries (be forewarned: it will turn whatever you’re cooking pink, though). The smaller leaves are tender & beautiful raw in salads. The baby beets do not need to be peeled, & are delicious grated raw on salads or sliced & eaten with dip. Or boil or roast them whole & eat with butter or chill to slice & use in salads.

Kohlrabi – they may be green, they may be purple and both colors are delicious and sweet. The crunchy bulb can be eaten raw or cooked, & the greens can be stripped from the tough stem & cooked like kale. Use a sharp paring knife to peel the bulb, cut in half, & slice into half-moons or matchsticks to eat with dip, on salads, or sauté or stir-fry, or simmer in soups. The bulb will keep for weeks, but try to use the greens within a few days.

Pea Tendrils – another green that can be eaten raw or cooked – either way, just chop them up coarsely or the stem will be too fibrous to chew. Nice sweet pea flavor. Eat it up within a day or two after storing in plastic in the fridge.

Potato Onions – a nice bunching onion that can be used as you would scallions (green onions). Store in plastic in the fridge & use within a week.

Sage – fresh sage is delicious with chicken, turkey, pork, pasta, tomatoes, & potatoes. You can cook with it or make a pile of leaves, roll them up, & thinly slice (‘chiffonade’) into little ribbons for a beautiful fresh garnish on top of a finished dish. If you won’t be using it within a few days, hang it upside down in a well-ventilated place out of direct sunlight & dry until crispy.

Snap Peas – are like candy! A wonderful snack all by themselves, or with dip. Tasty stir-fried or sautéed, too – just don’t over cook them or you’ll lose their juicy crunch. To remove the stem and strings at the same time from sugar snap peas, hold the stem between your thumb and index finger, snap and pull down.

Spinach – a beautiful crop of early summer spinach – fantastic in fresh salads or sandwiches & delicious wilted in eggs, pasta, or sauces. Keeps for several days in plastic in the fridge.

Wilted Greens with Lemon & Olives

- 12 cups mixed greens, coarsely chopped (kohlrabi/ radish/beet greens, chard, kale, spinach, arugula, etc.)
- 2 Tbsp. fresh garlic, minced
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- Grated zest & juice of 1 lemon
- 1/3 c. kalamata or oil-cured black olives, pitted & coarsely chopped
- Salt & pepper to taste
- Rinse greens well in a colander. Heat oil in a large pan with a lid & sauté green garlic. After a minute, add still damp greens, stir a couple times, & add lid. Steam for a minute or two, then stir & add lemon zest & juice. Stir in olives, salt, & pepper & cover for another minute. Serve warm or cold. Serves 4-5.

Creamy Potato & Snap Pea Salad

- 2 lb. potatoes, cut into bite size chunks (skin left on)
- 2 Tbsp. white wine vinegar mixed with ¼ tsp. each salt & pepper
- ½ lb. snap peas, stems & strings removed (snow peas work too!)
- 1 bunch of green onions (or potato onions), chopped
- 1 Tbsp. green garlic or garlic scapes, minced
- 3/4 c. sour cream
- 1 Tbsp. mayo
- 1 Tbsp. grainy mustard
- Salt & pepper to taste
- A mix of any fresh herbs, such as rosemary, thyme, oregano, parsley, dill, cilantro, etc.
- Boil cut potatoes in salted water until just soft (but not falling apart). Drain, reserving hot water. Gently fold in vinegar/salt/pepper mix & cool.

Welcome to the Driftless Organics CSA Program!



As we begin this 2012 season, we have nothing but high hopes for a season of plentiful, and great tasting fruits and vegetables that continue to satisfy you week after week. Whether you are a first time member or a seasoned CSA veteran, we want you to get the most out of your vegetable boxes. Make no bones about it, learning to eat the contents of your box can be challenging at times. I mean, we all know what to do with strawberries (you stuff 'em in your face!!), but what do you do with a bunch of broccoli-raab? (you'll find out...)

We aim to help you through this endeavour with a newsletter that includes tasty recipes and food tips that focus on the veggies in each week's box. And, as we all know, the internet is a great resource to find just the right recipe for what you crave. Our website alone has over 200 useful recipes and oodles of cooking tips for lots of different veggies and herbs. Most of all, what I find helps the most when you are faced with a box of vegetables that you are unsure of what to do with is to be creative. Don't let past preconceptions about certain vegetables hold you back. Try new things!

Throughout this entire CSA experience we hope you will remember that we are a part of a nationwide movement towards a more sustainable, healthy and just food system; one that exemplifies the things we care about, like treating the earth a little better and making our ecological footprint just a bit smaller. We, the farmers and you, the eaters, have joined forces to take steps towards positive change.

In addition, we want y'all to learn a bit more about how we grow your food. Through the newsletters, our web site, and our facebook page, we are going to try to show you some of what goes on here on the farm from day to day. We encourage and welcome farm visits and please, if you have any questions feel free to give Mike a call (608-624-3735) or e-mail (csainfo@driftlessorganics.com).

With these ideas in mind, we embark on the 2012 season with gusto. From the bottom of our plows to the tip top of the corn tassel, we wish you the most enjoyable CSA season you have ever experienced.

Other Important Things to Remember:

Your pick up site, be it a garage or parking lot, co-op or cafe, has a designated site coordinator. This hardworking soul (or souls) help us out in ensuring that you all get your boxes. They are an extremely important and valuable, piece of the puzzle of the CSA program. Let's all try our best to make their job as easy as can be by not forgetting your box!

One of the hardest things about belonging to a CSA farm is remembering to pick up your box. If you do indeed forget your box, the first thing to do is call your site coordinator and let them know. Arrangements can be made for a later pick up but just keep in mind that this can't become a habit. Your site coordinator is not responsible for your box after the pick up time and if arrangements haven't been made - your box will be redistributed so the food doesn't go to waste.

Your veggies and fruit come in a reusable food-grade wax box and we would love it if you could bring your box back to your pick up site so that we can reuse it. Better yet, bring your own bag along to transfer your goodies so that you can leave your box at your site. There will be a place for you to put your box and here are instructions on the back of this sheet on how to break down your box without ripping it. Please be careful, because a ripped bottom on a box is box wasted. Unfortunately, we can't reuse the pints that your berries and tomatoes will be coming in. However, the plastic pints can be recycled and the green pulpy pints we use can be composted.

Something that we encourage throughout the entire season is feedback. Of course we LOVE to hear the good stuff and we sure appreciate the compliments, but we want to hear the not-so-good stuff as well. Please feel free to e-mail us with any questions or concerns, complaints or desires. Anything! We are open to it all and we are constantly striving to improve our farm and one of the best ways to find out how is by listening to our members! You can e-mail us at csainfo@driftlessorganics.com or call the office at 608.624.3735.

REUSING THOSE WAX BOXES

As you see, we deliver your veggies in wax boxes. We like to reuse the boxes as many times as we can for obvious reasons like recycling and keeping our expenses down. It is up to you to return your box without ripping it and this can be tricky as they are a bit difficult to break down for the novice wax box-breaker-downer. Here's a few helpful tips:



STEP 1: Turn your box upside down. Grip flap with fingers and squeeze together allowing flap to fold along its manufactured fold line. Here's the key: **SQUEEZE** the flap together, don't **PULL**. Squeeze=yes. Pull=no. This is where the majority of the tears occur and when the box tears here, it is useless to us as it no longer is strong enough to hold your veggies.



STEP 2: Flip box and repeat step 1.



STEP 3: After both side flaps have been released, the two larger flaps should easily bend upwards until all four flaps are standing upright.



STEP 4: At this point, box should be loose and able to flatten easily. Like many things in life, **don't force it**. Gently break down box and flatten. Now you can stick it in the empty (larger) wax box provided at your site for empties.

Thank you for helping us reuse these boxes... every little bit helps keep costs down.