



NEWS FROM THE FIELDS OF  
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*Week #10! It has been a brilliant week on the farm and we are having the time of our lives out here in the fields. Summer is upon us in all of its triumphant glory. Tomatoes are going hog-wild, watermelons are at their peak, peppers and sweet corn, oh my! It is truly a wonderful time to be alive and to be bombarded by amazing, 'certified' organic produce.*

### What does it mean to be "Certified Organic?"

With our 2012 organic certification papers finally arriving in the mail from our organic certifying agency, acknowledging that we are once again for and for another year "certified" organic, I ask: "What does it mean to be 'certified' organic?"

Using my best dictionary speak, here's a definition for you: "Certified Organic" means that the farm and the products produced (grown) adhere to strict, uniform standards that are verified by independent state or private organizations. Certification includes inspections of farm fields and periodic testing of soil and water to ensure that growers and handlers are meeting the standards which have been set.

A few of these standards include:

- \* avoidance of most synthetic chemical inputs (e.g. fertilizer, pesticides, antibiotics, food additives, etc), genetically modified organisms, irradiation, and the use of sewage sludge;
- \* use of farmland that has been free from chemicals for at least 3 years

\* keeping detailed written production and sales records (audit trail).

\* maintaining strict physical separation of organic products from non-certified products;

\* undergoing periodic on-site inspections.

To us, the meaning of organic goes above and beyond this textbook definition. We'd like to think that the guidelines laid out by the USDA and the National Organic Program or NOP (the federal regulatory framework governing organic food) are a point in which to start from.

A few of the other things we try to do:

**Cover crop and taking time off:** if it doesn't have vegetables

growing on it, then it should have a cover

crop! That's

our motto for

our fields

and that is

what we

strive

for.

Cover

crops,

like rye,

oats and

vetch add

nutrients and

organic matter

to the soil. Plus,

they protect the soil

from wind and erosion. We

also like to give our soil some time off by

not planting vegetables in every single field,

every single season.

**Soil Fertilization & Mineralization:**

There's an old Organic Valley poster of a

young Noah and Josh with the slogan "We

plow our profits back into our soil" and in

a lot of ways this is true. We spend a whole

heck of a lot of time and money in keeping

### this week's box!

Broccoli

Cucumbers

Garlic

Green or Purple Beans

Jalapeno Peppers

Mixed Tomatoes

Red or Yellow Watermelon

**Spicy Pepper Mix:** Banana,

Cayenne, Jalapeno & Poblano

Red Onions

Sweet Corn

**Sweet Pepper Mix:** Red or

Yellow Italian Frying Peppers

and/or Red Pimientos

Thyme

our soils healthy. We are always getting soil tests taken and adding certain nutrients and minerals when needed. We do this because we know that it grows better (and tastier) vegetables but also because we want to leave this soil *better* than what it was when we started farming it.

**Keeping things local:** selling our produce locally, growing our own cover crop seed, buying as many supplies as we can from neighborhood outlets and other small steps add up to keeping the production cycle smaller and a bit more sustainable.

**Rotating:** Don't be fooled - most organic farmers have their own arsenal of pesticides - ones that are approved for use in organics. Even as such, we try to minimize their use (a pesticide is a pesticide after all) by rotating our crops and putting some distance between the vegetables and where the pests are. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't.

Oh, if only I had more room, I could write and write and write about this stuff. But alas, time to get back to work. Enjoy your week, everyone!

-Mike



## Greek Salad

- 1 large or 2 medium tomatoes, cut into wedges
- 1 cucumber, seeds removed, cut into large chunks
- 1 large or 2 small green or red peppers, cut into large chunks
- 1/4 red onion, cut into thin wedges
- 1/4 c. kalamata olives
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 2 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar
- Salt & pepper to taste
- 2 oz. feta cheese, crumbled
- 1/2 bunch flat leaf parsley leaves or chopped romaine lettuce (optional)

Combine all ingredients in a serving bowl. Serve cold or room temperature, over romaine if you wish, with crusty bread to sop up the juices. Serves 4-5.

## Green Beans with Tomatoes, Garlic and Fresh Thyme

- 1 lb. green beans, stems removed
- 2 Tbsp. olive or sunflower oil or butter
- 2 large cloves garlic, very thinly sliced
- 1 small tomato, chopped
- Salt & pepper to taste
- 1 Tbsp. fresh thyme
- 1 Tbsp. red wine vinegar

In a large sauté pan with lid, heat oil/butter over med-high heat. Add green beans, stir a couple times, & cover. After about 5 minutes, add garlic & tomato, stir a few more times, & cover again for a couple minutes. Remove cover, add salt, pepper, & thyme & sauté for another couple minutes, until beans are just starting to be tender. Stir in vinegar & serve immediately. Serves 3-4.

*Did you know our newsletters are online as well? Check out recipes and stories from weeks (and years) past at: [www.driftlessorganics.com](http://www.driftlessorganics.com)*

**Broccoli** - Broccoli is back for a limited time! Enjoy cooked or fresh. Keep in the crisper drawer of your fridge.

**Collard Greens** - peel leaves off tough stems, chop, & steam, sauté, stir-fry or simmer anywhere you would kale or chard. Store in plastic in the fridge & use within a few days.

**Cucumbers** - try in the Greek salad recipe, or check out our website for other cucumber recipes. Store on the counter for a day or two or in the fridge for longer.

**Garlic** - a smaller variety that what you've been getting the last couple of weeks. store on your counter or in the pantry.

**Green or Purple Beans** - The last of the beans for a while. If you just can't stand the sight of beans right now, I suggest freezing them!

**Green Zucchini or Yellow Summer Squash** - have you tried making zucchini bread yet? Might be a good alternative if you are sick of these guys.

**Hot Pepper Mix** - there will be a bag of a mixture of hot peppers including: Banana - semi-hot, yellowish-green, good in pasta sauces or fajitas. Cayenne- red or yellow, very skinny, small and kind of wrinkly. Good in chili or spicy Asian food. Very spicy! Jalapeno - green, small, oval shaped. SALSA! or just chopped up raw in southwest or Mexican food. Poblano - dark green and about the size of a fist. traditionally poblanos are roasted & peeled before eating, but these are young enough that the skin isn't too tough, so you

can just chop it up & sauté, stir-fry, or simmer it like you would other peppers. Their hotness will vary from pepper to pepper, so be sure to test it before adding lots to something. They're delicious in fajitas, eggs, chili, beans, enchilada & cream sauces. Store on the counter for several days or the fridge for longer. **When working with hot peppers, you may want to wear some sort of glove to protect your hands. At the very least, wash your hands after chopping!**

**Red Onions** - these onions are cured enough to be stored on your counter. Otherwise, store them in your fridge.

**Sweet Corn** - we purchased some mighty nice looking organic sweet corn from a neighbor to fill out the box this week. We hope you enjoy!

**Sweet Pepper Mix** - there will be an assortment of Italian Frying and pimientos. **Just remember: sweet peppers are loose in your box, hot peppers are in a bag.** Eat your fill or chop some up & freeze for later – no need to blanch first.

**Thyme** - delicious with chicken, steak, roasted/grilled vegetables, quiches, pasta, pizza... Strip from stem to use. If using in a recipe that calls for dried thyme, use 3 times the amount fresh.

**Watermelon** - Either a yellow or a red melon in your box this week. Watermelon or so much better cold, so be sure to store in your fridge until you are ready to eat. Some folks like to cut up their melon right away and store the chunks in tupperware for a quick and easy snack.