



NEWS FROM THE FIELDS OF  
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*Week #18! What a gorgeous fall it has been and we have been so fortunate for this lovely weather. We've been able to stay on top of our winter harvests and are right on track to finishing the year up on time. There's still a lot of work left to do, but we've caught our second wind (or is it third?) and are cruising along nicely now. Remember, after this week, there are only TWO weeks left in the season (one for you EOW members).*

Once again, it's sweet potato season. We love this time of year for a number of reasons, one of which is sweet potatoes!

Sweet potatoes are a tough crop to grow successfully and for this very reason, there aren't too many farmers in the region who are crazy enough to try and grow them. They really are meant to be raised in the more southern regions of the country, where hot and humid weather is the norm for most of the growing season. A lot of farmers who do grow sweets in the Midwest will plant them into a black (or green) plastic mulch. This mulch helps to heat up the soil, creating a much warmer environment for the plants to thrive.

We used to grow them this way up until last year. We'd had just about enough of the plastic mulch for a number of reasons: it is expensive, a pain to plant into, an EXTREME pain to harvest the potatoes out of and it is simply nauseating to have to throw away all of that plastic after harvest. We were filling an entire huge dumpster with our sweet potato waste! So until the biodegradable plastic mulch is accepted as certified organic, we will be planting our sweet potatoes into the bare dirt.

We plant the sweet potato seedlings, otherwise called "slips", as soon as the danger of frost is more or less gone (about mid to late May). We plant the slips into

the sandiest of our soils, as this gives them the room they need to grow, plus makes it much easier for us to dig them up in the fall. We've tried growing sweet potatoes in a heavier soil and have ended up with some mighty ugly sweet potatoes, plus they were a nightmare to harvest. I'd like to say that we've learned from past mistakes and now, harvest is a breeze!

We harvest our sweet potatoes much the same way as our potatoes. We run an old ginseng digger with a tractor (see picture below). This machine digs up the sweet potatoes, gently bounces the dirt off of them and then drops them on top of the ground. Our crew then follows behind, picking them up and placing them into black trays. The whole process takes about 2 full work days for a crew of 6-8 hardworking folks.

The sweet potatoes then need to be cured in a warm and humid environment. We do this by stacking the plastic trays in an enclosed area that we heat to a balmy 85 degrees F with 80-95% humidity. We leave them in there for about 7-10 days. This environment allows the skins of the sweet potatoes to thicken and helps to heal any scuffs they sustained during harvest. Also the curing process helps to convert some of the starches into sugars making them more delicious than uncured sweet potatoes.

Often commercially called yams, sweet potatoes are a member of the morning glory family (the similarity can be seen in their leaves) and are not really potatoes but rather

## this week's box!

- Banana Peppers
- Cauliflower or Romanesco
- Green Top Carrots
- Green Top Red or Gold Beets
- Mint
- Mixed Sweet Peppers
- Mixed Tomatoes
- Napa Cabbage
- Parsnips
- Red Kuri Squash
- Salad Mix
- Shallots
- Sweet Potatoes
- Yellow Onions



*Here's Noah, digging sweet potatoes...*

rooted tubers. Yams originated in West Africa and are a starchy tuber, while sweet potatoes are native to the Americas, dating back to 8,000 B.C., and generally have a moist, very sweet and orange/yellow flesh.

They are indeed a lot of work to grow but alas, we just can't help ourselves, we love them that much and we think you will agree, they are worth the trouble.

**NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER VEGGIE BOXES ARE STILL AVAILABLE!!**

**Each box will be crammed full of storage veggies like potatoes, carrots, squash, sweet potatoes, parsnips, beets and more. ORDER NOW! <http://csaweb.driftlessorganics.com/>**

this week's box!

**Banana Peppers** - Ok, here's the test to see who's reading the newsletter - telling the difference between these HOT peppers and the sweet peppers that are also in your box. The banana peppers are either red and pointy or pale yellow-green. The flesh is thinner than any of the sweets as well. There are THREE of these in your box.

**White or Orange Cauliflower or Romanesco** - delicious roasted with garlic & then tossed with fresh lemon juice/zest & parmesan.

**Green Top Carrots** - big, but very tasty still! These weat, crunchy roots will stay sweeter & crunchier without the greens, so be sure to snap them off before storing the roots in plastic in the fridge.

**Green Top Red or Gold Beets** - make sure to cook up these gorgeous & nutritious greens within the next few days. Sauté them in a bit of oil or butter & garlic until just wilted. The beets, trimmed with a 1/2 inch of stem left on them, will keep in plastic in the fridge for weeks.

**Red Kuri Squash** - a yummy, dry tex-

ured, deep orange squash. Cut in half, scoop out the seeds, & roast cut side down on a cookie sheet for 35-45 minutes. Store on the counter for weeks.

**Mint** - steep with hot water for a wonderful tea or try in recipe below.

**Mixed Tomatoes** - we're really glad we covered these before the frost a couple weeks ago, because it's been beautiful ever since & we're still getting tomatoes!! Cool nights are great for tomato soup, homemade pasta sauce, pizza, chili... they all use tomatoes!

**Napa Cabbage** - Napa are a bit more tender than normal green cabbage, & are thus a better bet for salads. The normal stuff will hold up better to cooking & coleslaws, though, & will keep longer.

**Parsnips** - the first of the fall parsnips! Not quite as sweet as the ones we sent you earlier this summer, that were stored in the ground all winter & harvested in spring, but still really yummy! Look for the white roots in your box that look like carrots.

**Salad Mix** - a nice mix of tender young lettuces. We try to wash them well, but you'll still occasionally find some grit - we recommend running them through a

salad spinner if you've got one. Keep in the fridge & use up within a week.

**Shallots** - in lieu of garlic, we are giving you some more of these precious shallots. Our garlic crop didn't amount to much, but we will have some more for the remaining boxes!

**Sweet Potatoes** - your special sweet treat to you! Roast them whole, or with oil in wedges or half-moons, alone or with other roots. Or simmer them in soups, sauces, or curries. I love putting them in vegetarian chili. Store on the counter for a couple weeks. Make sure **you DO NOT store your sweet potatoes in the fridge!**

**Mixed Sweet Peppers** - bells (red), Italian Frying (deep yellow), minis and/or pimientos (red, squat) - I can't think of a meal we've had in weeks that didn't have peppers! I hope you're loving the bounty as much as we are. If not, chop them up & freeze in freezer bags - you sure will appreciate them when organic red peppers from Mexico cost \$5.99/lb. in December!

## Roasted Tomato Pasta/Pizza Sauce

- 6-8 tomatoes, preferably romas
  - 3 Tbsp. olive/sunflower oil
  - 1 onion, chopped
  - 1 tsp. fennel seeds
  - 3 cloves garlic, minced
  - 1/2 - 1 hot banana pepper, seeds removed, minced
  - Fresh/dried herbs to taste: rosemary, oregano, thyme, etc.
  - Pinch of sugar (optional)
  - Salt & pepper to taste
- Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Cut tomatoes in half lengthwise & use your fingers to scoop out seeds & liquid. Place tomatoes cut side up on a cookie sheet, drizzle with a bit of oil, salt, & pepper & roast for 30-40 minutes, until tops are starting to brown (if you have a convection oven, it will speed this process up a bit). Let cool a bit & puree in a food processor. Meanwhile, heat remaining oil in a heavy bottomed pan & sauté onions until translucent. Add fennel seeds, garlic, & banana peppers & stir for a couple minutes. Add herbs of choice, pureed tomatoes, sugar, & more salt & pepper to taste. Simmer until sauce reaches your desired consistency - it may be ready for pasta at this point but you may want to simmer it for a while for a drier pizza sauce. Makes about 3 cups.

## Napa Cabbage Salad with Mint

- 1/2 cup slivered almonds, toasted
  - 3 tablespoons sesame or peanut oil
  - 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
  - 1 tablespoon soy sauce OR Asian fish sauce
  - 1 teaspoon sugar
  - Freshly ground pepper
  - 1 pound Napa cabbage (1 small or 1/2 large head), thinly sliced or shredded
  - 2 carrots, grated
  - 1/2 medium onion, sliced into very thin wedges
  - 1/4 cup chopped mint
- In a bowl, mix the oil, vinegar, soy/fish sauce, sugar, & mint. Add the cabbage, carrots, onions & toss. Garnish with almonds & mint & serve.