

THIS WEEK'S BOX:

Broccoli
Cauliflower
Collard Greens
Fennel
Green Leaf Lettuce
Green Zucchini
Red Radishes
Scallions
Strawberries
Patty Pan Squash



News from the Fields of Driftless Organics

Times are a bit tough on the farm right now, as the rains just won't let up. As a result, we have seen some flooding. Positive attitudes remain though, and because of the amazingly hardworking crew, we are managing to keep on top of it all (this is good news!). Let's keep our fingers and toes crossed that we've seen the worst of it....

A QUESTION OF SCALE

When describing to folks how much acreage we farm, the common response is "Woah, you guys are big!". Now, I wouldn't go so far as to say that 40 acres of vegetables classifies us as a big farm; but we are definitely a bit bigger than most CSA vegetable farms in the surrounding area.

This isn't by accident, and in terms of the scale of our farm, we are at exactly where we want to be right now. I'd like to explain a little bit as to why we've chosen to go the route of 'big' and what we feel the benefits are.

From its inception, the intentions of Driftless Organics have been to find that ever elusive and changing balance between being a 'big enough' and a 'small enough' vegetable farm.

While we never intend on becoming one of those gigantic veggie farms with the never ending rows upon rows of crops that you see out in the irrigated deserts of Arizona or California, we do want to be to at a scale where we can make a substantial impact on the local vegetable market scene.

When it comes down to growing the vegetables, we want to be big enough to feel like we are producing food for a

lot of people. Yet, we want to stay small enough where we can always keep an eye on the quality of our products and make sure that our high standards are met and kept.

On the issue of tractors and other equipment, we want to be big enough to be able to afford essential equipment that makes an operation run more efficiently. This, in our opinion, enables us to produce goods at a more competitive price. Plus, theoretically, if we can be big enough to afford things like a forklift or harvesting equipment, we can ultimately save the backs and bodies of ourselves and our crew.



Our tomato field, high and dry up on the ridge. Looking good!

Speaking of crew, we have always wanted to be big enough to be able afford to pay the employees a living wage and offer perks like free veggies and cooked lunches. Yet, we want to remain small enough where we can get to know our fellow coworkers as friends. Nothing matches the joy of feeling like a team out there, all working towards a common goal.

Don't get me wrong, we have nothing against the smaller farms out there; and they, like any sized farm, have their own very unique set of advantages and disadvantages. We're farming at a scale that suits us and our philosophies. So far, it has been pretty darned successful for us. (Now if we can just find some land that doesn't flood)...

--Mike

Lemon Roasted Summer Veggies

4 cups vegetables, cut into large bite sized pieces (broccoli, cauliflower, fennel bulbs, zucchini, summer squash, etc.)
 4 garlic scapes, coarsely chopped
 Juice & zest of 1 lemon
 3 Tbsp. olive or sunflower oil
 fresh rosemary or thyme (optional)
 salt & pepper to taste
 1/4 c. grated parmesan
 1/2 c. parsley, chopped

Pre-heat oven to 450 degrees. Toss vegetables, scapes, lemon juice & zest, oil, rosemary/thyme (if using), salt & pepper & pour into an 8x11 baking dish. Roast uncovered for 20-25 minutes, stirring a couple of times, until vegetables are just starting to brown. Remove from oven & sprinkle with parmesan & parsley. Serve immediately.

Radish Pineapple Salsa

1 bunch radishes, stems & tails removed
 1 tsp. salt
 2/3 cup pineapple, finely chopped (fresh or canned)
 1/4 cup onion or green onions, minced
 1/4 cup cilantro, chopped
 1 to 3 Tbsp. hot sauce
 zest & juice from 1 lime

At least an hour (or up to 4 hours) before serving, thinly slice radishes. Place in small bowl, toss with salt, and press (place a small plate that just fits inside bowl on top of radishes and set a quart jar of water on top of plate). Meanwhile, combine remaining ingredients in medium serving bowl. Refrigerate if you wish. After at least an hour, drain & rinse radishes & stir into pineapple mix. Adjust seasonings to taste. Serve with Caribbean food.

Fennel Salad

2 c. fennel stems and bulb, peeled & sliced thinly at bias
 2 Tbsp. olive oil
 1 Tbsp. white wine vinegar
 salt & pepper to taste
 fennel leaves, for garnish

Remove leaves from stems & peel. Slice thinly at an angle. In a medium sized serving bowl, whisk together oil, vinegar, salt & pepper. Toss in sliced fennel & set aside for 20 minutes or so for flavors to meld. Garnish with fennel leaves. Serve cold or at room temperature. Serves 4.

Basil (bonus item) – yea for the first basil of the year! I love using whole basil leaves in sandwiches & salads, or rolling them up & slicing thinly (“chiffonading”) to garnish just about anything, from stir-fries to pasta to eggs. Doesn’t keep long - either in a glass in water on the counter or in plastic in the fridge - so use it up within a few days.

Broccoli – try it with cauliflower & fennel in the lemon roasted parmesan recipe below. Store in plastic in the fridge.

Cauliflower – another first of the year! Try it in the recipe below, or add it to stir-fries, casseroles, veggie & dip platters, salads... Store like broccoli.

Collard Greens – a close relative of broccoli & kale, are super high in vitamins K, A, & C & one cup of cooked greens have as much calcium as a glass of milk!! Typically used in southern-style greens cooked slow with ham hock, vinegar, onions, & hot sauce collards can also be used any way you’d use kale or chard. Simply rip the leaf off the stem, chop, & saute or steam. You can also steam the whole leaf & use it as a wrap. Store in plastic in the fridge for up to a week.

Fennel – is so yummy! The whole dang plant is edible except for the core! The bulbs & stems are delicious added to salads, soups, casseroles, stir-fries, or as a favorable substitution to celery in any recipe. The leaves are also great in green salads or as a garnish. Try my fennel stem recipe that was recently featured

in the new Edible Madison magazine, below. Store in plastic in the fridge; the leaves & stems don’t last as long as the bulbs - try to use them up within a few days.

Green Zucchini – another first of the season, these came on earlier than expected! Slice thickly lengthwise, brush with olive or sunflower oil, salt & pepper & lay them on the grill for a delectable side dish. Grill extras to put on sandwiches! Keeps on the counter for several days, or in the fridge crisper drawer for about 5.

Green Leaf Lettuce – is the classic sandwich lettuce. Also works as a handy wrap for tacos, tabouli, chicken salad...

Italian Parsley – is so delicious & beautiful & good for you! It adds such nice color & mineral-rich flavor to salads, pastas, soups, etc. Store in plastic in the fridge for a week or so.

Radishes – keep longer discarded from their greens (which are very nutritious & perfectly edible!) & stored in plastic in the fridge.

Strawberries – are plentiful this year, but aren’t keeping well because of all the rain we’ve been getting. Eat them up quick before they turn!

Yellow Patty Pan Squash –
 Treat like you will the green zucchini - this yellow and green flying saucer - like goes great in stif fries or on the grill.