



ONE POTATO TWO

NEWS FROM THE FIELDS OF DRIFTLESS ORGANICS

volume 5 • issue 16 • september 22-24, 2011

THIS WEEK'S BOX

Baby Bok Choi
 Banana Peppers
 Cilantro
 Garlic
 Green Kale
 Leeks
 Parsnips
 Radishes
 Red Cabbage
 Red Onions
 Red & Yellow Sweet Peppers
 Tomatoes
 Yellow Potatoes

Week 16! Ok, so it is truly fall out there and we've seen some mighty abrupt changes out in the fields. We've never quite seen anything quite like it - but it seems as if just about every crop has just plain up and stopped growing. We're hoping for a bit of rain and some sun for a jump start to get those fall crops sized up and ready before the CSA season is up. Every year is so different from the last and I guess, above all else, this keeps things interesting!

BIG RIVER BEEF!

by Mike Lind

Ever since I was a little kid, I've loved being around and working with farm animals. I fondly remember summers on my grandparents' dairy farm, assisting with chores such as feeding the calves or milking. There's something fulfilling about raising and caring for animals that you just don't get from fruits and vegetables. Don't get me wrong, vegetables are my number one farming passion, but it doesn't necessarily fill all of my farming ambitions.

About 5 years ago, my wife and I decided to get some beef cattle. You see, we live on 80 of some of the most beautiful acres in the county, but they are acres that frankly aren't suited for growing vegetables. We are surrounded by hills and the soil is pretty poor. Perfect land for growing grass! Getting some cattle seemed like a great fit, so I purchased 12 heifers from my neighbor. These 12 ladies were to be my breeding stock, and I rented a bull and before I knew it, I had 12 pregnant animals. 9 months later, there were 11 of the cutest little calves you've ever seen running around the farm. I was one proud farmer!

The beef business has evolved over the

years. I decided that raising cows over the winter and having calves in the spring was just too much for me (spring is a busy time with the vegetables, after all). That's when I had the fortune of joining forces with veteran farmer and good friend John Danforth. Together, we formed Big River Beef, LLC.

You see, John had a herd of his own and his farm was much more suited for raising momma cows and their calves. My farm was more suited for just raising steers, so we split up the duties. John takes care of the calves and then, when they are old enough to leave their moms, they come over to my place. "The feeders" as they are called, are brought over to the lush spring pastures of Dani and my farm when they are about 11-13 months old. They then spend the next 8 months chomping on grass (and nothing else) on our hillsides.

On the farm, I employ what is called a "rotational grazing" system. I take my land and divide it up into 10 or so mini parcels. Each parcel is about 3-4 acres and the steers spend about 3 days on each one. Every 3rd of 4th day, after I work the day at Driftless, I come home, grab my bucket (the steers you see, will follow me anywhere as long as I have my bucket) and move my animals to a new parcel that is bursting with fresh grass.

The idea of the rotational grazing system is that you create a scenario that mimics cattle roaming over a wide swathe of land, constantly searching for and eating fresh grass. This not only keeps the grass healthy because you are not over-grazing it, but it also seems to fatten the cattle up faster because they are constantly getting fresh eats.

Even though our small beef operation is a lot of extra work (on top of the insanely busy vegetable operation), I wouldn't give it

up for anything. I love caring for the animals, watching them grow, becoming familiar with their personalities and knowing that they are living the good life with plenty of grass, fresh air and water. I love spending the evenings outside, getting exercise and improving land that I can call my own. It may be my imagination but I truly think that my pastures look ten times better than they did 5 years ago and 100 times better than they did when they were ignorantly and destructively planted into corn by the previous tenants.

From the get go, John and I decided to raise our animals organically; and feeding them nothing but grass seemed like a no-brainer to us. It is what they are meant to eat after all. I am really proud of the quality of beef that we raise. I firmly believe that organic grass fed beef is healthier for us and honestly I think it tastes better as well.

In case you're interested: *We market our grass fed organic beef primarily to the CSA members of Driftless Organics. We have a limited amount left and our next delivery is this December. If you would like to order some, please visit our web site at: www.bigriverbeef.com. Thanks!*



THIS WEEK'S BOX

Baby Bok Choi - There will be 4 of these little guys in your box. They are a sweet little cooking green. Steam, stir-fry, braise, simmer in curries, or add to miso soup. Keep in plastic in the fridge for up to a week.

Banana Peppers - adds zip to Asian stir-fries & curries or Italian pasta sauces just as well as salsa... Keep on the counter for a few days or the fridge for a few longer. Or you can chop them up with some onions, sweet peppers, tomatillos, & tomatoes in a mixed chili bag for the freezer. **Your banana peppers are in your bag of potatoes so you don't get them mixed up with your sweet peppers...**

Cilantro - such a pretty last planting of cilantro, & it survived the light frost we had last week. Keep it in plastic in the fridge, preferably with a paper towel in it, for several days. Try our cilantro pesto recipe, below, on crackers with cream cheese, pizza, pasta, or as a marinade for pork or chicken going on the grill.

Green Kale - slightly frost kissed for sweetness. Wilt, stir-fry, sauté, or add to soups, curries or pasta sauce. Best to remove the stem before chopping up the leaves, as they're rather tough. Keep in plastic in the fridge for up to a week.

Leeks - delicious in soups, sautés, smashed potatoes... You can use the white part as well as the green, just make sure to wash them super well, as grit loves to hide in the crevices between white & green especially. Keep in plastic in the fridge for a week or more (longer & you'll have to peel off a slimy layer or two - never fear, the middle's usually still perfect).

Mixed Tomatoes - Make sure to store these at room temperature, not the fridge, or you risk making them mealy (unless you're cooking with them & then it doesn't matter too much). We send you tomatoes at various stages of ripeness so that they will last and you don't have to eat them up all in one day. Simply store them on your counter and when they are soft/slightly squishy to the touch and their color is full, then they are ripe. There will be a mixture of tomatoes

in your paper bags again and if you are curious about what tomato is what, check out the tomato recipe page on our website! No time to deal? Core & cut them up & throw them in a freezer bag for winter soup or chili making.

Parsnips - look for the white carrot-looking roots. These are the first parsnips of the season! Add to soups, stir-fries, curries or boil with garlic & mash with butter & cream as you would potatoes (or combine them with potatoes & mash). Keep in plastic in the fridge for several weeks.

Poblano Peppers- just 2 or 3 of these dark green chiles, good for using in the recipe to the right.

Red Cabbage - a beautiful head of fall cabbage for coleslaw. This cabbage will keep for 2-3 weeks (or longer) in your fridge.

Radishes - cool weather means nice fall radishes. Add to raw salads or veggie platters or cook in stir-fries or miso soup.

Red and Yellow Bell Peppers- the classic sweet pepper - and super versatile. They go good in just about anything: salsa, sandwiches, eggs or nachos. Store them in your fridge for up to 7-10 days or freeze them by simply chopping them up and sticking them in a freezer bag.

Red and Yellow Sweet Italian Frying and Pimiento Peppers - a couple different types of tasty peppers for sautéing in sauces or soups or roasting for salsa.

Red Onions - we are seeing some wierd rotty issues with some of our onions. The trouble is, you can't tell from the outside if they are ok or not. If you do cut one open and it has some rotten part, we apologize. Trust us, the rest of the onion is totally wonderful.

Tomatillos - add to soup, chili, salsa, enchilada sauce, etc. Keep fine on counter for up to a week. Or make one last batch of salsa verde. This is the last of the tomatillos for the year, so enjoy!

Yellow Potatoes - yum. Store in a dark, cool place or try them in the Southwest Cornbread Skillet recipe, below.

Cornbread Skillet

2 Tbsp. oil
1/2 medium onion, chopped
1 leek, white & green parts, washed well & chopped
3 cloves garlic, minced
1/2 tsp. cumin seed
1/2 tsp. coriander seed
2 medium potatoes, small 1/2" dice (or larger chunks if parboiled)
1 poblano pepper, seeded & chopped
1 medium red pepper, seeded & chopped
juice & zest of 1 lime
5 medium tomatillos, cored & chopped
1 large orange or red tomato, cored & chopped
salt & pepper to taste
1 can pinto or black beans
3 Tbsp. cilantro, minced
1 cup cornmeal
1/3 cup all-purpose unbleached white flour
1 Tbsp. sugar
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. baking soda
1 egg
1 cup plain yogurt or buttermilk
1/2 cup shredded jack or pepperjack cheese

In a large oven-proof skillet (10" - 12"), heat oil & add onions. Saute for a couple minutes & add leeks. After another minute, add garlic, cumin, coriander, potatoes, & peppers. Saute for a couple minutes & add lime juice/zest, tomatillos, tomatoes, salt & pepper. Continue to cook, stirring periodically, for about 8-10 minutes. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 375 degrees & prepare cornbread topping: Sift together dry ingredients. Whisk together egg & yogurt & mix into dry ingredients & set aside. Stir beans & cilantro into skillet & top with cornbread batter. Bake at 375 degrees for 15 minutes. Add shredded cheese & return to oven for another 3-5 minutes, until golden & browning on the edges. Serves 6-8.