

# ONE POTATO



# TWO

NEWS FROM THE FIELDS OF  
DRIFTLESS ORGANICS

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## THE BOX

**W**e are in the midst of week #18 and the work rolls on. It has been a rainy and cold week and the crew continues to demonstrate that they are the tough, hardworking folks we need to keep to get the job done. One such crew member is Elihu, and he's here this week to write the newsletter.

**I**i, I'm Elihu; I've been working at Driftless Organics since the beginning of July as the Number One Tractor Driver. I lived in the driftless area in 2006 working at another farm. I met Mike there at that farm; we became friends, and thankfully in this economic climate when I came back from Malawi a job was waiting for me. I was a Peace Corps Volunteer in Malawi from 2007-2009, in the environment sector. It was an amazing experience and I'd like to share a bit about my experience with you.

I worked in Nkhata Bay district on the shores of Lake Malawi, in my area I found a Beekeepers Cooperative, which I focused on as my primary project. This was awesome and difficult; a frustrating and fulfilling experience.

An illustration of the poverty in Malawi may be seen in the pressures that a high school student faces. There is a very real possibility of not enough food, therefore there is usually no breakfast or lunch until after school at 3 o'clock, when they get home. In school, there may be no desks, one textbook per classroom, and overcrowded classes with disinterested teachers. At home, a student has to carry water from the well, carry firewood, farm in the field with the family, cook on the

ground over an open fire for every meal, study by kerosene, and stay out of trouble enough to stay in school. On top of all these pressures to complete an education, school costs about \$150 per year. Malawians are spirited people to endure this and still be happy and friendly.

Malawi is nicknamed the Warm Heart of Africa, and for good reason. Laughing could be considered a hobby. If I was ever lost in a new place, someone would guide me there, walking all the way without any thought of themselves. When passing by a family at their house who is eating I would always hear "karibu" which means welcome, please eat, and these people with so little would gladly share a meal of sima (see the newsletter article that Keefe wrote August 27) and vegetables or fish.

98% of people in Malawi are farmers. Compare that to 1% of Americans that farm. Malawians are subsistence farmers and if they have a crop failure or lose their farmland through improper management, it is tantamount to losing their life, as they have no other options for a livelihood. They grow corn or cassava as a staple food; and rice, beans, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, peanuts, to eat or sell. In addition many people grow sunflower, tobacco, tea, and coffee as cash crops. Farming is done with their back and a 4 pound hoe blade the size of a dinner plate on a 1m to 2m long handle. That's it - a hoe. The hoe is the foundation for agriculture. Farmers grow almost all their own food, and sell some surplus to buy salt, oil, soap or kerosene (these are the 4 main consumable items). Compare this

- APPLES
- BEAUTY HEART
- RADISHES
- BUTTERNUT SQUASH
- CARROTS
- EGGPLANT
- FENNEL
- GARLIC
- GREEN LEAF LETTUCE
- JALAPENO PEPPERS
- ONIONS
- PARSNIPS
- SPINACH
- SWEET MINI PEPPERS
- SWEET ORANGE & RED
- FRYING PEPPERS
- SWEET POTATOES

to the US: what do you think that 4 top consumables are here?

My friend Dan is a Peace Corps Volunteer from my group who extended for a third year. He conducted an environment camp last year and is about to have one this year. Last year, at the first environment camp I taught why beekeeping is good for the environment and did a hands-on management session of hives there. It was a great experience for me, but even more so, it was fantastic for the campers.

Because of it's success, Dan has written a proposal to hold this camp again this year. High School students (campers) come to the Coffee Research Station at the base of Nyika Park for a week. They have classes on business skills, soap making, beekeeping, fish farming, and jam making with a primary focus on sustainable agriculture. These skills can provide a basis for small businesses to generate alternative incomes and healthier lives.

The camp is to provide young people living around Nyika plateau with skills

<p><b>Facts about Malawi</b>  <b>Population:</b> 14,268,711 density 151/sqKm  <b>Area:</b> about the size of Indiana  <b>Life expectancy:</b> 43 years old  <b>HIV/AIDS rate:</b> 12%  45% of population under the age of 14.  <b>UNHDI:</b> 160 out of 182  (UN Human development Index)  <b>GDP per capita:</b> \$800</p>	<p><b>Facts about the USA</b>  <b>Population:</b> 307,212,123 density 31/sqKm  <b>Area:</b> twice as big as the European Union  <b>Life expectancy:</b> 78 years old  <b>HIV/AIDS rate:</b> 0.6%  20% of population under the age of 14.  <b>UNHDI:</b> 13 out of 182  (UN Human development Index)  <b>GDP per capita:</b> \$46,900</p>
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that they can use to improve their communities livelihood without poaching or otherwise destroying the parks resources. He is looking for some assistance with his second environment camp. He only needs \$200 more to fund the project. If your interested in helping out these students you can make a tax deductible contribution on the Peace Corps Partnership page. [www.peacecorps.gov/contribute](http://www.peacecorps.gov/contribute) Search for Dan Carr or project number 614212. Dan's camp may be fully funded if so There are other projects currently seeking money in Malawi as well as Peace Corps Volunteers projects from MN and WI maybe you would want to help out a project from your home state.

I miss Malawi, my village, my neighbors, my friends, the lake, the beautiful landscape, the warm weather, the simplicity, and the genuine kindness of the people. Thanks for reading this, and I'll keep doing my best to getting more delicious vegetables to your box.

-- Elihu!

- 3 cups vegetable or chicken broth
  - 1 cup apple juice or cider
  - 8 cups butternut squash, peeled, seed, & cubed
  - 1 onion, chopped
  - 2 cloves garlic, minced
  - 6 fresh sage leaves
  - Crème fraîche or sour cream
  - Salt & pepper to taste
  - About 2 tablespoons minced fresh sage leaves
  - Gorgonzola, crumbled, for garnish (optional)
- Preparation

Bring 2 cups broth and juice to a boil in a large soup pot. Add squash, onion, garlic, and whole sage leaves to pan, cover, and return to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer until squash is very tender, about 30 minutes. Puree with an immersion blender or in a food processor/ blender. If soup is thicker than you like, thin with more broth. Stir over medium heat until soup is hot. Remove from heat & add crème fraîche/sour cream and salt/pepper to taste. Garnish with minced sage & Gorgonzola, if using. Serves 4-6.

## YOUR BOX

**APPLES** - These apples are called 'Enterprise' and were picked down the road, from Turkey Ridge Organic Orchard. They are a great storage apple and their flavor actually improves if they sit in the crisper drawer of your fridge for a couple of weeks.

**BEAUTY HEART RADISH** - such a beautiful radish, rather mild in flavor. Thin half-moons are lovely simmered in miso soup & they add nice color grated or sliced on green salads. Store in crisper drawer or plastic in fridge. Will keep all winter in optimum conditions.

**BUTTERNUT SQUASH** - the easiest squash to peel raw, which is why I always use this squash for squash soup (see recipe below). Store at room temperature. You can also cut it in half, scoop out the seeds, & bake it like any other winter squash.

**CARROTS** - cold nights are making these carrots sweeter every day! Remove the tops and store in plastic in the fridge.

**JALAPENO PEPPERS** - try slicing them up and putting into a batch of corn bread (along with some cheese).

**SAGE** - fresh sage compliments roasted vegetables, winter squash, creamy pastas, poultry, & Gorgonzola. Store in plastic in the fridge or in a little vase of water on the counter.

**GREEN LEAF LETTUCE** - A baby head of lettuce that we just had to put in the box (it was either that or lose it to the frost). Combine with your spinach and some toasted walnuts for a great salad.

**EGGPLANT** - This round, white and pinkish/purple variety tastes slightly sweeter than your normal eggplant but is the same for all practical purposes. The perfect amount for a small batch of eggplant parmesan!

**FENNEL** - add thinly sliced bulb & stems & chopped up leaves to salads and colecoleslaw a nice anise-y crunch. Great in minestrone or potato soups & pastas. Store in plastic in the fridge & peel off any layers/leaves that

start to brown. The bulb will keep for up to 2 weeks if the leaves & stems are removed.

**PARSNIPS** - a close relative of carrots, parsnips add nice earthy sweetness (that just gets better the colder it is outside) to soups, stews, & roasted vegetables.

**SPINACH** - also getting sweeter as the weather gets colder. Best eaten fresh in salads or just barely wilted in cooked dishes.

**SWEET ORANGE & RED FRYING PEPPERS** - try frying these up with garlic, sungold tomatoes, & the fresh sage in olive oil, adding cream, salt, & pepper & tossing in fettuchini & Gorgonzola or Parmesan.

**SWEET POTATOES** - what a gorgeous crop of sweet potatoes this year! We cooked big chunks of them in vegetarian chili at the Harvest Party this weekend - it was a hit! Be sure to store these at room temperature and NOT in your fridge.