



News from the Fields of Driftless Organics

Week #20! This is it! With quite possibly the nicest autumn we've ever experienced warming our backs and massaging our memories, we say goodbye to another 20 week CSA season. What a fall it has been! We couldn't have asked for nicer weather and it has been instrumental in keeping those large fall harvests on track and seen to completion. We are closer to finishing the season out than we have ever been any season before and let me tell you, this feels GREAT!

Next on our list is planting garlic, which is slated for next week (we need SOMETHING to do now that we won't be packing your boxes...). We'll start breaking apart the garlic heads next Monday, plant them on Tuesday and Wednesday, get them mulched on Thursday!

The end of the regular CSA season is a big deal for me and for all of us here at Driftless, as we have been counting down to this date for the last 5 months. (Not in a bad "can't-wait-for -it-to-be-over" sort of way, but rather a goal that we have been working towards...). Each Monday

morning, I tell the crew: we have this many weeks complete and this many weeks to go, and I follow this with an exert or two from a complimentary e-mail sent by a kind CSA member. And with these tidbits of information, we started each week and throughout each of the 20 weeks, the satisfaction of each and every CSA member was at the forefront of our minds.

Looking back at the year gone past, it is a wonder to me that we actually made it through! Having recruited almost 35% more members this year than last, I entered the season with a fair amount of stomach churning and a even small amount of nail-biting. We were sailing into somewhat uncharted waters and I just couldn't help but wonder: "would we be able to actually pull this off?" and "what if we don't have enough veggies?"

We hit the ground running with a glorious spring where we accomplished task after task with impeccable timing. Going into the beginning of June, we were feeling good and farming was more fun than I can ever remember it being.

THIS WEEK'S BOX:

- Baby Red Bok Choi
- Black Spanish Radish
- Broccoli
- Brussel Sprouts
- Carrots
- Cauliflower or Romanesco
- Daikon Radish
- Garlic
- Honey Nut Squash
- Parsnips
- Red Kale
- Red Onion
- Spinach
- Sweet Potatoes
- Yellow Potatoes

And then the rains came... How many times have I said that this year? I won't dwell on it, I just want to say that it made things more than a wee bit challenging, but taught us tremendous amounts that we will use in years to come.

Despite the wet summer, we managed to survive the season and get in and out what needed to get in and out in a timely manner, *for the most part*. The only real loss to speak of is the fall cabbage. Planted a full 2 weeks late into a substandard field (one of the few that was dry at that time) - it just isn't heading up in time. What you see out in the field right now is a bunch of plants with no cabbage heads on them. Sad, but true.

This is one of the few things about this year that I truly wish could have worked out better. The tomatoes are another. This is the second year in a row where we have had tomato troubles and we can only blame so much of it on the weather. Hopefully, with some research and implementation of different production techniques, 2011 will see some better tomato yields.

What else to improve upon? I am sure there are lots of things: less broccoli, more strawberries and sweet corn... the list may be long and I am hoping that you all can add to the discussion. I will be sending out a survey in the next couple of weeks that I want every single one of you to take a couple seconds to fill out. This is how we improve as a farm, and ultimately build a better CSA box.

I'm getting all teary-eyed thinking that this is the end. I keep saying it, but here I go again: THANKS goes out to all of you. We all hope, from the depths of our freshly plowed fields to the tops of the bins piled high with fall carrots, that you had a great CSA season!



Dan, Liz and Aaron, reaping what we have sown...

--Mike

THIS WEEK'S BOX by Dani Lind

Baby Red Bok Choi – cute little guys great for braising or steaming whole or chopping up into stir-fries or Asian soups. Store in plastic in fridge & eat up within a few days.

Black Spanish Radish – an over 500 year old heirloom storage variety. This is one vegetable that improves if you stick it in a plastic bag in the back of your fridge & forget about it for a couple months. Storage mellows its mustardy pungency & it is designed to not only keep, but improve with age (as long as it's stored properly – in a loosely sealed bag in the fridge, or ideally in damp sand in a root cellar). If you don't want to wait that long – cooking also mellows it out, either in soups or stir-fries (or tempura!).

Broccoli – this mild sunny fall has been great for the broccoli! Great in the Tempura recipe.

Brussel Sprouts – as I said last week, roasting is the best way to enjoy brussel sprouts. Halve or quarter larger ones, keep smaller ones whole, & toss in a bit of oil, spill on to a cookie sheet, & roast. Sprinkle with salt & pepper & enjoy! Store in plastic in the fridge for a week or two. You can keep them longer, but you'll have to trim the yellow outer leaves & browned stem before cooking. I've never tried them in tempura, but I bet they'd be good if you cut them in half!

Carrots – store well in plastic, in the fridge. There is so much you can do with carrots, from roasting them (with honey), to grating in salads to simply putting a carrot or two in your kids' lunch. For dipping sauce, I like to mix up

Cauliflower or Romanesco – delicious in the Tempura recipe, below.

Daikon Radish – a Japanese storage radish, milder & more moist than the Black Spanish. It won't keep flawlessly as long, either – but if you don't get to it & it starts to brown on the outside, simply peel it before using – the inner flesh should stay good for at least a month in plastic in the fridge.

Honey Nut Squash – a version of butternut, only sweeter. Doesn't keep as long, so try to use up in soups or simply baked. Try the recipe from two weeks back if you haven't already.

Parsnips – will keep in your fridge, in the crisper drawer for a fairly long time. They are great mashed, sauteed in butter, or roasted with other root crops like brussel sprouts or carrots.

Red Kale Tops – these have survived many a frost now & should be super good & sweet.

Spinach – also sweetened up from nighttime frosts. Enjoy fresh in salads or lightly cooked.

Sweet Potatoes – this is the fourth installment of sweet potatoes and you may have some sitting around... they do store but try getting creative with them! Sweet potato fries, sweet potato pancakes or try the recipe below!

Yellow Potatoes – great for hashbrowns or cubed and roasted (with oil, salt, peper and rosemary) or best yet: mashed potatoes! A trick we are learning with hashbrowns: grate them into a bowl and stick in the freezer for not more than ten minutes - then fry in oil. This helps to get them to crisp up.

Tempura Vegetables

Use this recipe for a wide variety of vegetables - it's stunning, impressive, delicious & really highlights each vegetables' uniqueness.

Batter:

1 egg

1/2 c. ice water

1 c. + 1/2 c. white all-purpose or cake flour

4-5 cups of mixed cut vegetables, such as broccoli/romanesco/cauliflower (1" florets), brussel sprouts (halved), carrots or daikon radish (cut into match sticks).

High heat oil for frying (sesame, peanut, vegetable, and/or safflower oil)

Prepare chosen vegetables.

In a medium bowl, beat egg lightly and beat in 1/2 cup ice water. Add 1 cup of the flour and stir just a few times to barely mix (don't over-mix or your batter won't be light & fluffy like you want it to be). Put remaining 1/2 c. flour in a shallow bowl.

In a large deep skillet or wok, heat 3 inches of oil to 340 degrees (or until water sprinkled on top sizzles vigorously). Dredge each vegetable piece in flour, shake off excess, & dip in batter. Immediately shake off excess batter & slide into the hot oil.

Repeat. Cook small batches of each type of vegetable until the outsides are crisp and light gold. Pull out of oil with metal tongs or a slotted spoon & drain on a rack.

Serve immediately with grated daikon radish and this dipping sauce:

1 c. vegetable stock

2 Tbsp. mirin (Japanese sweet cooking wine)

1/4 c. soy sauce/tamari 1 Tbsp. fish sauce (optional)

1 Tbsp. sugar

Bring all ingredients to a boil, stir to dissolve sugar, and remove from heat. Cool to serve.

Sweet Potato Chili

2 Tbsp. oil

1 large onion, chopped

1 jalapeno pepper, minced

4 cloves garlic, minced

1 red pepper, chopped (can be frozen)

1 green pepper, chopped (can be frozen)

1 tsp. each cumin & coriander seed

1 tsp. chili powder

1 tsp. chipotle powder (optional)

1/4 tsp. each ground cloves & mace or cinnamon

1 large sweet potato, peeled & cubed

1 can (15 oz.) black beans with liquid

1 can (15 oz.) red, kidney, or pinto beans

1 can (14.5 oz.) diced or crushed tomatoes with liquid OR 2 cups fresh chopped tomatoes

1 cup water, tomato juice, or chicken broth

Sour cream & cilantro for garnish

In soup pot, heat oil & add onions. Saute until golden & add jalapenos & garlic. Saute for a couple minutes & add red/green peppers & spices. Saute for another few minutes & add remaining ingredients. Bring to boil & reduce heat. Simmer at least until sweet potatoes are tender, about 20 minutes, stirring frequently to avoid scorching. Add more liquid if it gets too thick. Serve with sour cream & cilantro. Serves 6-8.