



News FROM THE FIELDS of
Driftless Organics!
Volume 7 - Issue 23 (December Storage)
December 19, 2013



ONE POTATO TWO

Hello and Happy Winter! With the snow blanketing our fields, the short days and long nights, the spectacularly crisp sunsets and the frozen extremities of our bodies, I have to say: winter is finally HERE!

'Round here at Driftless Organics, we love winter. There's still a lot of work mind you, but the pace is so much more manageable. I mean, we still show up and punch in every morning; and go about our daily tasks with focus and determination, but it isn't so gall darn hectic. And we LOVE this about winter. We absolutely cherish the fact that we finally have the time to get to those projects we've been meaning to get done all season long.

Winter is when we sit down and go through the past growing season with a fine tooth comb and come up with the things that we want to improve on. For example: 2013 was a dismal year for our peppers. Sure - we

had some pretty awesome peppers, but overall the pepper crop was a bust. What happened? What can we do differently? What do we want next year to look like? These are the questions we ask each other and hopefully, before the 2014 seeds go into the dirt, we've found the answers we're looking for.

Seed ordering happens this time of year as well. This is great fun - involving dozens of colorful seed catalogs, a very complicated set of spreadsheets, lengthy hair pulling and head scratching and finally, after 7-10 days, a seed order of grand proportions.

Winter isn't all work, mind you. We DO have our fun winter activities like skiing and reading and painting and best of all just curling up on the couch with the wood stove crackling and the dogs lounging and everyone feeling really good and content about just *being*. Too often we get caught up in the hectic-ness of it all and there's no better time to just plain

THIS WEEK'S BOX

Acorn Squash
Beauty Heart Radishes
Butternut Squash
Carnival Squash
Carrots
Celery
Green Cabbage
Onions
Parsnips
Red Beets
Red Potatoes
Rutabaga
Shallots
Sweet Potatoes
Yellow Potatoes

STOP, relax, take a breather and recharge those batteries. And THAT is what winter is all about.

Of course, winter is ALSO about spending ample amounts of quality time with friends and family, doing what we all love to do so much: EAT! And we certainly hope that you all are going to take these boxes, make amazing feasts and eat to your heart's content. We wish you all the very HAPPIEST of HOLIDAYS! From our hearts to your stomachs: THANK YOU!

--Mike



Here's our garlic field, underneath a safe blanket of snow and straw.

DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know that SNOW is a really important element on a vegetable farm like ours? Seems strange, I know (you can't grow veggies in the snow after all), but it's true! When winter hits and the temperatures begin to plummet, we pray for that flaky white stuff to start falling. You see, snow is a GREAT insulator and when it blankets the earth, it protects the crops we have in the ground, as well as the ground itself! Fresh, undisturbed snow is composed of a high percentage of air trapped among the lattice structure of the accumulated snow crystals. Since the air can barely move, heat transfer is greatly reduced. All that heat from the earth stays trapped below the snow, where it belongs. It's kind of like that fluffy insulation in your attic, and it does wonders to keep the ground a wee bit warmer than the air. This helps to keep crops like garlic (we plant garlic in the fall, don't ya know), strawberries and even our perennial crops like raspberries, asparagus and rhubarb alive during their winter hibernation. It also helps protect our row crops like winter wheat and rye, which also gets planted in the fall but doesn't germinate until the spring.

Last year, we suffered a series of unfortunate weather events that led to some pretty serious winter-kill on a few of our crops. First, in early January, all of the snow melted away. Then, it rained a bunch. Then, it got reeeeeeally cold (I mean, COLD!) and all of that rain turned into sheets of ice. This cold and ice mixture spelled doom for much of our garlic (amongst a few other crops). And this is exactly why there is no garlic in your box today. (It's true - the garlic that was supposed to be in your box was planted in the fall of 2012 and only about 40% of it survived last year's winter. Even though we mulch our garlic with straw, if that snow cover isn't there, those little cloves of garlic that are only planted a few inches down are pretty vulnerable to the elements. Let's hope this year the snow will stick around and keep our crops and soil insulated and cozy all winter long.

Hi there CSA folks – Don't forget: all of the following information and many, many more recipes are online on our website at: www.driftlessorganics.com/recipes. We have amassed over SEVEN years worth of CSA newsletter recipes for you to peruse. So, check it out, it's an invaluable resource for making the most of your CSA boxes. I've found the best way to use up a lot of veggies quick is by roasting them. You can roast just about ANY vegetable, and I've found the more you mix together, the better tasting your dish will be. It's really simple to roast vegetables: simply chop up into bite-sized cubes, toss in oil, salt, pepper and any other spices you like and lay out on a cookie sheet. Bake at 400 for 20-30 minutes (stir a few times and check for done-ness).

Acorn Squash - a very moist, yellow fleshed squash classically cut in half & roasted cut side down & served with butter and brown sugar (return to the oven for a couple of minutes cut side up after filling the cavity with the butter & sugar). Store at room temperature or a bit cooler for several weeks.

Beauty Heart Radish - There will be 4 of these in your box. Look for the whitish-green globes with the pinkish tinged bottom and pinkish roots coming off the bottom. You'll know they are a beauty heart when you slice them open and see the vibrant pink insides. These are great thinly sliced on a veggie platter with hummus in the center. A wonderful addition to that Thanksgiving salad. They will store for a month or more in plastic in your fridge.

Butternut Squash - I think the best all-purpose winter squash: perfect smooth texture, not too dry or too wet, and they have a nice earthy sweet squash flavor. the most versatile of winter squashes, as it can be roasted whole/ cut in half or easily peeled & cut up for soups, curries, mixed roasted veggies, etc. Leftover roasted squash freezes really well. Did you know most commercially canned "Pumpkin" is actually butternut squash? Store at room temperature or a little cooler – it should keep for several weeks.

Carrots - speaking of juicing... Seriously,

though, we're really proud of our carrots this year – they're big & crisp & sweet & beautiful. Eat them raw or steamed, stir-fried, braised, or roasted. I've been making a really nice spicy pureed soup with roasted carrots & pears this fall – check out the recipe, below. No need to peel these carrots – the skin is very nutritious & they're organic! They'll keep for many weeks in plastic in the fridge.

Celeriac - Look for the crazy knobbily looking root that might have come out of Pans Labyrinth. Historically, celeriac, or celery root, was how we ate celery; it's only in the last couple hundred years that we have been eating the stalks. And Wisconsin celeriac is distinct for its celery-intense flavor, combined with sweetness (which you won't find in the temperate climates). A happy marriage indeed! Makes an amazing addition to pureed soups (like potato leek or sweet potato bisque), adding both creamy body & rich celery flavor. Stored in plastic in the fridge it will keep for weeks.

Green or Red Cabbage - use raw in slaws or on tacos, or steam, sauté, stir-fry, braise, roast, or even grill it! It's also surprisingly nice in mixed fruit/vegetable juices. Will keep best out of plastic in the crisper drawer of your fridge. If the outer leaves get wilted, simply peel them off. If you don't use the whole cabbage at once, store the rest in plastic in the fridge.

Parsnips - look for the white carrot-looking roots in the box. Parsnips are sweet with a bit of earthy bitterness. Lovely mashed with potatoes, as a mixed roasted vegetable, or pureed in a soup. You could also try cutting in half lengthwise, then on a sharp bias, & added to stir-fries. Roast or braise them on their own or with other root veggies. I also like to boil them with potatoes & mash them all together. Only peel them if their skin has started to brown. Stored in plastic in the fridge, they should keep for a few weeks.

Red Beets - grate them raw on salads or in slaws, or roast them whole or cut up (no need to peel) & tossed in oil. Will keep

for weeks/months in plastic in the fridge.

Red Onions - nicest to use red onions where you can appreciate their color, namely in raw applications like salads or salsas or cooked ones like pizza or nacho toppings, or in dark caramelized onions. Store in a dark cool place loose or in paper, not plastic.

Red Potatoes - waxier than the yellow potatoes, these are nice for boiled/steamed potatoes, potato salads, skin-on mashed potatoes, or roasts/soups where you want your potato to hold its shape. Unless you must, please don't peel them – it's extra work, you lose nutrients, & they're organic! Store in a dark cool place in paper, not plastic.

Rosemary - a lovely fragrant herb Mike & I grow year round in the greenhouse attached to our house.

Rutabaga - Look for 1-2 yellowy beige roots with purple tops in your box. Try them roasted with other vegetables or boiled & mashed with butter & cream. Make extra mixed vegetable roast so you can make the yummy creamy pear & roasted root soup, recipe below.

Shallots - what a treat! Shallots are like the champagne or aged scotch of the vegetable world. They are somewhere between an onion & garlic with something subtle added in. Delicious raw shaved thinly onto salads or sandwiches or blended into dressings. Or carefully peel them and roast whole and serve on top of a Big River Beef sirloin steak.

Sweet Potatoes - are chocked full of sweetness, vitamins, & minerals. Bake them whole or peel & cut for soups, mashes, casseroles, or oven fries or grate & add to pancakes, hashbrowns, or baked goods. Store at room temperature for several weeks.

Yellow Potatoes - starchier than red potatoes but not as starchy as a Russet, our yellow potatoes are very all-purpose. Use them in gratins, mashes, soups, stews, roasts, or whole as a baked potato. Ditto on the red potatoes for peeling & storing.

Did you know that we've got all of Dani's Recipes up on our Website? Check it out: www.driftlessorganics.com/recipes

Extremely Quick Pickled Beets

2 large beets, peeled & very thinly sliced with a mandolin
2 Tbsp. apple cider or balsamic vinegar
Salt to taste

Toss beets with vinegar & salt & let sit for about an hour at room temperature. Serve immediately or store in an air-tight container in the fridge for up to a week. Delicious by itself, or topped with goat cheese & walnuts, or on open-faced Scandinavian-style sandwiches with hardboiled eggs or gravlax & grainy mustard or horseradish crème fraiche.

Fresh Winter Vegetables & Tahini Dip

4 cups sliced beauty heart radishes & carrots
4 cloves garlic, smashed with the side of a large knife
1 cup roasted tahini
¼ cup fresh lemon juice
¼ c. water
Salt & pepper to taste
Garnish: drizzle of olive or sunflower oil, minced red onion or shallot, flat leaf parsley cut into thin ribbons

Prepare vegetables & hold in cold water until ready to serve. Pulse garlic a few times in a food processor & add tahini, lemon juice, water, salt & pepper & process until smooth & creamy (add a bit more water if it's too thick). Pour into a serving dish & top with desired garnishes. Drain vegetables & serve. Serves 4-6.

**DON'T FORGET: 2014 CSA
SIGN-UP STARTS IN A
COUPLE WEEKS. WE HOPE
TO SEE YA NEXT SEASON!!**

Sweet Potato Bravas

4 medium sweet potatoes
4 Tbsp. sunflower or olive oil
salt to taste
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 - 16 oz can of crushed tomatoes, preferably fire-roasted
½ - 1 tsp. cayenne pepper
1 tsp. smoked Spanish paprika
toothpicks for serving

Preheat oven to 400 degrees with a large rimmed baking sheet in it. Peel the sweet potatoes & cut into large bite-sized pieces. Toss with 3 Tbsp. oil & carefully spread onto the hot baking sheet in a single layer. Sprinkle with salt. Roast, carefully scraping/turning a couple of times, until golden & just starting to brown, about 15-20 minutes.

Meanwhile, heat remaining oil in a small frying pan over medium heat. Sauté garlic for a minute until fragrant, then add crushed tomato sauce & cook for about 5 minutes, until thickened. Turn heat down and add the cayenne and smoked paprika. Adjust seasoning to taste.

Place the sweet potatoes on a serving platter with the sauce poured over and serve warm, with toothpicks.

Colcannon

A wonderfully hearty Irish potato & cabbage dish to warm you up on those cold winter nights!

1 pound potatoes, scrubbed and cubed (don't peel 'em!)
2 Tbsp. butter
1/2 cup onion, thinly sliced
6 cups green cabbage, thinly sliced (about 1/2 head)
1 cup milk
Salt & pepper to taste

Steam or boil potatoes until just cooked through, about 15 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl and cover to keep warm. Meanwhile, heat butter in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add onion and cook until translucent, about 2 minutes. Add cabbage and continue cooking, stirring occasionally, until the cabbage begins to brown, about 5 minutes. Reduce heat to low. Stir in milk, salt and pepper; cover and cook until the cabbage is tender, about 8 minutes. Add the cabbage mixture to the potatoes. Mash with a potato masher or a large fork to desired consistency. Serves 4.

Roasted Rutabaga Wedges

(from MACSAC's 'From Asparagus to Zucchini' cookbook)

4 medium rutabagas (about 3 lbs.)

2 Tbsp. oil

3 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar

salt to taste

Heat oven to 500 degrees. Cut ends off rutabaga & peel them. Use a heavy, sharp knife to cut each rutabaga in half lengthwise, then cut each half into 3-4 long wedges. Place wedges in very large baking pan & toss with oil to coat. Spread them into a single layer, keeping them from touching one another. Roast in a hot oven 20 minutes (if you've got convection, use it!). Use tongs to turn each wedge over. Roast another 15-20 minutes. Remove from oven & toss with balsamic vinegar & salt to taste. Serve hot. Serves 6-8.

Roasted Vegetables with Shallots & Apple Cider Reduction

1 quart pure apple cider

6 cups mixed root vegetables of choice (parsnips, turnips, sweet potatoes, rutabaga, celeriac, carrots, etc.) cut into uniform sizes/shapes of choice – long strips, wedges, cubes, etc.

3 Tbsp. olive/sunflower oil

Salt & pepper to taste

1 Tbsp. fresh or 1 tsp. dried thyme

½ c. shallots, diced

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Bring apple cider to a boil in a heavy bottomed pan over medium-high heat. Lower heat to maintain a rapid simmer & cook until reduced to about ¼ the original volume, stirring occasionally (should take 20-30 minutes – be careful not to take it too far & burn it). Keep warm.

Meanwhile, toss prepared vegetables in oil to coat & spread in a single layer onto a rimmed baking sheet. Roast, turning occasionally, until just starting to brown but still au dente, about 20-30 minutes (if you have convection, use it – but lower cooking times). Remove from oven & sprinkle with salt & pepper & thyme, stir in shallots, & roast for another 10-15 minutes, until veggies are getting softer & golden browned. Toss with apple cider reduction & serve. Serves 5-6.

Cream-Braised Melange of Winter Squash

You can cook the squash in this recipe for longer for a chunky puree with some bite-sized bits of squash, or cook even longer into a puree. Or if you cook for less time, you'll have forkful bites of squash in a creamy sauce. This recipe gives you some leeway to suit the group your serving.

3 to 4 pounds mixed winter squash: acorn, carnival, and butternut

Driftless Sunflower Oil

4 cloves garlic, minced

10 to 12 sage leaves, minced

1 1/2 cups cream

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

Peel and cut the squash into 1-inch chunks and set aside.

In a large, deep pot, heat the Sunflower oil over medium heat. Add the garlic and cook, stirring frequently for about 5 minutes, until it is golden and fragrant. Add the sage leaves and cook for another minute. Add the squash and fry just a minute or two as it's beginning to get hot.

Pour in the cream, bring to a simmer, and cover. Cook for 10 to 15 minutes, or until the squash is tender enough to be pierced by a fork. Cooking time will depend on the size of your squash chunks, so you'll want to use some discretion.

Season to taste with salt and pepper.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS AND MERRY
NEW YEAR FROM ALL OF US AT

