



News FROM THE FIELDS of
 Driftless Organics!
 Volume 7 - Issue 24
 December 21, 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

- Beauty Heart Radish
- Butternut Squash
- Carrots
- Green or Red Cabbage
- Leeks
- Red Cylinder Beets
- Red Onions
- Red Cylinder Beets
- 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.

THIS WEEK'S BOX

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 to use later in pies and soups.

Carrots - A nice and healthy 4lb bag of carrots. Store in their plastic bag in your fridge.

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.

Leeks - hurray for leeks! A delicately flavored member of the onion family, leeks

are only available locally in the fall/early winter. The white stem is the part you want to eat, generally cut into round or diagonal slices (the tough leaves are typically used only for soup stock). Leeks are fantastic in potato leek soup, sautéed in butter/braised in white wine by themselves or with cabbage (good with chicken or fish), or in omelets.

Red Onions - Onions are back! We hope to have onions in the rest of the boxes this season. These are great for everyday use in stir fries, pasta sauces, etc.

Red Cylinder Beets - just like normal beets, only shaped differently! We've got lots of great beet recipes on our website that are definitely worth checking out.

Rosemary - a lovely fragrant herb Mike & I grow year round in the greenhouse attached to our house. Goes great with roasted potatoes (see recipe on the side of your potato bag).

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.

Yellow Potatoes - Who doesn't like mashed potatoes? Well - noone, that's who. And these guys make great skin-on mashed potatoes (don't forget the cream - it's the holidays after all). And make extra so you can try the recipe to the right...

Cheesy Leftover Mashed Potato Pancakes

unabashedly stolen from the interweb (these just look so darn good) and then manipulated to suit our needs from www.justtaste.com.

3 cups chilled leftover mashed potatoes
2/3 cup shredded cheddar cheese
2 Tablespoons chopped leeks, green and white parts
1 egg, lightly beaten
3 Tablespoons plus 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
Driftless Organics Sunflower Oil (or vegetable oil), for pan-frying
Sour cream, for serving

In a large bowl, stir together the mashed potatoes, cheese, scallions, egg and 3 tablespoons flour until combined. (See Kelly's Notes.) Using your hands, divide the mixture into 12 portions. Roll each portion into a compact ball then flatten it into a pancake about a 1/2-inch-thick. Place the remaining 1/2 cup of flour in a shallow dish and carefully dredge each pancake in the flour. Heat 3 to 4 tablespoons of oil in a large sauté pan over medium heat. (Add enough oil to thoroughly coat the bottom of the pan.) Fry the pancakes, in batches, until they're golden brown and crispy on both sides, 3 to 4 minutes. Add more oil to the pan as needed between batches. (Do not overcrowd the pan and do not flip the pancakes too soon or they won't develop a crisp crust.) Transfer the pancakes to a paper towel-lined plate and immediately sprinkle them with salt. Serve the potato pancakes topped with sour cream.

All leftover mashed potatoes will vary in consistency depending on how much cream, milk or melted butter you added to the original batch. If the mashed potato pancake mixture looks too dry and isn't holding together, add one more egg. If it looks too wet, add more flour, 1 tablespoon at a time, until the mixture is cohesive.

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
1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
1/4 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.