

What's Happening on the Farm?

Greetings Friends!

Apparently it really is fall, since the trees are mostly bare, and it tastes as if someone sprinkled sugar on the spinach and carrots. These lovely treats are the icing on the cake of a beautiful, mostly sunny growing season.

It was sad to see the peppers and tomatoes go away in the hard frosts last week, but the sweet flavor in the spinach and carrots did get noticeably stronger after each cold night. We know it's coming but every time it's so amazing and surprising! Nibbling spinach leaves as we walked from one field to another, it was so sweet our taste buds yelled "Hey!" and stopped us in our tracks!

In between picking and washing veggies for you, last week we did everything we could think of to prepare for the first rain event in 5 or 6 weeks. We planted cover crops in a few acres of veggies that had died off in the last month, picked up all the row cover we had used to keep some things alive, cleaned up a few piles of lumber and tools etc that had been sitting out in the dry sun, and finally got the chickens moved to some fresh grass. So far we haven't had much rain reach the ground, but it might just be enough to germinate those many thousands of little cover crop seeds—rye, vetch, wheat and clover—for feeding the soil for next year's crops.

Next week we'll plant garlic, and soon after that begin the giant carrot harvest. We have a little more time to play and rest now that the days and lists are shorter, but carrots and other storage crops will keep us plenty busy until right after Thanksgiving. Then December is our

month to push the pencils—firming up the budget for next year and closing this year's books, and planning crop rotations, planting amounts, and seed orders. January and February we tackle any number of office and shop projects, take a trip or two, and go to a few organic farming conferences and workshops. These months are where new ideas and improvements begin to take root and grow, then in March we get in the greenhouse and start actually putting seeds in soil again!

2012 has been full of teachable moments for us, and we hopefully have been listening and watching enough, and thinking clearly enough, to learn and be able to respond in the best way on the next trip around the farming carousel. We are already curious about experimenting with solutions to problems we've had on the farm, and the winter will give us ample time to dig into the topics some more—from adjusting planting dates in a warm year like this to improving carrot and lettuce germination, and more thorough pollination of tomatoes and peppers in heat waves, and keeping up with cabbage worms in broccoli. As we think of the changes that can be made to accommodate a hot, dry summer, it occurs to us that we should remember to also plan and be prepared for a cool, wet one, since anything is possible!!

This year has had its ups and downs for us, like all of them, and we're very grateful to be able to share them with so many wonderful people. Thanks to all our friends and family for their behind-the-scenes support, to our skilled and dedicated staff for their happy determination to see these veggies reach your tables, and to all of you for sharing with us in the risks and rewards of farming. We couldn't do it without you all, and it is an honor and pleasure to be growing food here, for you.

We hope you've enjoyed being a part of the farm this year. We see our work as a service to the community we live in, and we hope you can taste and see that in all that comes from the farm.

Your farmers, Erin and Ben



October 15, 2012

Crop Forecast

A couple hard frosts have brought us fully into sweet, hearty fall eating. We'll continue to have greens, lettuce and spinach to balance it out, hopefully until the end of the month. Last Friday morning dipped below 20 degrees down in the field, which can be troublesome for even some hardy crops, but they pulled through just fine. The parsnips and brussels sprouts are now sweet enough to harvest and enjoy—though they aren't yet at their peak flavor and will get better still, we've only got these two weeks left to get them to you. We are feeling the absence of a few fall

crops, as we plan and plant to have a couple more options on the table for you to choose from. However, for each crop that did poorly this year we've had 7 or 8 that did quite well, so we hope you enjoy what we and the farm have been able to produce for these final share pickups.

There's a half acre of **broccoli** and **cauliflower** that we're trying to coax into sizing up for you, but they seem to be growing in geologic time. We're still unsure if the sub-20° night damaged them, but they look promising.

Parsnips are their sweetest when dug in the spring, after a winter full of cold, cold, cold. But they're good in fall too, so use 'em up in soups, roasted root medleys, and see the recipe on p.3—cinnamon apple parsnip soup.

For **brussels sprouts** you'll have the choice of taking them on a stalk or pre-plucked. We do the stalk since it's much faster for us than hand-picking each sprout. But since some stalks have only a few nice sprouts on them, it's worthwhile to pick those. **Take note:** these are not the brussels sprouts of your childhood! When harvested before a couple hard frost, brussels sprouts are much less fun to eat. But sweeter now, they are great sautéed in butter, with bacon if you like (see the recipe on p.3) or roasted with cheese in the oven.

Winter Squash We forgot to mention in the last newsletter that we have some pretty funky-looking butternuts! The rusty-white swirls are lovely in their own way, but not quite what we're all used to seeing in a butternut. It is the early stages of "gummy stem blight", a fungus which shortens the storage life of squashes decorated with it. So we choose to give these out to you first—they are fine to eat, but eat them soon. We'll have a few more this week, and hopefully by next week we'll be able to give you ones that are more blemish-free and will be solid keepers if they sit around your kitchen for a month or two.

Also in the squash mix will be a few ambercups (the bright orange, round ones) and a few Long Island Cheese Pumpkins. The "cheese" are truly cheesy at their best, but so far this year they've been a little watery and only mildly flavorful. They work as an all-purpose squash, but are best used baked in muffins, breads, pies, maybe lasagne, where their flavor isn't highlighted as much as in a side dish with some butter and sage. The butternuts are so good they shine in just about any dish. The ambercups are also a good all-around squash, but are especially good for pie (the skin is so tender you can puree them up skin and flesh together after removing seeds and roasting.) If you've had any squash that is below the level of quality we hope you've come to expect from us, please let us know and we'll be happy to replace it.

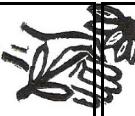
The **sweet potatoes** are all yummy, even if they're small. Even in a hot year we get plenty of medium and small ones; it just seems to be part of growing a tropical crop in a northern climate. If the small ones are proving too laborious to peel, some folks just leave the skin on for some uses, like chips/fries, or as a whole-potato finger food.

Leeks we'll probably run out of next week, even though we over-planted. Everything else is looking good! Happy cooking and eating!!



Remember to Sign Up for next year!

A \$25 Deposit by Oct. 26th will save your spot for 2013.



If you can't make up your mind, feel free to discuss it with us. We of course want the CSA share to work for you, so if there's anything that has you hesitating we'd like to know if there's anything we can do about it!

One of the most satisfying things about growing food for this community is that so many of you keep coming back year after year. Thank you so much for your support in years past, and in the years to come!

Note for Friday Oct 19th:

In our quest to live a balanced farming life, we are planning to go away for a long weekend. We expect to be on the road by noon or so on Friday, and our friend and employee Jesse Fearing will be "wearing our hats" for the share—he'll be happy to help you with any questions, payments, bulk orders, etc. Share pickup hours and all other details will be the same, it'll just be a different smiling face to serve you.



What's for U-Pick?

It's down to the hardy herbs—cilantro, plus thyme, oregano and parsley—and maybe a few flowers. All the rest is either in your bellies or gone back to the earth, now brown, but green again soon enough.

Bulk Produce for You:

This week's selection is: Garlic for \$1/head, Carrots for \$1/lb, Spinach for \$4/lb, Butternut Squash *seconds* for 60 cents/lb. (Garlic can be bought spur-of-the-moment. Other orders can be picked up on share days during our regular pickup hours. To make an order, simply call or email us at least 2 days ahead of the day you'd like to pick it up.)

Share pickups are every week until the last full week in October—

The last pickup days are
Monday Oct. 22nd, Wednesday Oct. 24th and
Friday, October 26th.

Thanks for your support and we'll miss seeing you here every week!

November Storage Share Wednesday, November 14th 10am-6pm

You can sign up with one of us in the barn.

A deposit of \$10, or the full amount, by Oct. 22nd will hold your spot.

If you're interested sign up soon, as we have just 20 more spots left.

For a price, we believe \$80 is fair for all of us.

In general this year's storage share will be similar to the last three years', varying according to this year's yields. It is separate from the regular season share, a one-time pickup in November before Thanksgiving, and we hope it looks something like this: a big bag of super sweet fall carrots (20lbs), a smaller bag of mixed fall roots, ±10lb potatoes, 3-5 squash, some leeks, 5– 10 lb sweet potatoes, brussels sprouts, garlic, maybe a little kale and maybe 1 or 2 cabbage. For dried herbs, a selection of thyme, sage, oregano and rosemary.

The picture on the left shows most of a storage share. Expected differences from last year: Onions are the notable absence, and leeks are still uncertain. Celeriac is tiny, and the beets might be too. Everything else, carrots, sweet potatoes, butternut etc, is looking quite good though! If the cold weather lets them survive that long, we might have a small amount of salad greens and spinach—we'll again do our best but out of all the long shots in farming that is one of the longer shots! Depending on how frigid it is in late October and early November, the kale, brussel sprouts and cabbage might be in short supply. Of course we will harvest and creatively store everything we can for you!

Any of these crops that don't get eaten up for Thanksgiving will easily store for weeks or months under proper conditions. We expect some of you will eat this all in a few weeks, and some will still be eating from it in January and February. A couple of you have even eaten our storage carrots in June!!!

Home Storage: Requiring refrigerator space (or other near-freezing and moist environment): Carrots, Mixed Roots, Cabbage, Kale, Leeks.

Outside of fridge: Squash, Potatoes, Garlic, Sweet Potatoes. We'll have a sheet which details ideal storage conditions for each crop. Your refrigerator is the easiest place for the cold-needing crops, if you have space in there. They will probably occupy both crisper drawers and about half of a bottom shelf. Squash and garlic want dry air, so countertops and ventilated closets can work well; potatoes want moist air and darkness, so closets and basements can work. The finer-detailed chart will accompany the share.

To save on refrigerator space, some folks have had a soup-making blitz right after the pickup, and froze those soups to eat throughout the winter. We think this is a great idea! Especially if keeping track of veggies stored in various locations sounds challenging. We will supply you with some recipes for inspiration.

As with any CSA relationship, your support helps spread the risk of the vagaries of Nature. We have been and will keep doing our best to make sure this a good deal for all of us, but quantities and the crops involved may vary.

What's Cooking?

(more recipes can be found on our website—openhandsfarm.com)

Brussels Sprouts with Bacon and Balsamic Vinegar

from Asparagus to Zucchini

1 pound brussels sprouts

1/4 pound bacon, chopped

1/2 cup finely chopped onions or shallots

1-2 Tbsp butter

3 Tbsp balsamic Vinegar

Salt and pepper to taste.

Trim ends off sprouts and halve the larger ones. Blanche in boiling water or steam over boiling water until just tender. Plunge into ice water to stop the cooking and preserve the bright green color, then drain well. Meanwhile, cook bacon until crisp and drain on paper towels. Remove all but 2 Tbsp of bacon grease from pan. Add onion, cook until brown. Add brussels sprouts, butter, vinegar, salt, pepper, bacon. Toss until hot. Makes 4 servings.

Cinnamon Apple Parsnip Soup

from *Farmer John's Cookbook*

3 Tbsp butter

1 large onion, chopped (about 1 cup)

4 medium parsnips, peeled, roughly chopped

2 baking apples (Granny Smith or greening), peeled, cored, roughly chopped

½ tsp ground cinnamon

½ cup dry white wine

4 cups chicken or vegetable stock

½ cup 100% pure apple juice (unsweetened, not from concentrate)

1 bay leaf

½ tsp salt

½ tsp freshly ground black pepper

freshly ground nutmeg for garnish

- 1) Heat the butter in a soup pot over medium heat. Add the onion; cook, stirring occasionally, until nicely golden, 10 to 12 minutes. Add the parsnips, apples, and cinnamon; toss to coat. Stir in the wine and simmer for 5 minutes.
- 2) Add the stock, apple juice, and bay leaf; partially cover the pot and gently simmer until the parsnips are tender, 20 to 30 minutes.
- 3) Remove and discard the bay leaf. Transfer the soup to a blender or food processor; puree. (Alternately, run the soup through a food mill.) Return the soup to the pot and add the salt and pepper, simmer 10 to 15 minutes to let the soup thicken a little more. Garnish each serving with a sprinkle of freshly grated nutmeg.