



Sogn Valley Farm

CSA Newsletter June 21-22, 2016

www.sognvalleyfarm.com

Greetings,

It's starting to feel like summer around here. The warm-season crops are really flourishing now, especially in the high tunnel, where the tomato plants are about chest height and growing wonderfully. Last week, we tasted the first of the cherry tomatoes, and we can't wait until they're abundant enough to share with you in CSA boxes. Won't be long now.

That's a good segue into a couple of things I wanted to discuss regarding "fruiting" crops, such as tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, squash, cucumber, melons, and strawberries. First, their production follows something of a bell curve. When they begin production, harvest is pretty sparse. That's about the stage we're at with summer squash and zucchini. Expect more voluminous portions of these crops in future boxes.

Secondly, fruiting crops bear continuously for a period of time and we harvest the fruit without killing the plant, itself. This is in contrast to lettuce or carrots, where the crop matures at one time and the entire plant is removed during harvest. When planning for CSA, I make sure my planting of lettuce, for example, has at least as many heads as I have CSA shares to pack.

In contrast, once eggplant is ready to harvest, it will produce the same amount each week. This poses some challenges, as most of you do not want eggplant in your box every week! So a CSA farmer has two choices: plant enough eggplant so a weekly harvest is sufficient for all CSA shares, and find another market for the eggplant during non-eggplant weeks of CSA; or plant a smaller amount of eggplant, and dole out eggplant to half of the CSA members in one week and the other half of members the following week. In this case, I would usually divide up members by pickup location.

What's in the box?

Salad mix: Similar to what you received in the first week's box, but without arugula. As usual, these greens have been triple washed and sanitized, but due to soil-splash from the heavy rains we've had recently, they may require a final rinse to be totally grit-free.

Dill: To me, the smell of fresh dill in the spring is one of those aromas that evokes a feeling of euphoria because, finally, summer is here! Dill is a wonderful herb to add to salads or salad dressings, or in a potato or cucumber salad. Those crops coming in 2-3 weeks!

Broccoli: Check out the Broccoli Salad recipe on the next page for a delicious way to enjoy your broccoli.

'Purplette' spring onion: Use as you would a scallion, or try substituting for the red onion in the Broccoli Salad.

Snow peas: Snow peas are common ingredients in Asian stir-fries, but can also be eaten raw. Although not as sweet as sugar snap peas, we couldn't help but pop a few in our mouths while harvesting these. Pods with large seeds are sweeter than the flat pods with minimal seed development.

Sage: Sage pairs well with chicken or lamb, and is often added with onions to stuffing. Also, try adding some to scrambled eggs or an omelet for a fresh twist on a common breakfast meal. Use just the leaves, as the stem may be fibrous.

Cauliflower: We aren't very creative when it comes to cauliflower: we prefer to roast the florets in a liberal amount of olive oil with salt, pepper, and garlic/garlic scapes, to taste. Some of you will notice that the curd is starting to turn purple and loosen up/elongate. This color development, caused by the presence of anthocyanin pigment, is a result of sunlight contacting the curd. And the elongation is a result of rapid growth during the heat we've had over the last week. The eating quality is still very good. You should see some more "normal" looking cauliflower from our fall crop, which we transplanted on Friday.

Zucchini or summer squash: Call this the first taste of the fruiting crops. As this is the very beginning of the harvest, quantities are limited, but fear not, you will have PLENTY of this going forward. Our go-to way to use zucchini and summer squash this time of year is to cut them into spears, coat with olive oil, salt, and pepper, and grill until they are golden brown and gooey inside.

Kohlrabi (full shares only): Kohlrabi is essentially broccoli that has been bred for its stem. Eat fresh, or add to a stir-fry, perhaps with your snow peas? Be sure to peel off the outer layer before eating, as it is fibrous. The greens can be sautéed and eaten, too!

On Deck

Each week, we'll give some hints about what new items may show up CSA shares in the next 1-2 weeks. Please note, this is not a guarantee, but our attempt to give you an idea of what's coming up.

**Summer squash/zucchini — Kohlrabi (for half shares) — Sugar snap peas — Cabbage
— Red leaf lettuce — Fennel — Beets — Strawberries — Cherry tomatoes**

The most likely instance where this latter scenario may occur this season is with strawberries. Since this is our first growing season, our strawberry plants were established only this spring. “June-bearing” strawberry varieties—which produce a concentrated fruit set during a period from late-May to early-July (depending on variety)—require an establishment year, during which no strawberries are harvested. Because we wanted to make sure we had some strawberries for you this season, we planted an “everbearing” variety, which produces continuously throughout the season but at a lower weekly yield. So, my point? Starting later this week, we’ll start harvesting strawberries. It’s quite possible that the first week of harvest will be only 10-15 pints, in which case we would probably choose one drop site that will receive strawberries next week. The following week, a different drop site (or two) will receive strawberries. I’ll make sure all members receive strawberries in their boxes at least once this season (hopefully twice), but it’s unlikely that you will all receive them in the same week. (For the record, we will be planting some June-bearing strawberry plants this year, so if you choose to renew your CSA membership with us for 2017, it’s likely you’ll have strawberries during the first few boxes in June.)

I hate to end on a low note, but I would be remiss if I didn’t report on an unfortunate event from last week. As members from Mt. Olivet, First Universalist, and Nokomis drop sites already know, our refrigerated truck broke down in the during the CSA delivery route last week. In the middle of Highway 62. I am thankful that two of my employees were able to come meet me to offload the remaining CSA shares, plus all of our produce and stall supplies for the Nokomis Farmers’ Market, which had its opening day last week. David was able to complete the CSA delivery route, with shares arriving only about an hour behind schedule. To those inconvenienced: thank you for your understanding! Laura and I loaded the farmers’ market produce, tent, tables, etc., in another vehicle and made it to the farmers’ market on time. As for the truck, we had it towed to a shop and got the bleak news that the transmission went caput and needed to be replaced. That’s a bitter pill to swallow. We’re thankful that Karin’s parents are allowing us to use their Suburban as a delivery vehicle in the meantime.

Back here on the farm, though, I’m glad to be able to walk the fields of healthy vegetable crops and be reminded of all that has gone well so far this season :)

Have a nice week!

Dana

Broccoli Salad

This recipe comes from my grandma, by way of my mom. It’s a simple, yet surprisingly addictive way to use raw broccoli. It’s a great side dish for summer meals, but can easily turn into the main course if you’re not careful ;-). Although the flavor is enhanced by the bacon in this recipe, we have made it without the bacon, and it is still very tasty.

Ingredients:

- 1 bunch broccoli, florets and peeled stem cut into small pieces
- 1/2 to 3/4 C red onion, finely chopped (or try substituting the ‘Purplette’ onion from this week’s box)
- 12 slices bacon, cooked and chopped
- 1/2 C mayonnaise
- 2 Tbsp vinegar
- 1 Tbsp sugar
- 1 C sunflower seeds

Preparation

1. Cook the bacon using the method of your choice. We like baking it in the oven at 400°F for 10-15 minutes. It cooks evenly and, if you line the baking sheet with aluminum foil, clean-up is quite easy. Once cooled, chop bacon into 1/4 to 1/2 inch pieces.
2. Combine all ingredients in a bowl and mix well.
3. Place in the refrigerator until chilled, then eat!