



the CSA kitchen

PART ONE: STRATEGIES & TECHNIQUES

by Lauren and Craig Kreutzer of **Meadowlark Community Farm**

hello!

Being a CSA member is the adventure of a lifetime! Okay - maybe that's a little much, but it will alter your relationship to food in some really beautiful ways. Fundamentally, it deepens your connection to the who, what, where, and how your food is grown. As Wendell Berry, farmer and writer, wrote in his essay, [The Pleasures of Eating](#), "Eating is an agricultural act". As a CSA member, your support of local farms and farmers helps to steward our local resources and our local economy. Also, you will be stocking your kitchen with healthy, delicious, nourishing food.

We are excited to be sharing some of our favorite kitchen strategies and techniques with you. We will walk through the flow of being a CSA member offering suggestions along the way.

The journey begins with preparing your refrigerator to receive your first share. From there, we will cover storing your produce, meal planning, recipe inspiration, and some basic cooking techniques.

Incorporating a CSA share into your everyday life can change how you plan and cook each week. Whether you are a CSA old timer from way back, or reading this as your very first foray, we are confident that you will walk away with some great resources to help you succeed in the kitchen.

Welcome to the CSA kitchen!

Your Farmers,
Lauren & Craig



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What will be in my share this week?

As a Meadowlark member, you will receive an email Saturday morning with a list of your share's contents. You have until Monday morning at 5am (that's when we print our harvest list for the day) to swap and/or purchase additional items. There are times when the unexpected happens, like that time the deer ate the chard the night before harvest. Those are far and few between, so by Monday morning you'll know what to expect on Wednesday when you pick up your share. *But before you get there we recommend that you...*



START FRESH

Before you go pick up your share, clean out your refrigerator! Compost anything inedible. Make a list (physical or mental) of the veggies that need to be eaten asap. Freeze those last peppers or dry any leftover herbs.

When you get home from picking up your box: unpack your share, spread your the produce out on the counter and imagine the possibilities. Some folks have luck with creating a meal plan for the week. Others enjoy more flexibility in their cooking. Either way, you will benefit from thinking about how you will use the produce before you put it away.

The produce can fall into 3 main categories:

Raw, Preserve, or Cook

Raw: Can you eat it raw? The easiest way to consume your produce is raw. Take a bite of those carrots! Have a big salad for dinner!

Preserve: Decide if there is anything you would like to preserve for winter – frozen, fermented, dried, or canned. Some of our preserved essentials are: dried herbs, frozen roasted tomatoes, frozen chopped peppers, and frozen celery. Decide when you will do this in your week.

Cook: If it isn't going to be eaten raw or preserved to be enjoyed later in the year, then you will be cooking the produce. Need recipe inspiration?

- 1) With each share, you will receive recipe resources in your Harvie e-newsletter.
- 2) Search for recipes that utilize several vegetables.
- 3) Use internet searches for inspiration! I'll often type whatever vegetables I need ideas for into the search bar and see what pops up.

STORING YOUR SHARE

in the crisper

beets	leafy greens
broccoli	leeks
cabbage	lettuce
carrots	microgreens
cauliflower	peppers**
celery	radishes
cucumbers	scallions
eggplant**	summer squash**
fresh herbs	turnips
green beans	zucchini**

From the moment your produce is harvested, it begins the process of decay. Proper harvest, post-harvest handling, and storage extends the life of your produce. When you get home from picking up your share, be sure to store each item in the appropriate place.

on the counter

tomatoes

in the fridge

melons
peas
sweet corn
strawberries

in the pantry

onions
shallots
garlic
popcorn
winter squash
potatoes*
sweet potatoes

*We often store potatoes in the refrigerator, though storage below 50F causes starches to turn to sugar resulting in a sweeter taste.

**Cold temperatures can cause chilling injury on eggplant, peppers, and summer squash. If you store these in the fridge, they should be used quickly.

More Storage Tips

- Remove the greens from and bunched roots (beets, carrots, radishes) before storing. Store roots and leaves in separate bags.
- Basil is sensitive to cold temps and will turn black if refrigerated. Strip the lower leaves of basil stems and put the stems in a glass of water on the counter to keep basil fresh. Wrap the stripped leaves (or all your basil if your fresh basil arrives without stems) in a dry paper towel and keep in an airtight container at about 50 degrees or room temperature.
- Most produce stored in the fridge will benefit from a plastic bag, greens bag, or other container to slow respiration rate and avoid limp leaves.
- Green garlic and garlic scapes should be stored in the fridge but garlic bulbs belong in the cool, dark pantry.

Recipes as Inspiration – Not as a Rule

Until I started working on produce farms, I wasn't very comfortable in the kitchen. I would follow recipes exactly – going to the grocery store to pick up the one ingredient that I was missing. Learning to cook with what I had on hand revolutionized my cooking.

Farmer Cassie from Crossroads Community Farm calls this strategy
“CSA: Constantly Substitute & Adapt”.

Cassie shares, “Slowly, I began to use recipes as navigational suggestions, and started to substitute wildly. You know what I discovered? While the meals I'd end up with weren't exactly the same as what a recipe's author intended, most times the meals were still tasty. How freeing!”

The more you are exposed to fresh produce and the more you cook, this strategy will become more comfortable and your cooking will become more playful. Cook with what you have. Learn to substitute. And don't be afraid to use more vegetables than the recipe calls for!



“A goal without a plan is just a wish.”- Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Want to eat well? Make a plan!

Simplifying Meal Planning

We've struggled with consistent meal planning for years. Now with two kids and a growing business, I know how important it is for us to go into the week with a meal plan.

Here is our process for meal planning:

- Breakfast is easy. We rotate our favorite breakfasts - eggs and oatmeal. On Sundays, we have pancakes for brunch.
- Next I look at dinner. Here is my process for deciding what to have.
 - Choose the protein.
 - Decide flavor profile. What seasonings will I be using?
 - Pair 2 vegetable sides. (Preferably something fresh and something cooked.)
 - Add a starch/starchy vegetable.
 - Plan to cook enough at dinner to have leftovers for lunch 3-5 days out of the week.
- I start lunch planning with the days we will eat leftovers. Egg salad, sandwiches, or omelets will usually round out our lunch plans

For more information, check out:

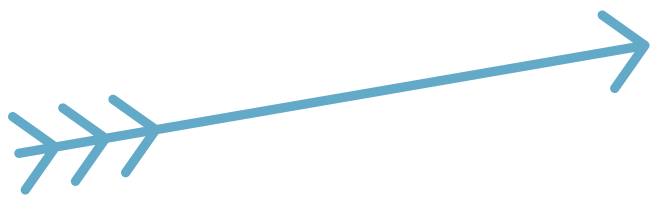
[Lily Nichols, RDN | Lazy Meal Planning](#)
[Eat The Butter | Vintage Meal Planning](#)



More Meal Planning Ideas



- Think about setting up a themed weekly menu such as “Meatless or Macaroni Mondays, Taco Tuesdays” etc. to use up CSA veggies in varied meals throughout the week and to make it easier to decide what to cook.
- Plan to make a big salad for dinner on the day you pick up your CSA share.



Next, we'll cover some basic cooking techniques: blanching, steaming, sautéing, steamy sautéing, roasting, and grilling. Each sections shares the general technique and a recipe.

Cooking Basics:

Blanching

Blanching consists of submerging food into boiling water to partially cook it. The key to blanching produce is to use well salted water (it should taste like the sea) and not to overcook. Once cooked to your desired tenderness, remove your produce from the boiling water and place it in an ice water bath. This preserves their color and texture. From here, you can freeze your produce or add it to recipes - like stir-fry. They can also be sautéed after blanching - like blanched collards with bacon and caramelized onions.

Blanched and Sauteed Garlic Green Beans

from cookingwithcocktailrings.com

Blanching gives beans a fresh flavor and the perfect texture. This process is also easy to do if you want to make beans to serve later. To test when a bean is perfectly cooked during the blanching process, take a bean out of the pot, squeeze between your fingers. When it is firm but gives a little, the green beans are cooked. Once they are blanched they can be refrigerated and reheated later or served cold. I like to sauté them with garlic, olive oil and a little lemon juice.

Ingredients:

¼ cup sea salt
1 pound green beans
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
3 cloves garlic, chopped
1 teaspoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
Kosher salt, to taste
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste



Instructions:

Bring a medium pot filled halfway with water to a rolling boil over high heat. Add the sea salt and stir until all the salt is dissolved. The water should taste similar to ocean water. French the beans, removing the strings on both sides with a paring knife. Add the green beans to the water and cook until tender, about 3 minutes. Drain the green beans and add to a large bowl filled with cold water and ice cubes to stop the cooking process. When the green beans are cool remove the green beans from the ice and drain again. Refrigerate until ready to serve. When ready, heat olive oil in a sauté pan over medium heat. When the oil is hot, add the garlic and sauté until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the green beans and sauté for 2 minutes, stirring occasionally. Season with lemon juice, salt and pepper.

Steaming

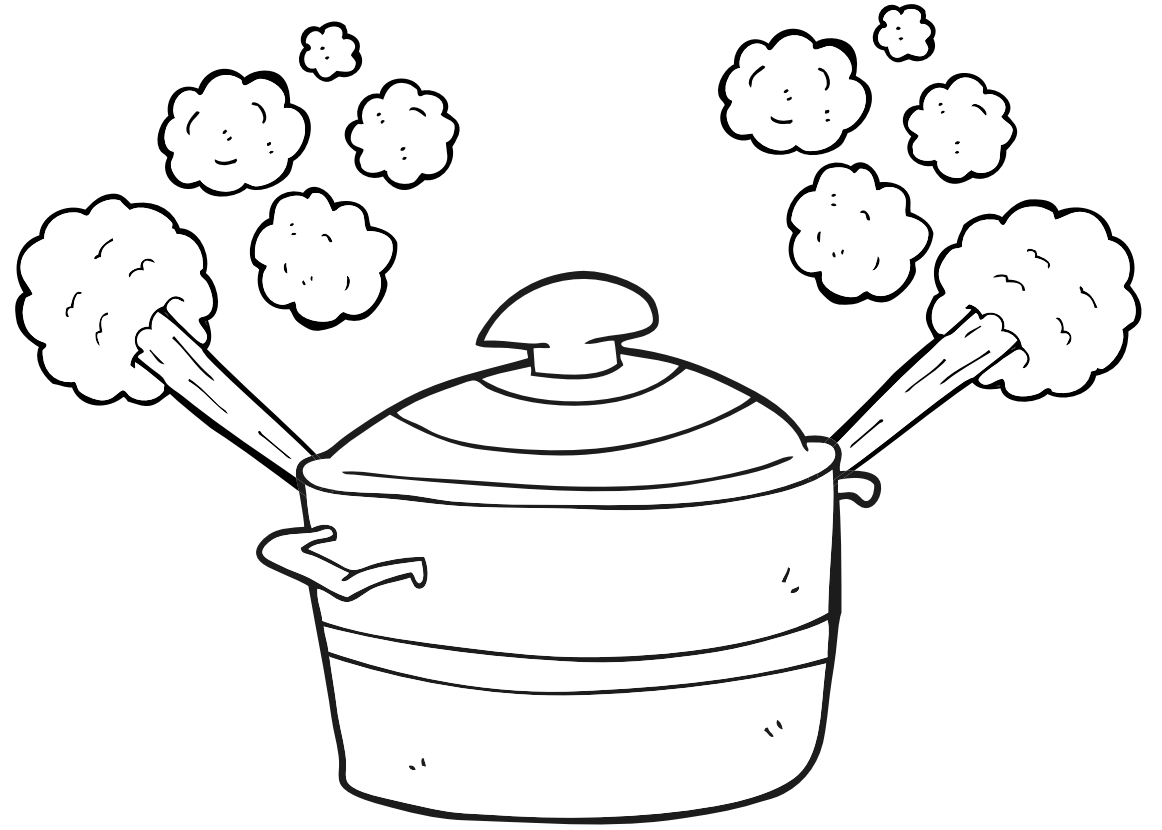
Steaming retains color, texture, flavor, and nutritional content. You'll need a steamer basket or metal colander. Add water to a pot so it barely touches the bottom of your basket or colander. Bring to a boil, add veggies, and cover. Cook until tender. This is our go to method for cooking broccoli and cauliflower - which are usually tossed with garlic butter after steaming.

Lemon Herb Steamed Cauliflower

from acouplecooks.com

Ingredients:

- 1 small head cauliflower (1 1/2 to 2 pounds)
- 1/2 cup water
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 3/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 1/8 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest (zest from 1/2 lemon)



Instructions:

- 1) Chop the cauliflower into florets.
- 2) Place 1 1/2 cups water into a saucepan or pot. If using a steamer basket without a handle, add it to the pot now: the water surface should be right under the basket. Bring the water to a boil.
- 3) Once boiling, add the cauliflower (in the steamer basket, if it has a handle). Steam with the lid on 10 to 12 minutes until just tender, testing with a fork to assess whether it's done.
- 4) Carefully remove the cauliflower to a bowl, draining any excess liquid. Toss with the remaining ingredients and serve.

Sautéing

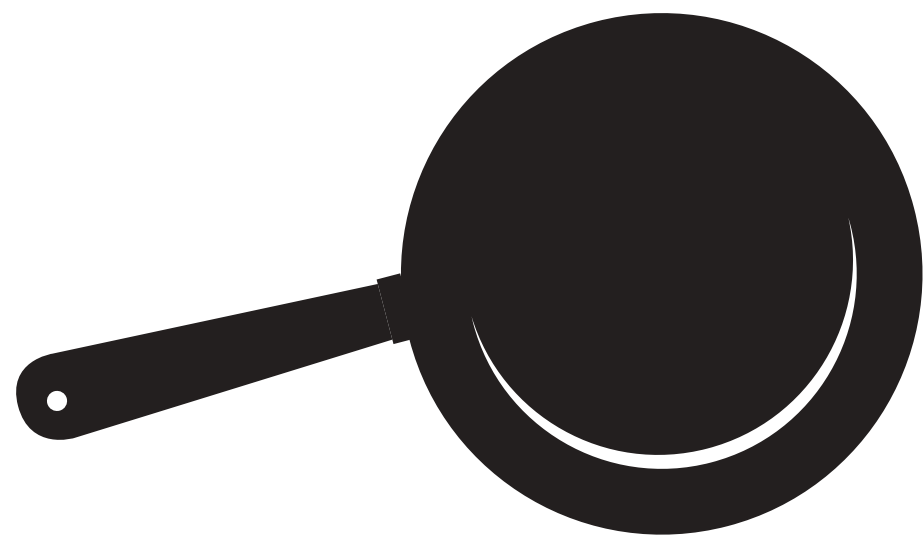
Sautéing uses a hot pan and a small amount of fat to cook food quickly. Use this method of cooking with tender vegetables whose texture, color, or flavor will suffer if overcooked - like sugar snap peas. To saute, set a large frying pan over high heat. When hot, add your fat (olive oil, butter, coconut oil) - just enough to coat the bottom of the pan. Allow the fat to get hot before adding your vegetables. Cook over high heat, sautéing until your produce start to brown - 5 to 6 minutes. (Sauté means "jump" in French - so you want to keep the food moving by tossing and flipping. Do this by picking up the pan with the flip of a wrist.) Be sure not to overcrowd your pan - this will cause the veggies to steam rather than sauté.

Sauteed Sugar Snap Peas

by Ina Garten

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 pounds fresh sugar snap peas
- 1 tablespoon good olive oil
- 1 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 3/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- Sea salt or fleur de sel, for serving



Instructions:

Remove and discard the stem end and string from each sugar snap pod. Heat the olive oil in a large saute pan over medium-high heat. Add the sugar snap peas, salt and pepper and saute, tossing occasionally for 3 to 5 minutes, until the sugar snap peas are crisp tender. Place the sugar snap peas in a serving bowl, sprinkle with sea salt and serve.

Steamy Sauté

We use this method with veggies that are too dense to sauté directly - like cauliflower or green beans. Bring ~1/2 cup of water to a simmer in a large frying pan. Add your produce and cover with the lid. Cook until tender (how tender is up to you). Remove the lid, pour off any excess water, and return to the heat. Add your preferred fat and sauté.

How To Steam-Fry Vegetables

from simplyrecipes.com

Feel free to substitute any of favorite vegetable for those in this recipe, such as broccoli, bell peppers, onion, fennel, asparagus, or zucchini. Cut into bite-sized pieces for cooking. (Note: Asparagus and other delicate vegetables will cook slightly more quickly; begin checking for doneness sooner than with other vegetables.)

Ingredients:

1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil

1/2 pound (1/2 of one medium head) cauliflower, cut into 1-inch florets

1/2 pound green beans, cut into 1-inch pieces

1/2 pound (3 medium) carrots, sliced 1/4-inch thick

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4 cup water, stock, wine, or other liquid

2 tablespoons chopped parsley (optional)

Instructions:

Heat the oil, then add the vegetables. In a 12-inch skillet over medium heat, heat the olive oil until it begins to shimmer.

Add the vegetables in a single layer. It's fine if the vegetables overlap, but try not to crowd the pan too much; cook in two batches if you're using a smaller skillet. Sprinkle the salt evenly over top.

Stir-fry the vegetables until they have some light brown spots, about 5 minutes.

Add the water or other liquid and cover the skillet. Let the vegetables steam, covered, just until tender. This usually takes about 4 minutes.

Check the vegetables. Uncover the pan and use a fork to spear a few of the vegetables and see if they're tender or still crunchy. If done, cook the vegetables, uncovered, just another minute or so to let any remaining liquid evaporate from the pan. If not done, add another tablespoon or two of liquid, cover, and steam a bit longer.

Serve: When the vegetables are tender, transfer them to a serving dish.

Sprinkle with parsley (optional) and serve while still warm.

Roasting

Roasting vegetables helps develop sweetness on the inside (due to the releasing of sugars) and on the surface (due to caramelization and the Maillard reaction). Sweet potatoes, carrots, Brussels sprouts, and broccoli are my favorite vegetables to roast. Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Cut your produce into equal bite sized pieces toss with your fat, season with salt, and place on a single layer on a baking sheet. Roast for about 30 minutes until tender and caramelized. (Check on the veggies after about 12 minutes - rotate the pan to make sure they brown evenly.) When vegetables are browned to your liking and completely tender when pierced with a knife, remove them from the oven.

Roasted Broccoli

from gimmesomeoven.com

Ingredients:

1 bunch of broccoli (about 1.5 pounds), with the florets cut into bite-sized pieces
2 tablespoons olive oil
sea salt and freshly-cracked black pepper

Instructions:

Heat oven to 450°F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper* or mist with cooking spray.

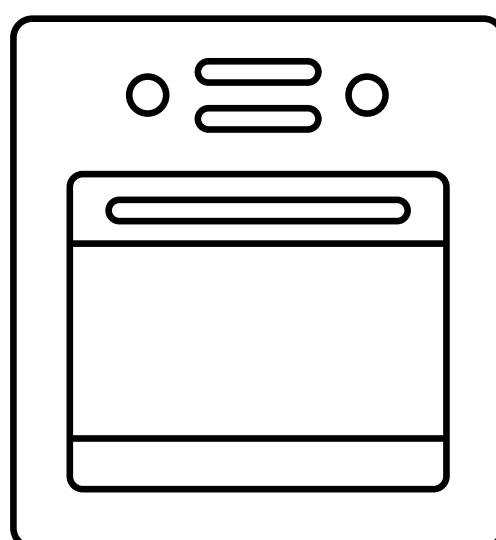
Spread the broccoli florets out evenly on the baking sheet and drizzle evenly with olive oil. Toss until the florets are evenly coated. Season with salt and pepper.

Cook for about 15-20* minutes, or until the florets are slightly charred and crispy around the edges. Taste, and season with additional salt and pepper if needed. Serve warm.

NOTES

*Parchment Paper: Double-check the temperature limit on your parchment paper. If it is not made to withstand high heat, I recommend just misting your baking sheet with cooking spray.

*Cooking Time: This will depend on the size of your florets, so keep a close eye on them to be sure that they do not burn (especially if you have smaller florets).



Grilling

A way to cook some seasonal favorites - like asparagus, fennel wedges, or baby potatoes. Some vegetables can go straight onto the grill - like asparagus. Others can be parcooked on the stovetop or in the oven and finished on the grill.

Grilled Fennel with Parmesan and Lemon

from skinnytaste.com

Ingredients:

12 oz fennel bulb, 1 large, stalks and fronds removed

olive oil spray

kosher salt and black pepper, to taste

1/2 tbsp olive oil

1/2 lemon, juice of

1/2 oz Parmigiano Reggiano shavings

Instructions:

Leaving the core intact (which helps keep your slices intact), stand the bulb and cut the fennel in half vertically from top to bottom.

Cut each half into (4) 1/4-inch thick slices to give you a total of 8 slices.

Spray each side with olive oil and season with salt and pepper.

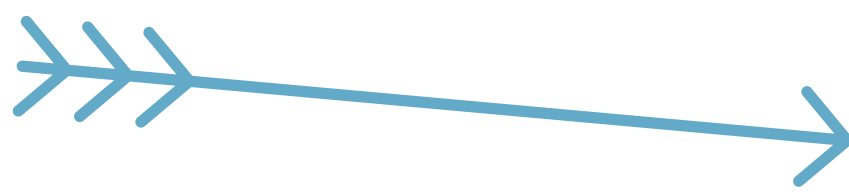
Heat an outdoor grill or indoor grill pan over medium-high heat, spray the pan with olive oil and grill the fennel turning until you get a good char on each side and fennel is tender to the touch, about 2 to 3 minutes on each side.

Set aside on a platter, drizzle with olive oil and lemon juice and top with the Parmesan shavings.

Serve warm.

To learn more about these cooking methods, check out Samin Nosrat's cookbook - *Salt Fat Acid Heat*.





Here is a list of ideas to inspire you in the kitchen!

Roasting/Grilling It All!

If you have too many vegetables in the fridge is to roast them up, all of them. This helps reduce their size for storage and makes them ready to grab-and-go at dinner time.

<https://www.treehugger.com/easy-vegetarian-recipes/always-roast-many-vegetables-you-can.html>

Sheet Pan Meals

The Kitchn website has an excellent tutorial on building up the perfect sheet pan meals for roasted vegetable deliciousness. <https://www.thekitchn.com/easy-sheet-pan-dinners-268343>

Mason Jar Salads

The Kitchn website has a great how-to on creating salads for on the go eating.

<https://www.thekitchn.com/how-to-pack-the-perfect-salad-in-a-jar-cooking-lessons-from-the-kitchn-192174>

Veggie Pancakes (aka Fritters!)

The Kitchn website takes you through the basics of frittering for any vegetables you have on hand.

<https://www.thekitchn.com/how-to-make-fritters-out-of-any-vegetable-231408>

Basic Frittata

6-8 eggs, 1/4 cup of dairy, any combination of sauteed veggies you have, a protein if you want it, a little cheese, and bake in a 350 oven for 15-30-ish minutes (check and eat when center is firm-ish, but not hard -- depends on size of pan, heat of oven, how many eggs you use). Some ovens may cook faster, some cook slower. Once I mastered my basic recipe and knew how long it would take in my oven, I was set. In any week and with any veggies, I could always make this work if I was out of other ideas. I start by sauteing my veggies, pour over the mixture of eggs and dairy, top with cheese and protein if using, and then pop into the oven. One pan -- my 10-inch or 12-inch fry pan is all that gets dirty.

Smoothies

Ready to jump on the green smoothie train but don't know where to start? The Bon Appetit website has a step-by-step recipe formula for creating balanced and tasty smoothies with your vegetables as a key ingredient.

<https://www.bonappetit.com/drinks/non-alcoholic/article/smoothie-formula-green-kitchen-smoothies>

Pesto

Too many greens suddenly? Make pesto! We love arugula & walnut pesto in addition to the traditional basil based blend. (Another favorites: spinach & sunflowers seeds/walnuts.) Real Simple has a versatile recipe that will help use up any greens in your fridge.

<https://www.realsimple.com/food-recipes/browse-all-recipes/universal-pesto-recipe>

Vegetable Scrap Broth

Vegetable or bone broth can make a soup or other recipe so much richer. And you can make it yourself! Keep a gallon size freezer bag in your freezer and begin saving your vegetable scraps. Toss in carrot bits, onion peels, celery leaves, etc. as you have them. When the bag fills up it's time to make stock. Here's a good tutorial on the easy process of boiling up your own rich veggie goodness:

<https://ohmyveggies.com/how-to-make-vegetable-broth-with-kitchen-scraps/>

Pickles!

Quick pickles are an easy option for making lots of different veggies last longer than they would fresh in your fridge. They can be enjoyed as a snack or added to salads, sandwiches, pizza, pasta salad, etc.

<https://www.epicurious.com/recipes/food/views/basic-quick-pickle-brine-56389776>

<http://www.eatingwell.com/article/114109/how-to-pickle-anything-no-canning-necessary/>

<https://www.epicurious.com/recipes/food/views/spring-greens-with-quick-pickled-vegetables-51231710>

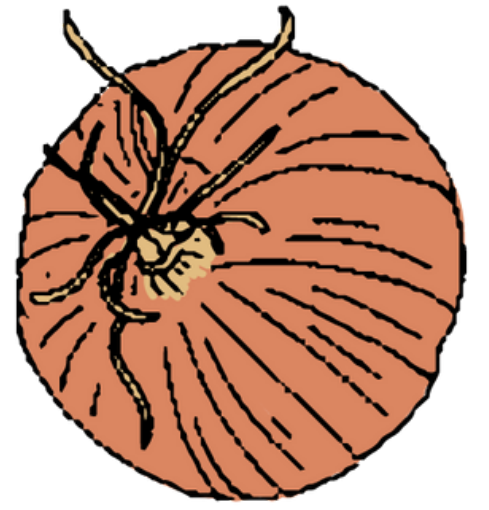
Freezing

Have too many vegetables this week? You might need a plan for using them up later. Freezing your vegetables before any signs of spoilage means you'll preserve the bounty for tasty meals later this season or even into the winter. Here are a couple of resources for learning the best ways to prepare and freeze your vegetables.

https://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/uga/uga_freeze_veg.pdf

<https://www.cookinglight.com/cooking-101/techniques/how-to-freeze-vegetables?>

Words to Cook By



- Cook (mostly) from scratch.
- Plan meals around what is in your box, and try not to go to the grocery store until after you pick up your CSA share.
- Store your veggies for **freshness** and **visibility**.
- Clean and process the veggies as soon as you get them. Cut up things that can be eaten raw right when you get home and put it in a container in the fridge - for easy snacking and lunch packing.
- Taste as you go - starting with the raw vegetables. Learn how different methods of cooking change the flavor and texture of the produce. Find your favorites!
- Use recipes for inspiration. Don't be afraid to substitute and improvise. Add different herbs, use a new spice, use an extra cup of spinach, omit something you don't like - you're in charge.
- Preserve the bounty! You'll appreciate frozen, dried, or canned produce during the winter.
- Get organized. Read the whole recipe first, gather all the ingredients, do the messy prep first. Clean as you go.



This is my invariable advice to people: Learn how to cook- try new recipes, learn from your mistakes, be fearless and above all have fun!