

STUDENT ORGANIC FARM CSA NEWSLETTER

November 23, 2004

In your share this week:

- *New England pie* **pumpkin**
- *Ermosa* butterhead **lettuce**
- *Napoli* orange **carrots**
- Mixed **beets** with greens
- *Harris model* type **parsnips**
- *Yukon Gold* and/or *All Blue* **potatoes**
- *Lincoln* and/or *Laura* **leeks**
- *Superstar* white or *Redwing* red **onions**
- **Garlic**
- *Oliver* **Brussels sprouts** (with Brussels greens included)
- *Winterbor* green **kale**
- Fresh **sage**
- Fresh **fennel leaf**

Announcements

1. The obvious one: **This week CSA pick-up is Tuesday instead of Thursday, in honor of Thanksgiving – same time, same place!** Members who pick up at PSSB: your shares will be there by 4:10, as usual, and you can still pick up on Wednesday (or any time afterward)
2. If you need extra **produce for Thanksgiving dinner**, the following crops are available as extras (within reason: the point is to provide enough for you to make a few dishes big enough for a family); some are already harvested; some are U-pick:
 - a. Everything in this week's share *except* garlic or pumpkin (limited harvest on those this year) (beets are U-pick only)
 - b. Rutabagas (not included this week just because you got them last week – they make excellent Thanksgiving food; I recommend them!)
 - c. Slightly not-pretty lettuce: several heads developed brown-tipped leaves – not perfect, but still yummy if you trim the tips off
 - d. Collard greens and a limited amount of Swiss chard(U-pick)
 - e. Turnips and/or radishes (U-pick)

- f. Herbs: parsley, oregano, chives, etc. (U-pick)
3. If you cannot make it to pick up your share this week (either Tuesday from 4-6:30, or by arrangement on Wednesday – **no one will be at the farm Thurs-Sunday**), PLEASE CALL THE FARM (517-230-7987) AND LET US KNOW so we don't pack up an "orphan share" for you after pick-up on Tuesday. This goes for all normal Thursday CSA pick-ups as well – please email or call before pick-up day if you're going to miss normal pick-up time, and let us know if you need alternate arrangements, or if you plan not to come that week. We've been donating orphaned shares to the Greater Lansing Food Bank soup kitchen at Christ Lutheran Church in Lansing (during the summer and early fall) and more recently to the East Lansing food cupboard, but our last donation will be early December, so help us to avoid wasting food, especially in the winter, when harvests and shares are carefully rationed – give us a call! Thanks.
4. **PARTY!!!** The date for the end-of-season (almost) CSA celebration potluck and farm "awards banquet" is **Thursday, Dec. 2, at 6:45 p.m.** Tentative location (still to be confirmed): the PSSB greenhouse conservatory on campus. That doesn't give you much time to come to CSA pick-up and then go home and prepare a dish, so if you need to pick up your share early, please call ahead and let us know; we'll try to have everything ready early that day to accommodate potluckers. Bring your own plates, cups, silverware, napkins, etc. **EVERYONE IS INVITED, EVEN IF YOU CAN'T BRING A DISH TO PASS** – bring yourself, a beverage, a funny or serious story about the SOF or any student farmers, your kids, magic tricks, silly hats, balloons, whatever – don't limit yourself; just come to the party.
5. **MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS** for Spring session (mid-January through end of April, same as MSU Spring semester): Current CSA members may renew your membership anytime before **December 2, 2004** to guarantee your share for spring. To renew your membership, please send a check for either the **full \$350** (for 16 weeks, same as fall session), OR a **deposit of \$175** (*note: the deposit amount has changed from \$150 previously to \$175 now) to Michelle at the address below. Make checks out to **MSU** with "Spring 2005 CSA" in the memo line. NOTE: We can only reserve your share for future sessions IF you are already paid in full for all current and past sessions – to check to see if you have an outstanding balance, please email msufarm@msu.edu

After Dec. 2, current members can of course still rejoin, but your share is no longer guaranteed. There are over 40 people on the waiting list for spring shares, and after Dec. 2, if there are any shares unclaimed (by current members), we will offer them to the folks on the waitlist, with priority going first to students, then to MSU staff and faculty, and last to non-MSU folks. We've changed from a strictly "first-pay, first-served" system to encourage *student* involvement on all levels at the *Student Organic Farm*. ☺

Send checks and all SOF correspondence to
Michelle Ferrarese
MSU Dept. of Horticulture
A288 Plant and Soil Science Building
East Lansing MI 48824

6. Thanksgiving dinner invitation: Friends of the SOF (that's you if you're reading this) are invited by two local farmers, Janet and Mark, to join them for a healthy Thanksgiving dinner at their suburban farm just outside of East Lansing. If you're free for T-day dinner, they'd like to host you at their place. Please RSVP to Janet and Mark at hypnoangel@juno.com

What's up at the farm?

Thanksgiving bounty, of course. Whatever your celebration style or belief, a bountiful local harvest is always worth celebrating and giving thanks for. I am a big fan of knowing the history of my food from the plate back to the ground – once, while working at a nature day camp, we instituted "Trace Your Lunch" at lunch time: using a wall-sized map of the western hemisphere, we used strings, thumbtacks, and labels to trace the routes taken by items in our lunches from source to plate – the kids were fascinated; they'd never considered where (or what) a peanut came from, for example, let alone a marshmallow or tangerine. The map, with a different colored string for each item, provided a clear visual picture of the relative distances different food items had traveled to reach our science center that summer, and at least a few campers came away (after being well indoctrinated on the evils of fossil fuel consumption and pollution) vowing to make their parents shop at the farmers' market, or, even better, grow their own food in their garden. Seems pretty simple, no? Since not everyone has the time, space, or privilege of growing their own garden, CSA can step in and bridge that gap between conviction and practicality.

Growing up, most of my family's Thanksgiving dinners came from unknown distant sources – turkey farms on the Atlantic (maybe?), cranberry bogs in Maine (I think), potato farms in Idaho, lettuce fields in California, and so on. The symbolism of bounty was always there, and the spirit of thankfulness still presided, but it was an impersonal thanks-giving, a superficial reflection of thanks, as our elementary school skit about “pilgrims and Indians” was a murky reflection at best of relationships between colonists and native Americans. The source of food, and the connection to that source, is for me what makes giving thanks personal, not just perfunctory. After my first season of belonging to a CSA, my thanks were for the people who grew that food, and my good fortune of being part of that community. After my first full farming season, my thanks were for the rain, the soil life, the sun, and the seed which all became the food. The closer I get to the sources, the clearer the gifts appear, and the more sincere and direct the gratitude.

This Thanksgiving, when I look at a map of Michigan, even, the distance from the source of most of our meal to the plate is smaller than the thumbtack with which we used to attach strings to our lunch maps. I am thankful this year for the opportunity, along with the rest of the student farmers, to help shrink that distance for all our members. In Mid-Michigan, in addition to local produce, there are plenty of sources of local milk, meat, honey, bread, herbs, wool, cheese, and other useful items. There's a wonderful web page (on which the SOF is listed) to help you source these things locally: www.localharvest.com. You can search by zip code for farmers' markets, CSA farms, U-pick farms, and all types of related products. I was surprised how many places are listed – if you know of any other good sources for locally produced goods, let me know; we'll include it in future newsletters.

New Veggies and Recipes

Smashed Potabagas or Potasnips

Potatoes and rutabagas OR Potatoes and parsnips (twice as much potatoes by volume as rutabagas or parsnips)

Butter and/or cream (optional – a little extra richness)

Salt and pepper to taste

Scrub all roots (peel if you like – optional), and cut into 1-2” uniform chunks. Boil chunks until creamy soft (but still intact – be mindful!). Smash in a big bowl with a potato masher (if you're really determined, you can use a blender or food processor, but the roots should be so soft it's easier not to bother), add the other ingredients, and serve hot. This is a great way to introduce the family to rutabagas

or parsnips – once you're in love with these lesser known roots, you can increase their ratio in this recipe.

Pumpkin Pie

This is a simple recipe to prepare the pumpkin in your share this week – you'll have to make the crust; this is just my favorite filling recipe:

1 medium pumpkin
1 pie crust
2 beaten eggs (OR 1 Tbsp. arrowroot/cornstarch plus 1 Tbsp. ground flax seed blended with ¼ cup water)
½ - 1 cup sweetener (sugar, honey, maple syrup, etc. – your choice, to taste—most folks probably like more sweetener; it's dessert after all)
2 tsp. cinnamon
1 tsp. ground ginger
½ tsp. ground nutmeg
¼ tsp. ground cloves
¼ tsp. allspice
½ tsp. salt
2 Tbsp. butter (optional – a little extra richness)
¼ cup pastry flour if the pumpkin mixture is extra soupy (optional)

To cook the pumpkin:

Wash the outside, and slice in half from top to bottom. Break off the stem if you like. Scoop out the seeds and stringy center, scrape the inside clean. Place the two halves, cut side down, in a tray or pan with about ¼ inch water (enough to come up over the cut edges to prevent drying out while cooking). Bake at 375 for 30-60 min (depends on the size of the pumpkin – check after 30 min to see if it's soft to the touch, then every 10 min or so afterward). Once the pumpkin is good and soft, remove from oven and let it cool (patience – don't burn your fingers). Using a large metal spoon, scrape the cooked pumpkin flesh from the skin, OR gently cut and peel the skin from the flesh. Either way, end up with a bowl full of skinless pumpkin flesh, and go at it with a potato masher. Add all the ingredients in the list above, and mash and stir til everything is blended smooth. Alternately, put everything in a blender or food processor – blenders take a fine touch; there's a lot of solid pumpkin in there, after all. Blend or process til creamy smooth.

To make the pie:

Preheat the oven to 475. Pre-bake the pie crust for 5-7 min, let cool a bit. Pour/scrape pumpkin mixture into crust, and bake 15 min. Turn the heat down to

350, and bake 30-40 more minutes (check for firmness). Why bother with two temperatures? I'm not sure; it's how my mom does it. You can probably set the oven at 425 and bake the thing for 45-50 min; in fact, that's what I'd do! Cheers.

Creamy Holiday Greens by Marty

1 bunch greens (beet greens, chard, kale, and/or collards – try a mixed pan!)
1 small onion and/or 1 small leek and/or 2-3 cloves garlic (all to taste) -chopped
Olive oil and/or butter
1 cup cream or half and half
A dash of dry white wine like vermouth
2 tsp. Nutmeg – fresh ground if possible
Salt and pepper

Heat olive oil and/or butter (I like half of each) in a large skillet over medium heat. Sauté onions/leeks til translucent, then add garlic if using it. Add washed, chopped greens (if you like, chop the stems/midribs separately, and add them first. A few minutes later, add the leafy parts – this makes a good mix of textures) and a big dash of vermouth, and wilt the leaves. Then add the cream and nutmeg, and let simmer on low-med heat for 4-6 min. Salt and pepper to taste – this dish will make even the most hardcore meat-and-potatoes family members like kale and beet greens.

Golden Rutabaga Cheesecake from The Ontario Rutabaga Producers' Marketing Board

3 cups cubed rutabaga
16 oz. cream cheese, softened
1 2/3 cups fine graham cracker crumbs
1/3 cup melted butter
2 envelopes unflavored gelatin (or agar-agar)
1/2 cup cold water
3/4 cup sugar, divided
1/2 tsp. salt
1/2 cup milk
3 eggs, separated
1 cup whipping cream
2 tsp. vanilla extract
1 tsp. grated orange zest

Boil rutabaga in boiling salted water until tender. Drain and puree in blender or whip by hand. Cool and place in large bowl with cream cheese; set aside. Mix graham cracker crumbs and butter. Reserve 1/4 cup and press remainder into

bottom of 9-inch springform pan. Chill. Soften gelatin or agar in cold water in top pan of small double boiler. Add ½ cup of the sugar, salt, milk, and slightly beaten egg yolks. Cook over boiling water, stirring, until slightly thickened. Beat into cream cheese/rutabaga mixture until smooth and blended. Cool. Beat egg whites until foamy; add remaining ¼ cup sugar, and beat until stiff. Whip cream and fold into cheese/rutabaga mixture; fold in whipped egg whites. Fold in vanilla and orange zest. Pour into prepared pan; sprinkle with reserved crumbs, and chill until firm. Makes 10-12 servings.

More recipe ideas

Stuffing with chopped sage and/or chopped fennel, caramelized leeks or onions

Salad with fresh fennel-lemon juice-olive oil dressing

Roasted potatoes with chopped fennel added just before serving

Potato-leek soup

Steamed or sautéed kale with sautéed leeks and onions

Roasted roots – potatoes, carrots, beets, parsnips, onions/leeks with fresh chopped parsley, sage, and/or fennel

Pumpkin soup

Beet green and kale salad – finely chopped, and marinated in lemon juice and/or vinegar for a few hours before serving

Curried chunked pumpkin

Steamed Brussels sprouts with lemon juice or vinegar, and salt

Shredded root salad: shredded beets, carrots, turnips, rutabagas, radishes, etc, arranged on a platter in stripes, concentric circles, polka dots, you name it, of contrasting colors, with fresh chopped parsley, sage, and/or fennel on top

I hope everyone has a wonderful weekend, and a great meal – see you all at the normal time and place (Thursday) next week! And at the party that evening! -MF