

# Wise Acres Farm CSA Newsletter

Week 6 – August 10, 2016

Can we talk about rain again? Ugh. When I look at the calendar as of Monday it has only been 10 days since it rained last, but it has been 20 days since we got a good soaking. We have it better than parts of southern Maine that are officially in a severe drought, but this is definitely the driest (and possibly hottest) year we have experienced since we've been farming. We are irrigating what we can, working on plans for more irrigation next season, and appreciating every bit of moisture-holding organic matter we have in our soil. The crops (and farmers!) are hanging in there.

I want to write this week about community-supported agriculture and how our farm's CSA model fits into the broader CSA movement. The farms that started the CSA movement 30+ years ago envisioned CSA as a radical alternative to the impersonal industrial model of growing and distributing food. CSA members were expected to work some hours each week on the farm and guide farm planning decisions. The "share" of the harvest in many cases was an actual percentage of the farm's total harvest, which would be ample in a good farming year and more limited in a bad year.

Some farms still have CSA programs with this high level of member involvement and investment, but many farms have adjusted the model to reach CSA members who may not have the time or ability to be as closely involved (or may not want quite that many veggies!). Likewise, many farms, like ours, employ other marketing avenues like farmers' markets and wholesale along with CSA.

But the term "CSA" is also being adopted by non-farm businesses that aggregate products from multiple sources for delivery to subscribers. Recently, the New York Times published an article called "[When Community-Supported Agriculture Is Not What It Seems](#)," which described the impact that non-farm food subscription and delivery services are having on CSA farms in the New York area. There is very little regulation around who can use the term "CSA" and what it means. Aggregators and distributors are very much needed as our local food system grows (and many of the ones in Maine are much more farmer-friendly!), but they should not claim to be doing CSA.

To us, CSA means that the products you receive in your share are grown by us, the farm that you signed up to support. If there are any add-on products offered to increase the variety of the share, members should be specifically told where they come from. (FYI, this is not something we expect to do this season.) CSA also means that we as your farmers are the direct recipients of your food dollars and no middle entity is reducing the amount that we have available to reinvest in the farm.

## What's in the box?

**Arugula**

**Carrots**

**Cucumbers**

**Lettuce**

**Mini Lettuce**

**Parsley**

**Snap Beans**

**Sweet Onions**

**Zucchini or Summer Squash**

***Remember to return  
your box next week!***

Since we do sell produce both to you as CSA members and to our farmers' market customers, we have decisions to make each week about who gets what. Our guiding principle is to prioritize you as CSA members who have chosen to share in the risk and reward of our farm season. That means:

- If we face major crop shortages, we will fill CSA shares first.
- We set our share price so you are paying for \$24 worth of produce per week. We try to keep that amount fairly consistent, though it does vary somewhat from week to week. We aim to deliver a 5-10% bonus above and beyond that amount over the course of the season, depending on how our crops do.
- We prioritize maximum variety for the CSA when we face a choice about where to sell a high-demand crop. Example: Last week, we put eggplant in your shares even though we knew we could likely sell out of it at the farmers' markets, because the yield is lower this year and we wanted to make sure you got to try it.
- CSA members may not always get the *first* of any given crop, but you will get the *peak* of it! Many crops like tomatoes start coming in at a trickle and we will likely offer them at farmers' market for a few weeks before we have a sufficient supply to offer them in the CSA shares. But by then we will be rolling in all kinds of different shapes, sizes, colors, and flavors!

We value the work that early CSA pioneers did to help make small farms like ours viable, and we want to be transparent about how we understand the CSA in the context of our own farm plan. You chose to buy quality organic food from farmers you know, and we can assure you that that's what you're getting!

-Brittany

## Recipes & Veggie Notes

### Arugula

It's spicy this week! Spicy greens lovers rejoice; for the rest of you, we also put in an extra mini lettuce.

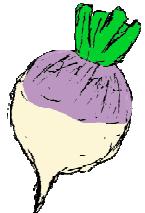
### Sweet Onions

You got a taste last week, and now these are really at their peak. The white variety is Ailsa Craig, and the red one is Tropea. They are very mild and juicy. We like to eat them raw chopped up in salad. They also make a great salsa, bruschetta or pickle ingredient. They are best stored in a bag in the fridge and will keep for a good two weeks.

### Veggies on Toast

It might be a stretch to call this a recipe...but try it, especially the next time you need to get food on the table fast! The item this week that would best lend itself to this is the zucchini. Cooking greens like kale and chard also work well. Chop and sauté until very tender in a little olive oil and salt (and add garlic, onion, or herbs if you want). Keep uncovered while cooking so most of the liquid cooks off.

Toast some hearty bread. It will hold up best if you get it pretty crisp. Spoon the veggies over the toast and then have at it! You could stir some cooked beans or lentils in for extra protein. I bet a little ground beef or turkey would work, too.



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