

Local Roots Community Supported Agriculture

Box Contents for June 28th & 29th

1 bunch Pink Beauty radishes
red butter lettuce
speckled lettuce
1 bunch Lacinato Kale
2 medium fennel bulbs
1 bunch turnips
1 bunch bok choy
1/4# pea vines

Large box additions

1 bunch broccoli rabe
1 bunch parsley
1 bunch baby carrots

Local Roots Farm News

Here's what's happening on the farm these days:

Brady is driving the tractor this afternoon, tilling in the beds where some of our early spring lettuce and salad greens grew, and sowing buckwheat. This fast growing, cover crop will smother some of the persistent grass that is lingering in most of our beds this season. In just a few weeks it will be a foot tall and as soon as it begins to flower we'll use our mini chisel plow to turn it under.

We're planning to use cover crops like buckwheat extensively here on our new farm. We have a lot more acreage than we did at the old farm, and we plan to do long term rotation between fields, leaving some fields fallow for several years in a row. This season, we're plowing as much new ground as we think we'll need for this year and for next year. We'll be using buckwheat and sudan grass during the warm season – both of these crops grow very fast and lush, and should help suppress the growth of the vigorous grass and other perennial weeds that were present in these fields when they were in pasture.

As we finish harvesting beds in the late summer and fall, we'll begin to plant other cover crops, mainly rye and clover. These are very cold-tolerant plants that usually survive the winter here. They'll grow a little bit in the fall, go dormant in the winter, and begin to grow again when the days get longer. By May, the rye will be several feet tall and ready to plow under to prepare the fields for summer vegetables.

For overwintering crops, like kale and radicchio, we'll undersow with low-growing clover. The winter cover crops we plant help hold onto the soil during floods, and when we till them in they build organic matter in our soil.

Although it's still June, we're already preparing for fall and winter. Today we're transplanting cauliflower and kale for harvest in October. By the end of July, we'll be done seeding all our transplanted crops, and the greenhouse will begin to empty of seedlings, making way for storage onions and winter squash to dry and cure.

Ideas and info for this week's produce

Radishes – So, we have a lot of radishes on the farm right now. I typically try to avoid giving the same crop more than two weeks in a row (unless it's tomatoes), but you will almost surely be receiving radishes again next week too. I know they aren't everyone's favorite vegetable, and I must confess that I was not a fan of radishes myself until I learned to cook them. Now they're on our dinner plate several nights a week in the early summer season.

Cut in half or quarters and sauté with oil and garlic. They turn amazingly juicy and lose their spicy heat. You can also roast them in the oven along with other hearty vegetables. At Cascina Spinasse, one of the many fine restaurants that buy our produce, they recently made a simple pureed soup from these radishes. Simmer radishes and onions in chicken or veggie broth, maybe with a little peeled potato or rice, then puree until smooth. The pink skin of the radish makes an amazing light rose-colored soup.

If you aren't quite ready to tackle these radish projects yet, and you're generating a radish stockpile, you should know that they will keep for several weeks. Remove the greens, and store the roots in a sealed container – Tupperware or just a tightly closed plastic bag. Stored this way, they will stay crisp for a long time. In the fall, we harvest turnips and radishes before the first freeze and have kept them as long as two months.

Fennel – I think fennel is best sliced thinly, dressed with olive oil and salt, and eaten straight from the bowl. You can eat the green stalks, as well as the entire bulb, and the fronds make a good fresh garnish for potatoes or shellfish.

Pea Vines - These tender tendrils are a real spring treat. They are the very tops of the Austrian Winter Peas that we originally grew as a cover crop, but now plant especially for their delicious green vines. They are great raw or lightly cooked. For salad, we love to combine roughly chopped pea vines with strawberries, soft cheese like chevre, and a light vinaigrette dressing.

To cook, use a small amount of oil or butter and a splash of water in a shallow pan with a lid. Add the pea vines, and cover. In about 2-3 minutes, they will have slightly wilted and turned a bright green. I think they're the perfect accompaniment to halibut or other mild fish.

Lacinato Kale – I'm not sure we've ever grown more beautiful kale than this.

Recipe – Raw Kale Salad with Tahini dressing

- Strip the leaves from their center stems. Stack the leaves together, and slice into thin ribbons.
- Pour a little olive oil and a pinch of salt over the kale, and use your hands to moosh it around. This gentle massage will soften the kale.
- Make a simple dressing of oil, vinegar, salt, and a generous amount of tahini (for a bunch of kale, use several tablespoons). Mix well, and serve.