

Local Roots Community Supported Agriculture

Box Contents for August 7th & 8th

1 bunch purple carrots
1 head green cabbage
1 bunch curly kale
2# red "new" potatoes
1 head Romaine lettuce
1 zucchini
1 head red oakleaf lettuce
1 beautiful fennel bulb
1 bunch parsley
1 bunch baby leeks

Large box additions

1 head broccoli
1 ripe tomato
1-2 cucumbers

Next week's produce (we think): broccoli – tomatoes (we really hope!) – cucumbers – beets

Local Roots Farm News

Meet your farmers

While some of you have been members of our CSA for many seasons now, we have a lot of new folks this year. I thought it was time for some introductions and a little farm history. My husband Jason and I own the farm, and we get all the work done with the help of a crew of employees and apprentice farmers. This week I'll tell you a little about me and Jason, and in future weeks I'll introduce our 2012 farm crew.

Jason and I have been farming in the Snoqualmie Valley since 2007. We started out in a creative lease-partnership arrangement with a landowner about 10 miles south of our current location, and farmed there for our first four seasons. We got into farming almost by accident, after I spent a season as an apprentice on another nearby farm. Just a couple months of working on a fast-paced, diversified, market vegetable farm was enough for me to know that this was exactly what I wanted to do with my life. I eventually convinced Jason to join me, and it turns out that he loves it too. Especially because he gets to play with tractors. During our first four years, we learned a lot, mostly through trial and error, reading books, and getting invaluable help from our neighbor farmers.

After four years as tenant-sharecroppers, our farming plans had outgrown our original partnership and location. In the fall of 2010, baby Felix was born, and just a couple months later we made an offer on the 40-acre property where we now live and farm. This was an amazing opportunity for us to take all the lessons we had learned on our first farm and start with a blank slate. We've invested in better tractors and equipment, built lots of needed infrastructure (irrigation, refrigeration, greenhouses) and greatly improved our growing methods. We have grown from about 3.5 acres under cultivation our first season to almost 10 acres this year. Jason and I still do a lot of the planting, weeding, and harvesting ourselves, but we also spend a lot of time in front of a computer or at our desks making lists. After five and half years, I still feel like we're just beginners at this whole farming thing. Low-input, high-diversity direct market farming is a new and rapidly evolving field, where there's lots of opportunity for innovation and creativity. Jason and I are enjoying moving beyond the crazed start-up phase of our farming and into a new era of measured growth and constant improvement.

Ideas and info for this week's produce

Purple carrots – Over the years we've tried many different varieties of "colorful" carrots. We still think that the regular old orange ones are the best tasting, but these "Purple Haze" are pretty tasty.

They hold their color pretty well when cooked. Here's a favorite recipe of ours, which also uses this week's fennel:

Recipe – Carrots and Fennel in Brown Butter

- Slice carrots diagonally into thin oval-y shapes. Slice fennel cross-wise to form thin C-shapes.
- Heat a couple tablespoons of butter in a pan until lightly browned, then add the carrots and fennel.
- Once the butter has browned, you can add a little oil or additional butter so there's enough to coat the veggies.
- Cook carrots and fennel, stirring frequently, until carrots are thoroughly cooked and the thin edges begin to brown. I think this dish smells like waffle cones. ... If you have fresh mint, it would be nice to add it at the last minute.

Baby leeks – We love these tender little leeks. They grow much more quickly than the storage leeks that we grow for the fall and winter, and the whole thing is edible, white and green parts alike. Some leek recipes tell you to discard the greens, but don't do it! Just slice them thinly and use them along with the white parts. We like to cook leeks on low heat for a long time until they melt and caramelize. We'll add them to radicchio or lettuce salad, or combine them with other veggies.

Soup – Many of this week's veggies, namely cabbage, potato, leek, carrot, and fennel, would make wonderful soups. Any combination would be great, but here are some ideas:

- Potato leek (great hot or cold)
- Carrot, cabbage, potato
- Carrot, potato, zucchini
- Fennel and potato

I'll include some links to soup recipes in today's email, but soup can be as simple as a few chopped veggies simmered in water or stock until soft. Add rice, barley, lentils, beans, noodles. . . Simple soup is a great way to use up those odds and ends that accumulate in your fridge.

Fennel – This is one of those love it or hate it veggies, and although we try, I know we can't please all the people all the time. I happen to be a fennel lover, and my favorite thing to do is just slice raw fennel into thin slices, dress it with olive oil and salt, and eat it all up. If fennel isn't your favorite. . . maybe you have a friend who likes it more?