

Local Roots Community Supported Agriculture

Box Contents for September 9th

1 bunch 'Nelson' carrots
1 bunch White Russian kale
1 green cucumber
½# salad greens
~1# broccoli
½# tomatoes
1 head garlic
1 head escarole
1 bunch Chioggia beets

Large box additions

1 bunch turnips
2 sweet peppers

Next week's produce (we think): carrots – celery – potatoes – chard – sprouting broccoli – sweet peppers – radicchio – cucumber – tomato

Local Roots Farm News

Greens – The theme of this week's box is greens, both for salad and cooking. Although we give you all sorts of greens all year long, there are definitely some seasonal variations in variety and quality. Lettuce is at its best in May and June, when it gets plenty of water and sunshine without excessive heat. Summer lettuce can be good too, but hot summers make it harder for us to grow lettuce consistently. Hot summers also can affect our fall lettuce crop: when temperatures rise above 85 degrees, lettuce seeds go dormant and will not sprout. We had several weeks of poor results in our lettuce seedings, so our fall lettuce crop will be smaller than normal. We have learned a few new things about varieties and techniques for helping lettuce through the difficult time of year... That's the great thing about vegetable farming: you always get to try again next year.

The lesser-known chicories are the salad-lover's best friend in late summer and fall. Today you are getting another visit from escarole, which is the sweetest and tender-est of the chicories we grow. Next week we expect to have lovely radicchio for you, which is a little more bitter but extremely beautiful. All chicories can be eaten raw in salad, but if you find the taste of raw escarole too strong, it is also a wonderful cooking green. Or you can split the difference: we have been grilling halved heads of radicchio on low heat, then chopping into bite-sized pieces, dressing with a vinaigrette, and eating as a cold salad. Grilling tempers the bitterness, and you can further balance it out by adding sweet things like chopped peaches or plums and/or savory things like cheese.

Fall is the time when kale, collards, and cabbage are at their peak. When the weather cools, these brassicas begin to produce more sugar in their cells. The leaves get a bit more hearty in texture, but after a frost or two they are genuinely sweet in taste. We eat a big bunch of greens (or two) every day in our house. Usually we just sauté them with olive oil and garlic, but they pair wonderfully with almost any other vegetable(s), as well as eggs, beans, or roasted meats.

Chard and beets are the same plant, botanically speaking, and you can use beet greens just as you would chard. In fact, I often find that beet greens have a more tender texture and cook more quickly than the large leaves of Rainbow chard. You can chop the stems and cook the along with the leaves, or you can try pickling them for adding to other dishes. Recipe in today's email. Enjoy your greens!

Ideas and info for this week's produce

September is that funny time in between summer and fall where there is lots of different produce... sometimes you'll have to get creative to match up things you might not ordinarily eat together. On that note:

Vegetable Management – if you are falling behind on vegetable consumption, you can stow some things away for future eating. Separate the beets and carrots from their greens (save the beet greens for eating!) and store the roots in a sealed container or plastic bags in the fridge. The carrots will keep for several weeks, and the beets can be stored for months without losing quality.

Chioggia beets – These are one of the most beautiful things we grow. They are pink and white striped inside, although they fade to pink on pink when you cook them. In future weeks you will be getting more of our other colors of beets, so you might consider saving these until you have enough to make a nice multi-colored roast or salad. The correct pronunciation is key-oh-ja (like Chianti ☺). Check out the link to a beet homage in today's email.

Salad Greens – We have a standard formula for the mix of greens that makes up our salad mix, but at this time of year we start to change it up a little by adding more endive and chicory leaves. The beautiful red leaves in today's salad are the inner parts of Treviso radicchio. I don't work in an office, but if I did, I'd really be into these salads in a jar I've been seeing on the internets.

Broccoli – While lettuce languishes in the late summer, broccoli is in its prime! Enjoy this old favorite vegetable steamed, blanched, or (as long as it stays fall-like in temperature outside) roasted. We like to slice the broccoli lengthwise, making several spears of stalk with florets attached, and roast on a cookie sheet at about 400° The cut surfaces caramelize and the florets turn lightly brown. Delicious!

Cucumber and Tomato – So we've got your fall-ish stuff today, but still some morsels of summer. The report from the tomato house is that we probably have another couple weeks of tomatoes... until 2015!