



August 4, 2004

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Fair Share Farm CSA Newsletter

This Week's Share:

Full Share:

Sweet Corn
Tomatoes
Cherry tomatoes
Carrots or Beets
Swiss chard
Melon
Cucumbers
Onions
Garlic

Partial Share:

Sweet Corn
Tomatoes
Carrots or Beets
Swiss Chard
Melon
Garlic

Next week: look for more melons, potatoes and corn.

Oh, deer

Sharing the land with wildlife is not a choice but a fact of life out here in the country. For us seeing wildlife around us as we are working or relaxing at the end of a day's work is better than any show on television. Occasionally, we get a reminder of how being a part of nature is definitely not a spectator sport.

Today would be one of those days. Every Tuesday we get up extra early and pick all of the vegetables that we don't pick during the Wednesday CSA picking: squash, cucumbers, eggplant, melons, and tomatoes. When we got to the tomatoes we found almost none either ripening or green on the plants. Many that were left had teeth marks on them. The cloven hoof prints in the soil gave the culprits away:

deer and lots of them. During the time since our last tomato picking on Friday, the deer had successfully stripped almost every tomato off over 400 tomato plants. This was a great surprise to us because we had never heard of deer eating tomatoes before. Their favorites in the field tend to be the leafy greens (like our spring lettuces), beet tops, chard, etc.

We love tomatoes as much as many of you do. So, we are putting together a good defense against further damage. For the short-term we hung pieces of stinky soap (Irish Spring works the best) in with the tomatoes. Deer associate the smell of humans with soap and avoid areas that have our stinky scent. Once we have harvested the last of the corn in a few weeks, the solar-powered electric fence will be moved to protect our other crops from deer.

In the meantime, while the plants attempt to make new tomatoes, your share of tomatoes will be lighter. With a little patience and warm weather, the plants will hopefully rebound in a few weeks and we will be enjoying those red (or yellow, green, white, black, or orange) globes of summer once again.

The perfect thump

While the lack of tomatoes was a sad sight, to look at our melon patch gave us a lot of joy. This week you are getting a choice of a variety of melons. Some may seem more familiar to you than others. Some are cantaloupes with their netted skin and heavenly aroma, others are new varieties we are trying like the Boule d'Or which is a yellow-skinned melon with bright green and incredibly sweet flesh.

We are also growing many types of watermelon. Most are the red fleshed kind you are probably most familiar with. Others are white-fleshed, while others have a yellow exterior. Picking watermelon is tricky business. Unlike a cantaloupe, watermelon don't slip off the vine when they are ripe. Instead you must look for the signs of ripeness in the sound that the melon makes when you thump it with your fingers. A high ping indicates unripe fruit. A low deep thud is a sign that the melon is ready.

We did our best to pick only ripe melons, but if yours isn't please let us know and we'll replace it.

Calendar

August 11th — CSA Distribution, Crossroads Market

August 14th— CSA Distribution, Fair Share Farm

Don't forget to return your

SURVEYS

next time you pick up your share

Recipes

Eggplant and Swiss Chard Casserole

During the early part of the season, it's easy to begin wishing for something other than greens. But if you really like greens, you begin to crave them right about now. So enjoy your fresh Swiss Chard along with the ingredients in this week's share, and those in the refrigerator.

- ◆ 6 to 8 Swiss Chard leaves (enough to form 2 layers in the casserole)
- ◆ 4 to 5 eggplant, cut into rounds or long slices
- ◆ 2 tbsp olive oil
- ◆ 1 large onion, cut in half and thinly sliced
- ◆ 1 fennel bulb, diced
- ◆ 2 cloves of garlic, minced
- ◆ 1 cup diced tomatoes
- ◆ Leaves from 6 sprigs of thyme
- ◆ 1 tbsp oregano
- ◆ Salt and pepper to taste
- ◆ 12 oz ricotta cheese
- ◆ 1 cup grated mozzarella cheese

Steam the chard leaves for 10 minutes. Let cool and then cut out and discard stems.

Sauté onions and fennel in olive oil in a skillet for 5 minutes. Add tomatoes, garlic, thyme and oregano and cook for 10 minutes on medium heat. Remove from heat.

Preheat oven to 400°F. In a large casserole pan layer in the ingredients; chard leaves, onion/tomato sauce, eggplant, ricotta, chard leaves, eggplant, sauce, ricotta, mozzarella.

Your Share Items

Heirloom Tomatoes

As our second growing season reaches the halfway point, we are beginning to get a feel for what grows well on the farm, and what we need to work on. Tomatoes is one of the latter.

Since most every vegetable gardener grows tomatoes, you would think that they are easy. And they can be, but they require much care. Growing healthy seedlings, suckering the plants when they are young, trellising them continuously as they grow, keeping the pests and diseases away, harvesting several times a week, keeping your soil fertile and weed free, just the right amount of water—do all of this and you may get a few “perfect” tomatoes, with no soft spots or cracks or unripe blotches.

We are working to learn the tricks of the trade, and the tricks for our farm. We have seen “perfect” heirloom tomatoes for sale at Local Harvest, so we know it can be grown on a large scale. In the meantime, we hope you enjoy this summer's try.

We are sorry that the heirloom box of

Bake the casserole for 30 to 40 minutes, or until sauce is boiling. Remove from oven and let cool and rest. Cut into squares and serve.

This is a good way to clean out the fridge and have a ready to eat meal with the leftovers.

tomatoes may still be a mystery to you. Hopefully after reading this, you will be able to put a name with the tomato.

What is an heirloom tomato? According to Taylor's Guide to Heirloom Vegetables, a tomato must meet these 3 criteria to be considered an heirloom variety:

- The variety must be 'true to type' from seed saved from each fruit,
- Seed must have been available for more than fifty years,
- The tomato variety must have a history or folklore of its own.

Green Zebra

Those small green tomatoes with the green stripes and yellow blush are one of the most delicious tomatoes we grow, with a fresh, tart taste. Ripe when soft, make sure you try at least one.

Garden Peach

While not quite as tart, this is another tomato we hope you don't forsake because of it's unusual color and skin texture. It's the one that looks like a peach, yellow with red blush and a slightly fuzzy skin. It is quite good, and keeps well.

Brandywine

Brought to the Americas by Thomas Jefferson, this large deep pink beefsteak/slicer is known for it's wonderful flavor. It tends to be lobed and not uniform in shape like the similar **Germaid Red** and **Rose**.

Togo Trifle

A pleated and hollow variety from Africa that is best for stuffing, you may have been disappointed in its texture upon first taste. The tomatoes we took the seeds from last year were much smaller than the ones growing this year. Go figure.

Carbon

These were the small round “black” tomatoes that ripened earlier in the season. Their flavor isn't as good as the later ripening and larger **Black Krim**, which are our favorite. They were planted in the wettest part of the tomato bed, so we will have to see if they recover.

White Beauty

A large beefsteak tomato, not really white but more the color of waxed beans. Nice and juicy, we had them early and hope to have more.

Woodie Orange

A large slicing tomato with a deep orange color and nice flavor and texture—juicy. They grew well early on with little problems. We hope to have more.

Old German

A large, slicing yellow tomato with nice red streaking on its shoulders and bottom. It had excellent flavor last year, but was more mild this year (so far.) **Pine-apple**, also a beefsteak is similar in coloring, texture and taste.

Orange Banana and Plum Lemon

These are two heirloom paste tomatoes, whose flavor is best when cooked.

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