

Great-grandfather's barn at Spring Brook Farm, circa 1901

What's in the box and where do I keep it?

Crop	Fridge?	Bag?	Notes & Varieties
Basil	No	Plastic	
Dill	Yes	Plastic	
Garlic	No	No	German Extra Hardy
Peppers	Yes	Plastic	Sweet and Hot
Potatoes	No	Paper	Carola
Salad Mix	Yes	Plastic	
Spinach	Yes	Plastic	
Tomatoes	No	No	
Winter Squash	No	No	Butternut

Squash

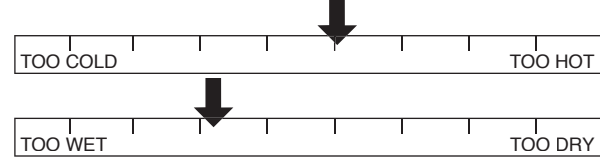
With the cool weather of September approaching it's time to start sampling the first winter squash of the season. The leaves on the squash vines have mostly died back but the vines will remain alive for a couple of more weeks as they finish ripening the squash. The longer you keep the squash plants alive the sweeter the squash is.

We'll start out with the butternut this week since it's the earliest maturing variety I'm growing this year. Some of it has been fully mature for a couple of weeks already. Over the course of the next few weeks we'll see several different varieties of squash, some familiar and some not.

Butternut is a perennial favorite for it's excellent eating quality and very good storage life. I like it because it can be used anywhere which calls for squash or pumpkin. Most pumpkin pies are made with butternut squash, because that's the most common ingredient in canned pumpkin. Actually they use a larger relative of the butternut called a neck pumpkin, which is like a butternut but has about an 18" neck on it instead of the usual 4-6" on a butternut.

Farm Report

Rainfall 1.35"
 High Temperature 88°
 Low Temperature 52°
 Coming next week Cilantro
 Farmer Complaint Indicators™ :



Preparation for squashes is quite simple. If I know I'm going to have squash as part of the meal I bake it off in the oven ahead of time. To do this I heat the oven to 350°, slice the squash in half lengthwise, scoop out the seeds and turn the squash upside down on a cookie sheet. Lately we've been into parchment paper as a cleanup helper, so I put a sheet of parchment down on the cookie sheet. I also add about 1/8 inch of water to the cookie sheet. This speeds up the process by steaming the squash as it's baking. It also helps to avoid some of the browning and hardening you get on the cut edge of the squash. I bake it until little resistance is felt when pierced with a fork.

When done you can use it in whatever recipe you like. Or you can just eat it straight. I usually scoop it out into the food processor (yes, we always try to dirty as many dishes as possible) and puree it with a couple of tablespoons of butter. This is a great way to have it, especially when it's the first squash of the season.

A few new items in the box this week including dill, spinach and salad mix.

Dill is always a favorite with potatoes or tomatoes

The spinach is the first of the fall crop. Enjoy it, because some of the fall crop isn't doing very well. Spinach does not recover well from very hard rains and we've had some 'gullywashers' in the past two weeks. It's September but we're getting rains that I'd expect in June.

The salad mix is a nice addition, enjoy a BLT tonight.

The tomatoes are going strong. The heirloom varieties are fading, but we still should see a trickle of them. The tomatoes in the box this week are riper than usual because of the heat last weekend. They may not keep as long. Keep an eye on them and be prepared to make some sauce.

The potatoes this week are the yellow-fleshed carolas. They are a nice versatile potato that fries and mashes well. They also fall apart nicely so they're delicious in soups and stews, but aren't that great for potato salad.

Farm News

It's been a wet week at the farm. Last week got all messed up because of a couple of rainy days that weren't in the forecast. I had to scramble to get some things done over the weekend before the next round of rains came this week.

It's a busy time of year keeping ahead of all of the things that need picking. The tomatoes are an endless sea of work to be done. With all the picking there are other things which need to happen. I did find time on Sunday and Monday to run the field cultivator over next year's beds and get a cover crop of oats and peas planted ahead of the rain—it should've gone in two weeks ago. I'm also starting to plant some rye and vetch cover crops where some of the vegetables were this year. Cover crops are an important part of a farm like ours. They provide valuable growth to hold the soil in place during the winter months, provide the soil with green matter and roots when turned in, and some even take nitrogen from the air and put it in the soil. They're definitely a win-win-win situation, if I could just find the time to plant-plant-plant them.

It's hard to believe that there's only three more weeks left to the season. It makes me realize that I should put out the call for maple syrup and honey orders again. Stock up now to get yourself through the winter months! Send me an email or use the order form on the website by the 23rd of September and we'll have your orders at the pickup sites the week of Sept. 27.

Also remember to mark your calendars for the pumpkin patch field day, Sunday, October 2. There's plenty of pumpkins and we even planted a couple of giant ones this year. I haven't weighed any yet, but I bet there's one out there that weighs over 50 pounds. Remember the only way to get a jack-o'-lantern from the farm is to come out on the pumpkin day, we don't deliver pumpkins (except for the little pie punks, of course).

Squash-a-roni and Cheese

This is a recipe I made up that I make all of the time, but I don't really measure anything for it. I started out making this to sneak some squash by my daughter, but it's really become a staple in our household. Don't let the 'from scratch' aspect of this scare you, if I have the squash already made I can make this in less than half-an-hour.

- 1-2 cups pureed squash
- 2 cups milk
- 3 tablespoons butter
- 3 tablespoons flour, wheat flour or white spelt flour work best, although barley works too
- 8 ounces shredded cheddar cheese
- 16 ounces cooked, drained rigatoni or elbow pasta
- Salt and pepper to taste

Bake, scoop out and puree the squash in a food processor. Set aside. Start the water for the pasta.

In a medium sauce pan melt the butter and whisk in the flour over medium-high heat. The consistency should be a little runnier than paste, if it's not correct it by adding more butter or flour. Whisk for a couple of minutes and then slowly whisk in the milk. When all the milk is in you can take the time to shred the cheese, but keep stirring the milk occasionally so that it doesn't scald. The milk will slowly thicken over the next few minutes, try not to let it boil. When thickened, reduce the heat to med-low and whisk in the squash, if your sauce stayed fairly thin then adding more squash helps to thicken it. Lastly, whisk in the cheese and reduce the heat to low and keep stirring every minute or so until your pasta is ready.

When your pasta is ready, toss it with the squash/cheese sauce and serve. I don't bake mine, but you probably could. This time of year I like to serve mine with a bunch of diced fresh tomatoes on top.

Mustard Dill Sauce

- 1/2 cup coarse-grained mustard
- 1/4 cup water
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 4 teaspoons sugar
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh dill, or to taste

In a bowl combine well all ingredients and season with pepper. Sauce may be made 1 day ahead and kept chilled, covered. Let sauce come to room temperature and whisk before serving. Great for stuff from the grill.