



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
Arugula	Yes	Plastic	
Dandelion Greens	Yes	Plastic	
Green Garlic	Yes	Plastic	
Lettuce	Yes	Plastic	Red Leaf, Green Leaf
Pea Shoots	Yes	Plastic	
Radishes	Yes	Plastic	French Breakfast
Spinach	Yes	Plastic	

Hello everyone and welcome to the 2005 season at Hog's Back Farm. We've been busy getting things planted, weeded and watered. If you're new to the farm this year, this is our weekly newsletter. Please remember to pick one up each week and read it over for news, info and recipes. Often there is important information that you need to know in the newsletter. If you forget or need another one we have them on the website in handy pdf format.

Generally the newsletter usually starts out with a discussion of one or two of the items in the box and then a brief description of the rest. Then there's some news from the farm and farmer, followed by as many recipes as we've had time to track down for the week. This week will be a little different in that I've asked a couple of veteran members to describe their approach to using the produce from the box. This may be helpful for folks who've never gotten a CSA share before, and even for some who have.

So without further adieux, here's a brief description of what's in the box this week:

Arugula is a wonderful spicy salad green which you either love or don't. Some illicit trading of arugula does go on at the pickup sites but I try not to notice. It is best used in salads with a nice dressing. If you're not familiar with it don't judge it on a simple taste of the leaf, arugula's spiciness is mellowed by dressing.

Farm report

Rainfall last week 0.45"
 High temp 82°
 Low temp 48°
 Soil condition..... Moist
 Weed pressure..... Medium
 Coming next week..... Butter lettuce

Dandelion greens are a new addition to the box this year in my quest to find different things that will be ready in time for the first week. These are really a type of chicory and not the same dandelion you find in your yard. Dandelions also have a bitter or spicy flavor that is enhanced by a sauce or dressing. The larger ribs should be removed unless you will be cooking them well.

Green garlic is the young garlic plant, before it starts forming a bulb. These were planted in October of last year and spent the winter in the ground before being harvested this week. Use them as you would scallions.

Lettuce needs no introduction.

Pea shoots are another item which new folks may not be familiar with. They are the young shoots of the pea plant and are fully edible. The stems can get a little tough so if you are using them raw in a salad just use the upper half of the shoots. Pea shoots have a delicate pea flavor and are packed full of nutrition. A recipe follows.

Radishes and spinach are frequent visitors to the box in the spring. There's a lot of spinach right now so enjoy it before the hot weather sets in.

All of the items in the box this week must be stored in plastic bags for best keeping in your fridge. We do not send them from the farm in plastic bags unless they are loose items like the spinach.

Farm News

Well it's been a bumpy spring with a chilly, wet May. Last week's sunny warm weather was a welcome shot in the arm for all the crops in the field and my psyche as well. I was starting to think that the lettuce wasn't going to be big enough for this week, but it's amazing how much lettuce can grow in a week of nice weather.

Just a quick reminder that we have a limited number of the yellow boxes that we pack the shares in. Please return them each week, or, better yet, transfer your veggies to bags at the pickup site and leave the box behind. We'd like to continue to use these boxes but if we don't get them back consistently we'll have to figure something else out.

It's also been a big spring for birds at the farm. We put up 5 bluebird houses in March and have at least a couple families of bluebirds in them now. It's been fun taking Iris to see the eggs, and then the baby birds when they first hatched. I would guess that they'd be fledging fairly soon. We also have a robin who has taken up residence in the packing shed. She's sitting on 4 eggs and they should be hatching any day. Keeping her company are a flock of barn swallows who make an amazing amount of noise. I also had the odd occurrence of coming across several large eggs out in the middle of the field after doing some tractor work. Close consultation with our staff ornithologist revealed these to be wild turkey eggs. Apparently not the brightest bird, it lays it's eggs just in the grass or under some brush.

I also have one crop loss to report which will sadden some. The gourmet deer at the farm have this year decided that their favorite snack is fennel. Two nights after we transplanted 500 fennel the deer helped themselves to about 480 of them. This was unexpected because they'd never shown an interest in it before. I have replanted so we may get some, albeit in September instead of July.

Well we don't have much room remaining for recipes so I'll just put down one that was a favorite last year. Look for a dandelion recipe on the website at www.hogsbackfarm.com/bb in the recipes area. Please feel free to add your favorite salad dressing recipe and enjoy the first big salads of the season.

Pea shoot and green garlic pesto

1 bunch pea shoots (cut above the rubber band and washed)

1 (or 2 if you like it garlicky) green garlic washed and chopped with plenty of the green top included

4 T. olive oil

1 t. salt (or to taste)

1/2 c. freshly grated parmesan

1/2 c. toasted nuts (walnuts, pinenuts, etc)

12 oz. cooked pasta

Combine pea shoots, green garlic, olive oil, salt, parm (short for parmesan in our kitchen), and nuts in a food processor. Process until you have a nice bright green paste. If it's not combining well drizzle in more oil as it's processing. Toss with the just-drained pasta. Garnish with a little freshly grated parm and serve hot, or refrigerate and add a cup of halved cherry tomatoes to make a nice pasta salad.

How I use my CSA box by Lisa G.

You've got your CSA box, now what are you going to do with it? Here's how I usually tackle my weekly CSA catch to maximize the life of all of the produce and thus the likelihood of all of the produce getting eaten.

First, I pull everything out of the box and put it out on the counter. I check the weekly almanac to see if there is anything new or unfamiliar and if yes, where I should store it. Then I start with the items that need to be rinsed before being stored, like lettuces. I fill up the sink with cold water and dunk the whole heads a couple of times to get out the dirt and sand. Then I leave the heads upside down in the sink to drain. After most of the water is gone, I put them in a vegetable bag with a folded up paper towel or napkin in the bottom to soak up any water that may yet still drain out. Lettuces definitely keep better if clean and fairly dry. This goes for arugula and spinach too. I still wash them again before using them. Anything that comes tied in a bunch, I untie and put into the vegetable bags loose.

Next I'll check any/all of the 'hard' vegetables for dirt. Anything that is dirty gets rinsed and dried off before getting put in a vegetable bag. I remove carrot and radish greens, as well as beet and turnip greens (if I'm not going to use them) before putting them in a bag. I put all the vegetables that go in the refrigerator into vegetable bags. Onions and potatoes get brushed off if dirty and put loose into dry storage bins I have in a cupboard. Fresh basil I keep in the poly bag it comes in. I fill up the bag with air and twist tie it closed. Basil is best stored in a warmer part of your refrigerator- a middle or upper shelf. Winter squash gets washed and dried and stored in a bin in a cool, dark place in the basement. Some things, like green beans, are okay to leave in the poly bags they come in, but I put almost everything else in vegetable bags.

NOTE: Vegetable bags are a Ziploc product that I found 12 years ago that I use all the time. They are perforated zip topped bags that really keep things in them fresher longer. They are quite durable. I reuse mine by washing them out and hanging them up to dry. Unfortunately, they are no longer available in grocery stores, but they are available through mail order from SC Johnson. I have more details if you are interested.

As I am unpacking my box, I'm also thinking about what I can make with the items I received. My goal is to spend as little money as possible at the grocery store and use up all of our vegetables in the week. I always read the almanac as there are often easy recipes right there to maybe even make that night. We enjoy eating "seasonally". I'm also looking forward to using the on-line recipe forum at the web site for other options as well.