

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

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

	Fridge?	Bag?	Notes & Varieties
Basil	No	Plastic	
Carrots	Yes	Plastic	
Cucumbers	Yes	Plastic	
Dill	Yes	Plastic	
Lettuce	Yes	Plastic	Red leaf, green leaf, romaine cross
Potatoes	No	Paper	New reds
Sweet Corn	Yes	Plastic	Local, conventional
Zucchini	Yes	Plastic	

Corn

The sweet corn is ready early this year with all of the warm weather. We don't grow the corn that comes in the box, we buy it from a local grower down in the sandy prairie about 5 miles to the south. His name is Dan Sam and he's been growing vegetables and strawberries for years. His dad used to do it before him. Most of his business is up at the Eau Claire farmers market. He is not organic but is judicious about chemical use and he assures me that my customers don't get any genetically modified sweet corn. The corn was picked this morning, so it's as fresh as it gets. It holds its flavor best if you get it cooled off quickly.

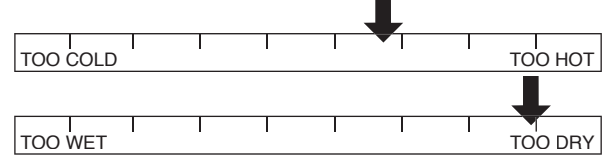
I haven't grown corn for several years because I really haven't had the space to dedicate to it. We now have oodles of space and I'm contemplating growing some of it next year. We shall see. My wife said she saw organic corn in the store for almost \$10/dozen.

Nothing says summer like sweet corn, except maybe tomatoes. Don't be tempted to overcook it. Throw it in boiling water for a few minutes, I tend to limit it to about two minutes but I like it a little al dente. We'll have a half dozen ears in the box for the next few weeks.

Farm Report

Rainfall0.1"
 High Temperature 88°
 Low Temperature 53°

Farmer Complaint Indicators™:



It seems like since we've got corn we should have green beans, but they're lagging behind because they got planted two weeks later than they should have because of wet weather that now seems a distant memory.

A big bag of new red potatoes is in the box. The skins at this early stage are very fragile and even with care a few skins come off while washing. I like to hand dig the first round of potatoes because the potato digger rips the skins off these. That said, it was a little warm hand digging all 356 pounds on Wednesday. It's so nice to have real potatoes again, instead of the stored ones in which the starches have turned to sugar.

Fresh dill is always my favorite companion to new potatoes. A simple potato salad with dill, a good quality mayonnaise and some eggs is a staple in our house this time of year. I like dill as an herb for meats and fish, too.

Cucumbers also go great with fresh potatoes. We usually slice some thin and throw them on top of the potato salad. Mel made a basil pesto potato salad with cukes on top and a balsamic reduction drizzled over the top that was pure evil last week. The cucumber plants are putting out quite a few right now. Hopefully they don't crash and burn too early. I did plant some later cucumbers but they have been completely overtaken, not by weeds, but by muskmelon and buttercup squash. My back hurts every time I walk by the melons and see how well those plants are doing. August is going to have some heavy boxes.

Carrots, zukes, basil and lots of lettuce round out the box this week. Some of the carrots are from a new row which is a little bit smaller. When it's as dry as it has been we simply can't get irrigation on everything and a couple of the carrot rows are in an odd spot by themselves so they haven't gotten the water to really make them size up in a timely manner.

Farm News

The big projects at the farm this week were: getting the first round of fall brassicas transplanted, planting fall beets, harvesting the garlic, and 'harvesting' the first batch of chickens.

The brassicas are anything in the cabbage family, in the case of transplanting last Friday this meant cauliflower, broccoli and cabbage. We have one more round to go in and that will be the end of the transplanting for the season.

Digging the garlic took a better part of Monday and Tuesday. We ended up with 2,040 heads hung up and starting to cure in the machine shed. About 500 of those will end up back in the ground in October as garlic for next year. The rest will show up in your boxes after they've cured for about 4 weeks.

The first chickens went in Tuesday morning. We caged them up Monday night and I got up at 3am to take them to Decorah, IA where they had a date with destiny at 6:30am. In order to sell you chickens which cross state lines they have to be processed at a USDA inspected facility and the nearest one is in Decorah. This processor is certified for organic processing, and although we are not certified, I wanted them processed as though they were, which meant getting there early in the morning, so that our birds were the first birds through the plant that day. It went quite well and they looked great when they were done. I can't wait to try one, but I have to get them trucked from the processor to a locker in the cities before I can get my hands on one. Chicken shares will start in two weeks, on August 2nd.

The rest of the week has been spent irrigating. It is irritating to always be irrigating. I don't understand why we can't get some real rain. The last couple of years we have had very dry Julys. This is inconvenient since July is generally the hottest month of the year as well. You just can't keep up with irrigation when it's 90° and breezy. There's no subsoil moisture right now so the water just gets pulled down to the lower areas of the soil a day after you put it on, and it's hard to tell you did anything.

Coming next week: More hot, dry weather, carrots, chard, cukes, zukes, corn, basil, onions.

Here's the promised blurb from Martha, the other intern at the farm this year:

My name is Martha, and I'm from Bozeman, Montana. I go to

school in Greensboro, North Carolina at Guilford College, where I'm majoring in Anthropology/Sociology. I'm Jewish, and almost twenty, and when I grow up I want to be a writer and a farmer. I'm also Geoffrey's girlfriend. If I were a vegetable, I would be a tomato.

I'm working at Hog's Back this summer to get my first real look at what being a farmer would entail, and so far I'm pretty happy with what I see. The work has been hard most days, but always rewarding, and this is exactly the type of work I want to be doing right now; something that lets me be outside every day and use my pent up energy and young, strong back while I still have it (and trust me, after bending double to pick eight hundred and forty sprigs of basil, I truly appreciate my back). I might never do this full time, as I miss having time to write, but I was raised on a goat farm with a sizable garden and cannot imagine living somewhere where I couldn't raise and grow my own food.

Dilly Potato Salad

- 3 pounds potatoes, washed
- 2 cucumbers, sliced thin (1/16")
- 3 ears of corn, kernels cut off of cobs
- 1/2 cup pecans, toasted
- 1/2 bunch of dill, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup yogurt
- 3 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon stone-ground mustard
- 2 teaspoon fresh lemon juice
- Salt and pepper to taste

Toss the sliced cucumbers in 2 tablespoons cider vinegar, set aside. Place whole potatoes in large stock pot with several quarts of cool water, so that the water covers the potatoes by a couple inches. Bring to a boil and simmer until the potatoes are just tender enough to easily insert a paring knife. Drain the potatoes and let cool for 5 minutes. While still warm cube them into large chunks with a serrated knife to avoid rubbing the skins off. Combine all the ingredients and stir gently, adding salt and pepper to taste.

Sweet and Sour Cukes with Fresh Dill

- 3 large cucumbers (1 1/2 pounds total), unpeeled, very thinly sliced
- 1 tablespoon coarse kosher salt
- 1/2 cup distilled white vinegar
- 1/4 cup finely chopped fresh dill
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Place cucumber slices in colander. Sprinkle with salt; toss to coat. Let stand 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Meanwhile, for dressing, stir vinegar, dill, sugar, and pepper in large bowl until sugar is dissolved. Drain cucumbers well; pat dry. Add cucumbers to dressing and stir to blend. Refrigerate at least 15 minutes and up to 2 hours; serve cold.