

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 | |
| Chard | Yes | Plastic | Rainbow |
| Cucumbers | Yes | Plastic | |
| Onions | Yes | Plastic | Sweet and Red |
| Peppers | Yes | Plastic | Green Bell |
| Sweet Corn | Yes | Plastic | Local conventional |
| Tomatoes | No | No | Early red |
| Zucchini | Yes | Plastic | |

Cucumbers

The cukes really love this warm weather, everyone should get 8 of them in their box today. This will be their peak of production. It'll start to taper off slowly over the next few weeks. As the season wears on and the hot weather lingers, the skins on the cukes get a little tougher. Peeling off the skins is a good idea this time of year, unless you're slicing them very thin.

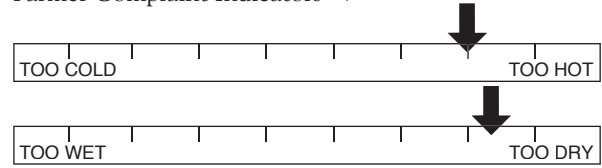
Cucumbers are one of the oldest of the cultivated vegetables, having been grown for 4,000 years. Cukes were known in Europe during classical and medieval times, and were introduced to the new world by Columbus who brought them to Haiti on a return trip to the new world in 1494. Cucumbers are about 96% water which explains why they are so refreshing on a hot summer day.

We eat a few at supper almost every night, sliced thin with a little salt and vinegar, on top of salad or just by themselves. Because of their high water content it helps to salt them prior to making a salad out of them so that you get rid of the excess moisture and don't dilute your dressing. A recipe illustrating this follows.

Farm Report

Rainfall0.50"
 High Temperature..... 91°
 Low Temperature 62°

Farmer Complaint Indicators™:



The first tomato of the year is in the box this week. We've been picking a few as they ripen but we finally have enough to get one in the box. In our effort to get enough you may get one that is fairly firm and not fully red ripe. If you do just set it upside-down on the counter for a few days until it gives easily when gently squeezed. It won't be long and you'll be wondering what you're going to do with all the tomatoes. These first early ones are out of the hoop house experiment I tried this year. The tomatoes are a little earlier but not worth the large amount of effort that went into it. I have committed myself to not erecting any more non-permanent structures on our windy hilltop.

More rainbow chard for you this week. Some of the leaves are so large they look like some sort of Neanderthal plant. Chard is about the only green you can grow in this hot weather that doesn't seem to mind it, as long as you keep it watered.

There's a first green pepper this week, too. The pepper plants are setting a lot of fruit this time of year and we should see more of them soon.

The onions are some more of the same sweet yellow onions we had last time plus one red onion. We harvested all of the white onions this week and it looks like next week and the week after will be peak onion and shallot harvesting. They all look very good.

The basil has been loving this hot weather. It's been nice to get a fair-sized bag of it in the boxes so people have a chance to do something nice with it. I made pizzas on Tuesday night with lots of fresh basil on them.

Carrots, corn and zucchini round out the box this week. Eat the corn the same day you pick up your box. No point waiting around. You can store it in a plastic bag in the fridge, but it won't taste as good as the day it was picked.

Farm News

We did manage to get a half an inch of rain on Sunday, but are still at less than an inch for the month of July. About 20 miles east of us they got 5 inches. I guess I'll take the half-inch, it gives me a few days off of irrigating. Some things are starting to require less water now as they get near harvesting, like the onions. Other things are sucking up the water like it's the only water they've ever seen, like the tomatoes. The tomato plants are standing about 5 feet tall now in their cages and they can go through a tremendous amount of water as the hot summer breeze blows over them.

Last Friday we managed to get all of the last planting of fall brassicas in, mostly broccoli. It's nice to be done with the transplanting. There's a few flats of haggard looking flower transplants sitting outside that need to go somewhere, then it will be time to put down the trowel for another year. We still plant all of the transplants by hand and I'd bet we're getting pretty close to 20,000 of them for the year. I would say that with Geoffrey and Martha's help we have come as close as we ever will to getting everything transplanted on time. It also helps that it never rains so you don't have to wait for the ground to dry out.

Monday we took some time to go over to the old farm and bring over the potato digger and a bunch of harvesting crates. I spent the end of Monday and most of Tuesday getting the vegetable fields for 2008 laid out and plowed up. I've still got a little plowing to get it finished and hopefully I will before we get any more rain. Even though it's a while until next season, the time to get the ground ready is now so that the weeds can start germinating in it and I have a chance to kill some of them over the next few weeks. Then in late August I'll lay out the beds and get cover crops planted in them.

Next week is the first week of the chicken shares. If you have a chicken share you may want to bring a cooler to the pickup site with you to transfer your chickens to. I will email everyone with a chicken share this week. If you don't get an email from me by Monday and think you have a chicken share send me an email and I'll make sure I have you down for one. This is the first year for this so hopefully it will go smoothly. If you have any feedback please let me know.

Next week in the box: cilantro, cucumbers, zucchini, tomatoes, corn, potatoes, scallions.

Creamy Dill Cucumber Salad

- 1 cup sour cream
- 3 tablespoons cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1/4 cup minced fresh dill
- Salt and black pepper
- 3 medium cucumbers (about 1 1/2 pounds)
- 1/2 medium red onion, very thinly sliced

Halve each cucumber lengthwise, peel and scoop out seed cavity with a spoon. Turn the halves upside-down and slice into 1/4-inch slices. Toss the cucumber and red onion slices with 3 teaspoons salt in a colander and weight them down with a ziploc bag with a quart of water in. Let sit at room temp for at least an hour to drain.

When the cukes have drained, whisk the sour cream, vinegar, sugar, dill and salt and pepper to taste in a medium bowl. Add the cucumbers and onion; toss to coat. Serve chilled, adjusting the seasonings if necessary.

Rainbow Chard Risotto

- 5 cups canned low-salt chicken broth
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 1/2 cups arborio rice or medium-grain white rice
- 4 cups (packed) coarsely chopped rainbow chard leaves (about 1 bunch)
- 1/2 cup dry white wine
- 1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- Additional grated Parmesan cheese

Bring broth to simmer in medium saucepan. Cover and keep warm. Heat oil in heavy large Dutch oven over medium heat. Add onion and sauté until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add rice and chard and stir until chard begins to wilt, about 3 minutes. Add wine and simmer until absorbed, stirring occasionally, about 2 minutes. Add 4 1/2 cups hot broth. Simmer until rice is just tender and risotto is creamy, stirring frequently and adding remaining 1/2 cup broth by 1/4 cupfuls if mixture is dry, about 20 minutes. Mix in 1/2 cup Parmesan cheese; season to taste with salt and pepper. Transfer risotto to medium bowl. Serve, passing additional Parmesan separately.