

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	
Beets	Yes	Plastic	red with tops
Carrots	Yes	Plastic	
Cilantro	Yes	Plastic	
Cucumbers	Yes	Plastic	
Potatoes	No	Paper	new reds
Sweet Corn	Yes	Plastic	local, conventional
Tomatoes	No	No	early reds
Zucchini	Yes	Plastic	

Cilantro

I don't get much time to wax poetic about cilantro so I thought I'd do it this week since there's a perfect large bunch in each box. The first thing to know about cilantro is that you either love it or hate it. There doesn't seem to be much middle ground when it comes to cilantro. As a general rule of thumb I find that people who like hot, spicy food also like cilantro, and those who prefer milder food don't care for it.

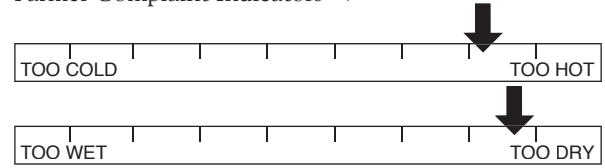
Cilantro is the same thing as coriander. When I buy cilantro seed it looks exactly the same as the unground coriander in the spice aisle. The seed imparts a different and milder flavor than the leaves. For those who don't care for it they can use this anecdote as ammo: The name coriander is from the Greek word *koris*, meaning bed-bug. Apparently Europeans associate the smell of the leaves with that of bug-infested bed-clothes. I guess that would put me off of it.

It is most common in the leaf form in Latin American and Southeast Asian foods, where hot spices also predominate. The seed is most common as a key ingredient in garam masala and other Indian curry blends, and it's not uncommon for a curry to make use of the leaves as well.

Farm Report

Rainfall0.55"
 High Temperature 92°
 Low Temperature 59°

Farmer Complaint Indicators™:



There's a nice, healthy bag of basil in the box this week. A simple pesto recipe is at the end of the newsletter, the adventurous can try it with cilantro.

These are the beets that folks weeded for the field day last month. They aren't loving this hot weather and the tops were starting to look pretty ratty so I thought we'd get them out of the field.

The carrots this week vary widely in size since about halfway down the row of them we discovered the remains of a gravel road in the field. It must have been used as a farm road at one time, so the carrots that were growing where the gravel road was are noticeably smaller and bumpier, but they taste fine. Why some farmer was dumping gravel in his field is beyond me.

The cukes are starting to slow down now but if I keep them watered we should have a few for the next couple of weeks. The late ones I planted have been completely taken over by buttercup squash and do not look like they're going to survive.

More red potatoes are in the box this week. I finally dusted off the potato digger and made use of it this time. I like to start the year by digging the first row or two by hand just so that I can truly appreciate the miraculous invention of the potato digger.

More corn this week, too. I thought the corn last week was excellent.

A few more tomatoes this week as they start to pick up steam. These are all still out of the hoop houses, but I'm starting to see a little color showing up in the field. Again, if you get a firm one just leave it upside-down on your counter for a few days to ripen up. And remember that we never put tomatoes in the fridge!

The zucchini just keep on plugging away. There's a little bit of disease showing up in some of the plants but the rest are making up for it in the heat.

Chicken Shares

This is the first week of the chicken shares and rather than use up more paper to print a separate chicken letter I thought I'd tell everyone about what's involved in raising these. First we start with day-old chicks from a hatchery in the eastern half of Wisconsin. These go into a couple brooder pens I've made in the old milk house attached to the barn. Here they stay for about 3 weeks being fed several times a day with certified organic chicken feed which is made on a farm about an hour south of here. Unlike most commercially produced chickens, their feed contains no ground up chickens, cows or hogs.

After the brooder house they are put out on lush, green pasture. While on pasture they spend their nights in one of three portable pens which are moved daily, while during the day they are out running around the pasture and eating, or relaxing in the shade of the pens on these hot days. Out on pasture they still eat a tremendous amount of chicken feed, as well as leaves off of the alfalfa, bugs, grit and whatever veggies we remember to toss over the fence. The three pens are encircled by electrified poultry netting to keep out predators.

They live a happy, healthy life until the ripe old age of 8 weeks when it's time to be 'harvested'. If human babies grew at the same rate as these chickens your two-month-old would weigh around 500 pounds. Now that the chicken shares have begun we won't be selling any more shares but have plenty of extra chickens available for sale. If you'd like to try 1 or 30 let me know and we can have them available for you to pick up on the next chicken share day, which is September 6.

One of the best things I've learned about cooking chicken in the last several years is how to brine a chicken. I always brine them before roasting them. Since these are such a nice size I'd suggest putting one in the fridge right now to thaw and brining and roasting it for supper on Sunday, with some new potatoes and a couple carrots. I can guarantee that's what I'll be doing, even if it's 100°F.

To brine a chicken, dissolve 1 cup table salt in 1 gallon of water in a large container. Rinse the chicken out and submerge in the brine and refrigerate for 1 hour. Remove the chicken and pat dry with paper towels. Proceed with your favorite chicken roasting recipe. Brining seasons the bird and keeps the white meat more tender during cooking.

Farm News

We did manage to get a little over half an inch of rain last week but it was just a drop in the bucket. We surpassed 1 inch total for the month of July but just barely. I'd say we're about 5 or 6 inches behind where we should be this time of year. The heat continues to make irrigation a necessary chore. The heat is hard on some crops, like the fall brassicas which like the cool weather that comes with September but just endure the heat until the cool weather comes. The warm season crops are loving it and are looking great.

The beginning of the week was spent getting the youngest chickens out to the pasture along with the handful of turkeys we are raising. They are all happy to be out of the hot brooder house which won't cool down in the warm weather. The turkeys love having all of the nice alfalfa to eat and they like the new little house that Martha and Geoffrey built for them.

Much of Tuesday was spent harvesting, we dug potatoes, harvested the red onions and picked tomatoes. I also managed to get a little cultivating done in the afternoon. The yellow onions and all the shallots will have to come out at the end of this week or beginning of next, and I'll have to figure out where to put them all. Overall the onion crop looks very nice this year.

While I was writing the newsletter we heard about the bridge on 35W, our hearts go out to anyone who may be touched by this horrible event.

In the box next week: Basil, cucumbers, green beans, zucchini, tomatoes, corn, onions, scallions, maybe a melon.

Basil or Cilantro Pesto

- 1/4 cup pine nuts , toasted (or substitute almonds or walnuts)
- 3 medium cloves garlic , threaded on a skewer
- 2 cups packed basil or cilantro leaves, rinsed thoroughly
- 7 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- Pinch table salt
- 1/4 cup finely grated Parmesan cheese

Toast nuts in small heavy skillet over medium heat, stirring frequently, until just golden and fragrant, 4 to 5 minutes. Place all ingredients except cheese(s) in bowl of food processor fitted with steel blade; process until smooth, stopping as necessary to scrape down bowl with flexible spatula. Transfer mixture to small bowl, stir in cheese(s), adjust salt, and serve over 1 pound of cooked and drained pasta.