

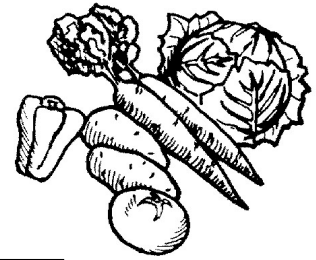
CSA Newsletter

WALTHAM FIELDS COMMUNITY FARM

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS OF SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE 1995–2005

A project of Community Farms Outreach

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Notes from the Field

It's finally raining as I write this on the first of August, about a week before you'll be reading it. Our garlic harvest is complete, our battle with the potato beetles is over for the season, and this rain will hopefully bring some relief to our crops at the Lyman Estate, which are badly in need of some water. Our farm staff is working hard on planting fall crops this week, including herbs, collards, broccoli, arugula, spinach, Swiss chard, fennel, turnips, radishes, endive and radicchio. We are carefully monitoring the progress of tomatoes, peppers, eggplant and melons even as we continue to harvest three times a week, fight the woodchucks off the latest planting of squash and cucumbers, and try our best to keep our fall crops weed-free.

This weekend, I took a trip to visit some friends on a farm in Western Massachusetts. The farm is picture-perfect, nestled in a valley between two mountain ridges, with incredible perennial landscaping, an old barn, a walk-in cooler, a frog pond overhung with willows, intern cabins, and an on-site artisan bakery. Sheep bleat gently, roosters crow in the mornings, and a little brook runs through the property. As I walked around the farm with Jonah, my heart ached a little. What, I wondered, am I doing in Waltham? Why continue to struggle with the weeds and woodchucks on our scrappy little piece of urban land, where neighbors complain about dust in their garages after we disk the ground and you can tell what the time is by the volume of traffic on Beaver Street? Why not pack it up, as many of my friends and colleagues are doing, and head to somewhere more hospitable and slower-paced, more rural, more breath-takingly beautiful and farmer-friendly? Why worry about our uncertain land tenure in Waltham when I could be planting raspberries somewhere else, knowing that I would still be farming that piece of land in ten years? I could hardly sleep the night we got back home, listening to the neighbors laugh and talk on their porch next door, missing the sound of the river and the crickets and the morning birds. The feeling stuck with me on my short drive to work in the morning, through the quiet Waltham streets as the Field Station's smokestack came into view.

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The answer came to me as I walked around the fields, making quick notes on a harvest list for the day's CSA pickup. It strengthened as the first urban shareholders came to the farm at 9 AM to pick their own beans and cherry tomatoes while the farm staff dug carrots. It grew further as you all pulled into the driveway at 3:30 to pick up potatoes, carrots, lettuce, squash, cucumbers, onions, garlic and tomatoes, and greeted the tired farm staff with your usual kindness and warmth. It solidified when a shareholder harvested a beautiful bunch of amaranth, which she called calaloo, and told us that she'd cook it up with tomatoes that evening. When we loaded 150 pounds of carrots into boxes for the Waltham Salvation Army and Sandra's Lodge for our wonderful volunteer drivers to pick up for the following day's hunger relief delivery, I knew: this land, these people, and this little farm have some *serious* soul.

Wendell Berry once said that eating is an agricultural act. If you take this to heart, as I do, then the national census that says that folks engaged in agriculture are no longer statistically significant is dead wrong. We are *all* engaged in agriculture, simply by the act of feeding our bodies. That's the good news. And the other good news is that you have chosen to be engaged in *local* agriculture—that's agriculture up close and personal, with all its heartaches, struggles and challenges. The average piece of food might travel 1500 miles before it reaches its destination, but not yours. You are making a difference, and you believe in that difference. And I do too. I'm convinced that our combined efforts in the long run will transform this farm into something as beautiful and tranquil as that farm in the mountains—it may never be as postcard-perfect, but it will be heartfelt and tenacious and soulful and authentically urban. It is a model of agriculture and community support that we can quietly hold up to those who argue that factory farming is the way to feed the world, and say, like CSA farmer Jay Martin, that 'food is the vehicle; community is the destination.'

—Amanda, for the farm crew

Organic & Conventional Farming Face-Off in 22-Year Study

from www.organicconsumers.org

The July issue of the journal *Bioscience* reviewed a 22-year-long field study by the Rodale Institute which compared organic and conventional farming on similar plots of land with similar crops. The study found that in the initial five years of the study, the conventional crops (i.e. crops grown with pesticides and synthetic fertilizers) had slightly better yields than the organic crops. But during that same initial period, the organic farming practices were building up higher levels of soil mass and biodiversity which then allowed the organic land to generate yields equal to or greater than the conventional crops. The conventional crops collapsed during drought years, while the organic crops fluctuated only slightly, due to greater water holding potential in the organic enriched soil. The conventional crop also had pesticides leaching into the water at levels exceeding the EPA's safety limits. Over the 22 year period, the organic crops used 30% less fossil energy inputs than the conventional crops.

Summer Squash with Garlic and Herbs

from *Chez Panisse—Vegetables*, by Alice Waters

Choose a mixture of very fresh squashes: yellow crookneck, green and yellow zucchini, and little pattypan squash. Trim and slice or cut into julienne. Saute in olive oil in a saute pan until tender and just beginning to brown. Add a generous amount of freshly chopped garlic and basil or marjoram, and season with salt and pepper. Cook just a minute more, until the garlic releases its aroma; squeeze over a bit of lemon juice, and serve.

This recipe was sent in by shareholder Judy Fallows, who says that Alice Waters is one of the founders of the Edible Schoolyard and is one of Judy's heroes. See <http://www.edibleschoolyard.org/homepage.html>.

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Cherry Tomato Pasta

Submitted by shareholder Katy Chapdelaine

orrechiette pasta
olive oil
fresh garlic, chopped
halved cherry tomatoes
fresh basil, chopped
fresh parsley, chopped
fresh mozzarella, cut into 1/2 inch pieces
grated parmegiano

Cooked the pasta and drain. Use the same pan to gently heat garlic in olive oil until it begins to sizzle and turn a very light brown. Dump the orrechiette back into the pan and toss well, covering the pasta with the oil. Add the remaining ingredients in order listed, tossing between each addition. The cheese makes it salty but you could add salt and pepper. I also add a big pinch of red pepper flakes to my bowl, but leave it out of the pot, in consideration of more tender-palated family members.

Fiesta Salad

Submitted by shareholder Katy Chapdelaine

chopped summer squash, tomatoes, carrots, cukes, etc.
bag of frozen corn
several onions, chopped
can of beans, e.g., black or kidney
olive oil
lemon or lime juice
fresh garlic
lots and lots of cilantro and parsley
ground cumin
rice vinegar
generous salt and pepper

Mix and enjoy. It's even better if it's sat in the fridge for an hour or two. You can add more store-bought ingredients, such as avocados or celery.



Community Farms Outreach is a nonprofit organization dedicated to farmland preservation, hunger relief, and education.