

STUDENT ORGANIC FARM CSA NEWSLETTER

January 13, 2005

Welcome to Spring CSA! (even though it's still winter)

In your share this week:

- Salad: the world-famous gourmet Student Organic Farm Baby Salad Mix
- Potatoes
- Leeks
- Onions
- Parsley
- Rutabagas
- Carrots
- Turnips
- Optional Brussels sprouts (they're not pretty, but they still taste good – some freeze damage, but surprisingly still useable. If you are a Brussels sprout fan, go nuts.)
- **Note on optional extras:** Until further notice, there are extra rutabagas, turnips, Brussels sprouts and radishes for folks who pick up at the farm. Just ask a student farmer at CSA pick-up. There may occasionally be extras of other crops, but staple crops like carrots and potatoes we have to ration to be sure there is plenty for all 50 shares all winter.

Announcements

1. IF YOU READ THIS NEWSLETTER IN TIME, AND IF YOU'RE AVAILABLE – **Volunteer day this Thursday, Jan. 13!** All hands on deck to sort good from bad Brussels sprouts, dig root vegetables, help with harvest and CSA set-up. Normally student farmers do all these things, but we're short-handed this week. Come to the farm any time between 10 and 3, wear waterproof boots and rain gear, warm clothes, and work gloves. Be prepared to get dirty, wet, cold, and appreciated -- support your farm in person. Bring water, and snacks if you like. Call 230-7987 for more info or directions.

2. **New Member Orientation Thursday Jan. 13, 2005 (today) 5:30-6:15 p.m.** Orientation will be held at the farm, in the winery (the first building on the left as you enter the Hort Farm). We will go over the ins and outs of Community Supported Agriculture, a brief history of the Student Organic Farm, our mutual responsibility to each other as farmers and members, and answer any questions you have about membership, logistics, etc. If you owe a balance on your share, the meeting is a great place to bring your check book. Old members are invited to the orientation as well, to meet your fellow CSA members and ask (or help us answer) questions. If you'd like to come early and see the farm while there's still daylight, come a little early (15-20 min) and a student farmer will take you on a guided tour. Please call the farm (230-7987) for more info or directions. Snacks are always welcome and much appreciated!

3. Student Organic Farm Core Group Forming this winter: A Core Group is a dedicated team of CSA members with the commitment to help make the farm survive, thrive, and better meet the needs of its members. The Core serves as the liaison between farmers and members, with both short-term and long-term responsibilities. Short-term projects may include organizing volunteer work parties at the farm, organizing/hosting potlucks, contributing to the newsletter, and staffing the CSA pick-up table (setting up, re-stocking, answering questions, cleaning up). Long-term projects may include helping with crop planning, fund raising, development of longer-term goals and directions of the CSA, and recruiting members.

First Core Group informational meeting in early February: to join, just send your name, email, and phone number to Laurie Thorp at thorpl@msu.edu. You will receive more info via email soon.

What's up at the farm?

Well, this is the first week back to CSA, and we'd like to welcome our new members! We hope to see you all at New Member Orientation this evening. Student farmers will tell the story of the farm and of Community Supported Agriculture, and there will be time to meet your farmers and fellow CSA members, question and answers, and still time to pick up your share after the meeting. Snacks are always welcome – bring a plate to share if you like.

We were out harvesting in the clouds Wednesday; it was unlike any harvest day in my memory. I could hardly see the hoopouses from the road, and when the wind finally picked up and blew the fog away, wisps of it still clung to the little trees in the orchard and lingered in the low spots in the fields. It was eerie and beautiful, and strangely warm – pleasant to stand outside in the weird weather. We pulled out many of the remaining Brussels sprouts plants – the sprouts themselves need to be sorted – about half the sprouts are good, half are freeze-damaged. There is another week's worth of Brussels sprouts in the field – also partially freeze-damaged, but if you're a Brussels sprouts fan, they're delicious. If you're not a Brussels sprouts fan, you may be by the time you spend a year in CSA. Give yourself a chance. The sprouts aren't pretty anymore; that's why they're optional this week – we didn't want to load you down with funny-looking veggies your first week back, but they are still quite tasty steamed or stir-fried. Load up if you like. We also pulled rutabagas from under mulch – surprisingly still beautiful – little to no frost damage, and some of the leaves were still fresh and green! Mulch.... Have you read anything by Ruth Stout? She's an old organic gardening columnist who published a book about organic gardening, the jist of which is “mulch to within an inch of your life, and never weed or till again.” Good advice for the garden, and it goes a long way on the farm, too. Mulch is good for soil improvement, frost insulation, water retention and absorption, weed suppression, maybe even enlightenment.

See below for a news release from December on methyl bromide, a frequently-used soil fumigant in strawberry crops, among others. Also, check out the recipe for Parsley Potatoes, and please send in your favorite seasonal recipes – we'll include them in future newsletters.
Peace, Michelle

*EXEMPTION GRANTED TO METHYL BROMIDE PESTICIDE (reprinted from the Wood Prairie Farm Special Spuds Newsletter from Jan.10 – Wood Prairie is an organic seed potato farm in Maine where we get many of our seed potatoes)

On December 16th, outgoing Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Michael Leavitt released regulations allowing a 2 million pound increase in 2005 in the use of methyl bromide, an ozone-depleting and cancer-causing farm chemical soil fumigant, in violation of both an international treaty and the Clean Air Act. This new action follows several other decisions by the Bush administration to allow more use of the pesticide which has been slated to be banned for years.

The EPA exemptions will allow agribusiness interests to use 19.7 million pounds of methyl bromide next year, an increase of nearly 2 million pounds over the amount used in 2003. More than three-quarters of the chemical will be used by two crops -- Florida tomatoes and California strawberries. Meanwhile plowdown of Brassica family plants such as mustard or rapeseed as a "Biofumigant", a practice we follow on Wood Prairie Farm, are being documented as highly effective soil fumigation by the USDA Agricultural Research Service.

To read more about the methyl bromide issue, go to the Natural Resources Defense Council at www.nrdc.org.

Parsley Potatoes (or "Patates Perseillade" if you're French)

1 qt or more "waxy" potatoes ("waxy" describes the texture of the cooked potato – the Red Dales in your share this week, while not super waxy, are delicious and beautiful in this recipe!)

1 big bunch parsley

A few tablespoons or more of butter, melted

A few tablespoons cream

Salt and pepper

Nutmeg if you're adventurous

Scrub (no need to peel unless you enjoy it – the skins are tasty) and quarter medium potatoes; cut large ones into bite-sized chunks. Boil or steam til soft and edible. Chop parsley finely, mix with butter, cream, salt, and pepper. Toss mixture with hot potatoes. Grate or sprinkle just a touch of nutmeg if you like, and serve hot hot hot. Enjoy! Variation: use half rutabagas, half potatoes. In fact, in any potato dish, you can substitute half rutabaga for a deliciously sweet and tangy twist on taters.