

STUDENT ORGANIC FARM
CSA NEWSLETTER
January 20, 2005

In your share this week:

- Salad: the world-famous gourmet Student Organic Farm Baby Salad Mix again*
- Loose leaf spinach – be sure to eat the petioles, or stems; they are sweet sweet sweet!*
- Onions
- Garlic
- Red cabbage
- Parsnips OR Carrots
- Radishes*
- Delicata or Sweet Dumpling winter squash
- Celeriac (a.k.a. celery root)
- Fresh oregano
- **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.

*items with a star were harvested from the hoophouses; the others were in cold storage or from the field (some leeks, root veggies, etc. still under mulch in the fields)

Announcements

1. PLEASE if at all possible, **pick up your share at the farm** or send someone in your place. There are currently too many members who want to pick up on campus. We've offered PSSB on campus as an alternate location only for folks who can't make it to the farm, and can't find a friend to go in their place.

The SOF does not have a farm vehicle; we rely on students' personal vehicles to deliver shares to PSSB, and among us there is no vehicle big enough to haul to campus as many shares as members have requested.

If you can come to the farm Friday, it's not as much fun as Thursday, but it's better than campus. If you need to pick up your share at the farm on Friday, just give us a call anytime (517-230-7987) on Thursday, and we'll pack a share for you and leave it in the cooler.

Alternately, if you have a truck to lend/give to the farm, we will accept!

IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY SCHEDULED TO PICK UP YOUR SHARE AT PSSB, AND CAN SWITCH TO PICK UP AT THE FARM THURSDAY OR FRIDAY, PLEASE CALL US BEFORE 3:00 P.M. THURSDAY AT 517-230-7987. Thanks so much.

2. A special note on spinach, baby salad mix, and anything else we distribute in plastic bags (rather than bunched or loose): We generally do NOT wash baby salad mix or spinach before we give it to you. We do this because dry leaves, if properly sealed in an airtight container (i.e. closed plastic bag), store longer in your refrigerator than wet leaves – with delicate leaves like salad mix, especially, wet leaves tend to stick together, get matted and compacted, and encourage rot. Dry leaves may be perked up by soaking in cold water for a few minutes before serving (make sure to rinse them well to get the dirt off, too).

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?

Lots! First of all, there's the crazy beautiful patterns the frost makes on the greenhouse endwalls – very intricate lacy designs that glow in three-D when the sun shines through. Then there's the snow, of course. We can always use help shoveling snow out of the greenhouse doorways – if you'd like to get out to the farm and move around a bit, and help out your farm at the same time, shoveling elves are always appreciated. The snow shovel lives in the work house (the farthest north of the 5 houses at the farm), and the main gates are open roughly from 8-5:30. If you might stay here later than 5:00, be safe and park outside the main gate (at College Rd.), so your car doesn't get locked in.

That of course leads us to **volunteer opportunities** – if you're interested in making a regular volunteer commitment, please email Emily at reardone@msu.edu, and/or call the farm phone (517-230-7987). Since our farm is staffed by students, when end-of-semester exams set in, the staff thins out. In the fall, the needs of the farm correspond well with the needs of a student – when classes get crazy busy, work at the farm slows down. However, in the spring, as you can imagine, it's the opposite – right when everyone needs time to study and write papers, the farm starts hopping – seeds need planting, soil needs working, weeds need pulling. So we'd like to get as many volunteers as possible (including some non-students, hopefully) on deck to pitch in the second half of the semester. You don't need to know anything about farming or gardening – we'll teach you whatever you need to know. You just need a few hours, plenty of energy, warm clothes that can get dirty, waterproof boots/shoes, and a willingness to work and to try something new. Margaritas are also welcome.

If you can't make a regular commitment, but want to come out and pitch in once in a while, great! Please email Emily and/or call the farm phone with your name and phone number, and when you think you'll come, and we'll appreciate your help.

New or Unusual Vegetables in Your Share this Week

You may be wondering “What is **celeriac**, anyway, and how do you say it?”

Celeriac (sell-air’-ee-ack) is a member of the Umbelliferae family, which includes parsley, carrots, parsnips, dill, and of course celery. Celeriac is sometimes also called celery root, and though celery and celeriac are both scientifically *Apium graveoleus*, celeriac is a subvariety, *A. graveoleus rapaceum*. If you have a copy of *Asparagus to Zucchini*, now’s the time to get it out. I love that book – I just read the description of celeriac, and while I won’t reprint the entire thing here, the basic idea is that it has long been a popular, and wonderful, storage crop—keeps 6-8 months in a root cellar, and at least a month in a plastic bag in the veggie drawer of your refrigerator. It’s high in carbohydrates, vitamin C, phosphorous, and potassium. What to do with it, though? Use it any way you normally use celery, for extra celery-y flavor. The outside skin is fibrous, and you may want to peel it, but if you can get all the dirt out of the crevices, the skin is still fine and tasty, esp. after cooking. The insides are delicious raw or cooked. Peeled celeriac darkens from air exposure, like potatoes – toss with lemon juice or store cut pieces in water to prevent discoloration.

Oregano is an herb you normally only find dried, and for good reason – like any herb, oregano’s flavor is more concentrated in the dried leaf, once the water has evaporated. Dried oregano packs more punch than fresh – but fresh is so beautiful! And still very tasty – chop finely and use in salad dressings; make infused oils and vinegars: put oregano into a small-ish jar, cover completely with olive oil or cider or champagne vinegar, store in a room-temp place a couple of weeks, remove and use the herb, and voila, you’ve got infused oil or vinegar, perfect for salad dressing or drizzling over root veggies or pasta. You can speed up the oil process by heating olive oil over LOW heat in a shallow pan, adding the herb, and letting it slowly heat and simmer, for 20-30 min. Remove and use herb, let oil cool, and store in a jar in a dark place.

Squash is not exactly unusual, but for the new members, if you haven’t cooked squash before, here is the easy way to do it: Cut squash in half lengthwise, and scoop out the seeds and strings from the center. Place two halves face down on a baking sheet or in a shallow baking dish. If your dish has edges, add water to the pan to just cover the cut edges of the squash, to keep it from drying out. Bake at 375 for 30-60 min, depending on the size of the squash (small squash 30 min, large squash 60, medium in the middle) – test the squash by poking it with your finger – if the back side is hollow and caves in, it’s done. Scoop flesh from skin, and enjoy.

Parsnips may be new to some folks – these root veggies are also members of the Umbelliferae plant family, and as such, bear a strong resemblance to carrots. They have a sweet, slightly carrot-y flavor, but richer and unique. They are quite tasty raw, but a bit fibrous; I prefer to cook them. If you’re a vegetable purist, forgive me (I used to be one, too) – my favorite way to prepare them is with *butter*—not margarine, give me a break, real butter, or olive oil if you insist, but butter is better... Scrub and trim ends, then slice almost in half – cut lengthwise, but only so there’s a slit, not two pieces. Arrange in a shallow baking dish, and stuff butter in each slit. Add a little water to the pan to keep things moist, cover with foil, and bake at 325 for about an hour. Once they’re soft and melty, take off foil so edges will brown and caramelize a bit. YUM!!!!

That's it for unique vegetables – but just a word on the **spinach** – the petioles (stems) are the sweetest vegetable I've ever eaten. Must be the cold conditions in the unheated greenhouses. Whatever you do, don't waste the stems! Let me know what you think. Is sugary spinach good? Try this spinach fresh – you probably won't have any left to cook once you've started nibbling on it, but if you like, it can be lightly steamed, used in omelettes, quiches, etc.

ONE LAST RECOMMENDATION: We're ordering another case of *Asparagus to Zucchini* cookbooks; as soon as they arrive, we'll let you know. They'll probably be around \$14 again, and it's an invaluable resource. My OTHER favorite source of info is the *Food Lover's Companion*, 3rd ed. By Sharon Tyler Herbst. If you're a food head like me, you can get lost for hours and get mightily hungry while reading this book.

OK--

Is there anyone out there who has NOT seen "The Meatrix"? If you haven't seen the movie "The Matrix," the "meatrix" might not be as hilarious as it was to me, but the point comes across nonetheless. I highly recommend it (5 min video on line -- see the end of this article for a link)

Consumer Campaign Helps Families Eat Healthier

New York, NY – GRACE (Global Resource Action Center for the Environment) today launched a new campaign – Sustainable Table – to help educate consumers on how to shop smarter, eat healthier and enjoy the abundance of fresh, nutritious meat and produce grown by local family farmers. From the benefits of pasture-raised meat to the overuse of antibiotics in factory farms, www.SustainableTable.org

<<http://www.sustainabletable.org/>> presents all the issues in a clear, easy-to-understand format that makes it easier for consumers to make healthier choices about what their families eat.

"You are what you eat. And more families than ever before want to eat sustainably," said GRACE President Alice Slater. "We launched Sustainable Table to give families more choices about what goes into their bodies and more ways to exercise their purchasing power to support their local communities."

Sustainable agriculture is a way of raising food that is healthy for consumers, does not harm the environment, is humane for workers and animals, provides a fair wage to traditional family farmers, and supports rural communities.

"The food you eat significantly impacts your health and wellbeing," said Slater. "It is important to understand what is happening with our food supply so you can make educated decisions for you and your family. More

and more families are concerned about nutrition and food safety. Not only are sustainable foods more nutritious than heavily-processed industrial foods, they are also produced without creating the health hazards associated with factory farming. But until now it has been difficult for many consumers to navigate the maze of confusing labels defining organic, antibiotic-free, and free-range products to find truly sustainable foods."

At [www.SustainableTable.org](http://www.sustainabletable.org/) <<http://www.sustainabletable.org/>> , consumers can find the popular Eat Well Guide , a free online directory of meat, poultry, dairy and eggs produced using sustainable agriculture. Simply enter a zip code and the Guide will direct you to farms, stores and restaurants close to home that sell sustainable foods. The up-dated Eat Well Guide features a fresh new look with increased functionality and hundreds of new entries. Look for the Guide's official re-launch in early November.

"Most families think they are locked into buying only the mass-produced foods available at supermarkets," noted Slater. "Sustainable Table shows you how to find farmers markets, food cooperatives, community-supported agriculture programs, and stores that carry sustainable foods made by traditional family farmers in your area."

The website features The Meatrix , the most successful online advocacy film in history. Over 6 million online viewers have watched this critically acclaimed, award-winning flash-animation film that humorously spoofs The Matrix movies while educating viewers about the issues surrounding factory farming. Offline, the movie has been screened at conferences, film festivals and special events around the world including the Woodstock Film Festival, the Telluride Mountainfilm Festival, the 8th Seoul International Labor Film Festival, and the 2004 Farm Aid concert.

Sustainable Kitchen is a section of the website devoted to scrumptious recipes, cookbook reviews, cooking tips, and feature articles on sustainable food and cooking. It was created so consumers can take their new-found knowledge off the internet and onto their dinner plates.

Sustainable Table includes a Teacher Resource section for educators interested in developing curricula around healthy eating and sustainable agriculture. The website takes students to working farms that double as educational centers, shows which schools are serving sustainable foods, and profiles successful school garden projects.

Consumers who want to make a difference in their communities can use "I Care" cards that let their local grocers and restaurant owners know that they care about where their food comes from. These cards can be downloaded from the Sustainable Table website, printed out, and left at any store or restaurant to urge local retailers to supply and serve sustainable food.

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(Global Resource Action Center for the Environment) works with research, policy and grassroots communities to raise public awareness and promote solutions to preserve the planet for future generations.

GRACE partners with of the Center for a Livable Future at Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health. The Henry Spira/GRACE Project on Industrial Animal Production fosters interdisciplinary research on industrial animal production and addresses its impact on diet, the environment, and on human and animal health. For more information on all of GRACE's projects, please visit www.gracelinks.org <<http://www.gracelinks.org/>> .

Find out why over five million people have watched the Meatrix!
www.thematrix.com <<http://www.thematrix.com/>>