

Greetings from Great Oak Farm

“There is a kind of idealism that seems to be native to farming. Farmers begin every year with a vision of perfection, and every year in the course of the seasons and the work, this vision is relentlessly whittled down to a real result by human frailty and fallibility, by the mortality of creatures, by pests and diseases, by the weather. The crop year is a long struggle, ended invariably not by the desired perfection, but by the need to accept something less than perfection as the best that could be done.”

-Wendell Berry, Look and See



This time of year, I am often reminded of these wise words from the author, poet, and farmer Wendell Berry. What was planned, planted, seeded, nurtured, and born in the spring on a clean canvas of white snow or brown earth, on orderly planning spreadsheets or in climate controlled greenhouses, has been set out in the wide world to grow. We farmers do everything we can to stack the deck in favor of the precious plants before they are put out on their own – preparing fine seedbeds free of weeds, making sure fertility and minerals are sufficient for plant health. We keep our tools sharp and our equipment ready, so that we are able to care to them when the need arises. We tend these plantings for as long as we are able, keeping weeds in check with timely cultivation, irrigating as needed, scouting for pests and diseases. But at some point, the corn gets too tall to cultivate, the squash has sprawled out to cover the field, and all we can do is stand by and watch. And hope. Hope that our planning was correct. Hope that what we were able to do was enough. Hope that Mother Nature will not throw us too many curve balls – for the curve balls will inevitably come.

Just last week, a big thunderstorm swept through our area and pounded us with over an inch of rain in under an hour. I was grateful for the rain, and a quick inspection of the crops showed that they were fine and equally as thankful for a drink, albeit a strong and heavy one – most vegetable crops like about an inch of rain each week, just not all at once! As I drove to town the next day, my heart sank as I saw acres and acres of corn and soybeans just down the road that were shredded by hail from that same storm. We had dodged the bullet, but our neighbors had not. Despite many thousands of dollars' worth of machinery and equipment, of sophisticated computers and crop planning technology, at the end of the day Mother Nature still calls the shots.

Here at Great Oak Farm, we have been mostly fortunate with dodging the curve balls, though some crops have fallen victim to the whims of the weather. Early crops got in late due to lingering spring snows, and without much time to get the weeds out of the ground before we planted, the weed pressure in those crops was unfortunately heavy. Heavy rains (one 14” event, and another big event of 4.5” in 1.5 hours) washed some plants out and made it difficult to get into the fields to cultivate the mid- season crops at times.

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The biggest hit was the sugar snap peas – one of my favorite crops to grow (and eat!) They had germinated well and were looking weed free, but after the big 14” rain sat in an inch of water for a week and sadly rotted away. I had planted 50% more than in years past with the hopes of making you all giddy with nearly too many peas, but we’ll have to try for that again next year. Late planted crops like fall beans, beets, and broccoli (we’re getting the last planting of broccoli in the ground this week) have overall been looking good. Winter carrots, another large late-planted crop of ours, took a hit during the 4.5” gully-washer. Those tiny, tiny carrot seeds, planted only about 1/4” down in a fine deep seedbed, are mighty vulnerable to big rain events. Once we could get back in the field, tractor cultivation resumed, and I am happy to report that although we lost some of the crop we’ll still have plenty of crunchy sweet carrots for your boxes this winter. David and I hope to be finished with the meticulous job of hand weeding them this week.



Even though we feel the sting of the whittling knife as our visions of perfect fields are carved down by reality, we farmers continually strive for it. And each year, we find hope and reassurance as some crops (somehow!) manage to approach that desired perfection. Despite less than ideal conditions earlier this season, so far the winter squash here this year is looking incredible. Our boys Caleb (15) and Danny (12) have taken an interest in driving our old cultivating tractors, and the wide rows of now weed-free squash

provided an easy place to practice and hone their skills. Their newfound excitement with being involved in the farm has warmed my heart, and I want to continue to nurture that seed, that interest in farming, for as long as I am able. Just like those seedlings in the field, I will do the best I can to get them off to a good start, to set them up for success. But someday – like the sweet corn that gets too tall to cultivate – they will be on their own in the wide world. I don’t know if they will want to be farmers when they grow up, but the lessons learned from farming – those of hope, of resiliency, of working with our hands, of making the best we can of what comes our way – are powerful ones that can help any of us weather the storms we face during our lives.

Yours in community – Chris Duke and family, Great Oak Farm

RECIPE CHALLENGE

What’s your favorite GREEN BEAN recipe?
Share on the Facebook recipe page!

WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

VEGGIE BOXES

~ Great Oak Farm ~

Broccoli, Green Beans, Cucumbers, Cherry Tomatoes, Slicer Tomatoes

~ River Road Farm ~

Green Onions, Green Peppers

~ Twisting Twig Gardens ~

Parsley

~ Yoman Farm ~

Head lettuce OR Radishes

MINI VEGGIE

~ Great Oak Farm ~

Broccoli, Green Beans, Cucumbers, Tomatoes

~ Twisting Twig Gardens/ Yoman Farm ~

Head Lettuce OR Summer Squash

MEAT BOXES

~ Heritage Acres ~

Chicken

~ Hidden Vue Farm ~

Assorted Beef

~ Bodin's Fishery ~

Whitefish, Lake Trout

MINI MEAT BOXES

~ Hidden Vue Farm ~

Assorted Beef, Beef Steak

~ Maple Hill Farm ~

Assorted Pork

~ Bodin's Fishery ~

Lake Trout

PLUS ITEM

~ Happy Hollow Creamery ~

Cheese

FRUIT BOXES

Sweet Cherries, Blueberries, Raspberries

August 1st + 2nd, 2018

How To Store Your Produce

Cucumber: Put in a sealed plastic bag in crisper drawer of the refrigerator for up to a week.

Green Beans: Store unwashed beans in a perforated plastic bag in the veggie bin of your fridge for up to 1 week. Rejuvenate limp beans by soaking them in ice water for 30 minutes.

Broccoli: Wrap broccoli loosely in a plastic bag and keep it in the vegetable bin of your refrigerator. It keeps for over a week but is firmest and tastiest if used within a few days.

Parsley: Similar to cilantro, stand upright in a container with an inch of water. Then cover the herbs loosely with plastic bag and refrigerate for up to 2 weeks.

Green Onions: Wrap in plastic bag and store in fridge for over a week.

Tomatoes: Do not refrigerate tomatoes; cold temperatures deplete their flavor & texture. Putting dry tomatoes in a brown paper bag may accelerate the ripening process.

Head Lettuce: Place washed lettuce in a plastic bag with a dry paper towel in the bag, and place the package in the vegetable crisper bin.

Zucchini: Store unwashed in a perforated plastic bag in the vegetable bin. In the refrigerator they keep for about a week and a half.

Fruit: Store your fruit in the refrigerator in the packaging it is delivered in. Eat within a week or freeze for longer storage.

Recipe on the next page!

SNEAK PEEK AT NEXT WEEK
August 8th, 2018

VEGGIE BOXES

~ Great Oak Farm ~

Broccoli, Green Beans, Carrots, Cherry Tomatoes, Slicer Tomatoes

~ River Road Farm ~

Garlic, Green Onions, Peppers

~ Yoman Farm ~

Zucchini, Basil

MINI VEGGIE

~ Great Oak Farm ~

Green Beans,

~ River Road Farm ~

Green Onions, Garlic, Peppers

~ Yoman Farm ~

Zucchini

MEAT BOXES

~ Hidden Vue Farm +

Griggs Cattle Co ~

Assorted Beef

~ Maple Hill Farm ~

Assorted Pork

MINI MEAT BOXES

~ Hidden Vue Farm +

Griggs Cattle Co ~

Assorted Beef,

~ Maple Hill Farm ~

Assorted Pork

~ Bodin's Fishery ~

Whitefish

PLUS ITEM

~ Happy Hollow Creamery ~

Cheese

FRUIT BOXES

Blueberries, etc.

Stuffed Zucchini Boats

Ingredients: Zucchini, Onion, Ground Beef, Sweet Peppers, Mushrooms, Cheese, Salt + Pepper

Wondering what to do with your zucchini?! This time of the year zucchini harvest seems endless. If you're running out of fresh ideas for what to do with the bountiful harvest, this is a great recipe that can easily be made vegetarian.

Step 1: Trim the ends off zucchini. Cut zucchini in half lengthwise; scoop out center with a spoon, leaving 1/2-in. shells. Finely chop pulp.

Step 2: In a skillet, cook beef, zucchini pulp, onion, mushrooms and peppers over medium heat until meat is no longer pink; drain. Remove from the heat. Add 1/2 cup cheese, salt and pepper; mix well. Spoon into the zucchini shells. Place in a greased 13x9-in. baking dish. Sprinkle with remaining cheese.

Step 3: Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 25-30 minutes or until zucchini is tender.



Check out what Mary is cookin' up in the **Cookery Maven** blog over at our website!

This time of the year she's working with ingredients from every box type—inspiration for all of our wonderful CSA members!