

# Big Leaf Farm

## Winter Season 2009-10

### Week#1

#### Farm News

Welcome to the first share of the winter season. After a break of only a week we're excited to be sending out shares again. We've got a couple of items we weren't expecting to have this late in the year because the weather has been so mild. This lack of hard frosts is good because we've been behind on a few projects, such as this one illustrated below. Here I'm burying a water line from our well to the barn where I wash and pack vegetables. For the last six months I've simply



used a water line laying on top of the ground, so it's good to know that we now don't have to worry about the water line being frozen on cold mornings. This project also allowed us to strategically place some taps for future projects, such as one for a propagation greenhouse we're hoping to build in the next year. I also recently finished an insulated cold storage room in the barn that we're using through the winter for some of our potatoes (the rest we left in the field, and will harvest directly from the ground when needed). We'll use this space as a walk-in cooler next summer.

For those of you who are new, this newsletter is the place where we list and describe the items you'll be receiving each week, provide some simple recipes and cooking ideas, and keep you up to date with what's going on around the farm. Because we have so many new members I'll try to describe the items in a little more detail than I have been recently, so I hope the seasoned members out there can humor me. Don't be afraid to ask questions if it's not clear what to do with a specific item. Also, if you ever want to share an exciting recipe with us, we're all ears. We like to put member-tested recipes in the newsletter for others to try.

The newsletter is available in printed form each week; to keep costs down I only print in black and white. If you'd like to see the color version (and help us save paper) you can always download a PDF version off the website. Just look under the 'News and recipes' section at [www.bigleafaffarm.com](http://www.bigleafaffarm.com). I'll try to always post the newsletter there before I leave for pick-ups Monday afternoon. Let me know if you're happy with the electronic version and we won't bother to print a paper one for you.

Also for those that are new to the CSA, here are a couple of things you should know about the produce you'll be receiving over the next 7 weeks. Because we don't use any chemicals to prevent pest from eating our crops, occasionally your produce will contain some kind of pest damage (or some kind of pest!). When this occurs I try to point it out in the newsletter and explain why we are experiencing this particular problem. This means our produce might fall short visually of what you might find in the grocery store. Also you might check things over for the presence of pests (especially slugs). They like to lurk at the base of things like cabbage or pac choi. We soak everything before we pack it up in boxes in an attempt to rid things of slugs but occasionally a persistent one goes for a ride to your house.

We only do a soak or light rinse of most of the veggies you'll receive to remove pests and soil. This means you should expect to wash them thoroughly before you cook with them. In short, treat them as if you've just brought them in from your own garden. Also, we don't provide a lot of plastic bags for the produce you'll receive, again to keep costs down. Once you get everything home, most things should be stored in plastic bags to keep them from drying out. Leaving the tops open allows them to breathe a little bit. Exceptions to this include winter squash, onions and garlic (stored on your counter) and potatoes (stored in a dark cool place).

We're looking forward to a great winter season and I'm looking forward to meeting everyone. Please let me know if we can do anything to enhance your CSA experience!

#### Cast of characters

- **Carrots:** This week you're receiving a purple carrot called 'Purple dragon'. They are OK raw – better cooked in my opinion. There are small blemishes in some of the carrots – the damage is from the carrot rust maggot. This pest is hard to control for organic growers, so we're hoping you don't mind cutting out the damaged parts. We've never had problems with this pest in the past, so we're coming up with ways to reduce it in the future. These aren't as sweet as the orange kind – you'll get to taste them in a week or two.
- **Pac choi:** This is a large asian mustard – both its leaves and large succulent stems are eaten. It is great in stir fries. You can find a very simple stir fry recipe featuring this

vegetable in our newsletter from week #20 from the summer season. You can download this as a PDF on the 'News and Recipes' page of our website at [www.bigleaffarm.com](http://www.bigleaffarm.com)

- **Finocchio:** Also known as Florence fennel, this bulb fennel is an unusual vegetable that many of you who are new to the CSA may not have seen before. The bulb is typically chopped and added to dishes that are baked or roasted. I've left the green foliage on each bulb – its flavor is an indication of what to expect from the bulb, and is a great garnish on a salad. Fennel bulb pairs well with potatoes – check out a recipe in the summer session week #5 newsletter. There's also a nice recipe for fennel bulb found in the recipe section below.

- **Broccoli/Cauliflower:** Our broccoli and cauliflower plantings are finishing up for the year – we've only got a little of both so you have your choice of one or the other.

- **Cabbage:** This fall cabbage is very tender and great raw in slaws or cooked. There's a nice fried cabbage recipe below in the recipe section.

- **Onions:** This week we have a mix of red and yellow storage onions for you. We'll alternate these with leeks for most weeks of the winter season.

- **Winter squash:** Everyone gets an acorn squash this week, and those with large shares get a spaghetti squash as well. The acorn squash is great stuffed, or just baked and garnished with a little melted butter. There are some nice spaghetti squash recipes in newsletters from week 17 and 24 of our summer season.

- **Garlic:**

## Recipes

*Here's a very simple recipe given to us last spring by one of our members. We haven't had a chance to use it until now. Thanks Courtney!*

### Fennel with carrots and onion.

1 bulb fennel, chopped  
4-5 carrots, chopped  
4 Tbs minced red onion  
¼ cup shredded parmesan cheese  
salt, pepper, thyme, to taste.

Toss the chopped fennel, carrots, and onion in an oil-wiped glass or ceramic cooking dish, topped with salt, pepper and thyme, then topped with a quarter cup of shredded Parmesan. Bake at 375 for an hour and 10 minutes, adding a quarter cup of water about half way in if it's too dried out. Sprinkle with fennel fronds for garnish when it's done cooking.

## Red split lentils with cabbage

*This is a wonderful cabbage dish for winter. It is great served over rice- for something a little more unusual, try it over cooked millet.*

1 ¼ cup red split lentils, picked over  
5 cups water  
½ t turmeric  
5 T vegetable oil  
1 t whole cumin seed  
2-4 cloves garlic, whole  
1 medium onion, peeled and cut into slices.  
½ lb cored and finely shredded cabbage  
1-2 fresh green chiles, finely sliced (substitute with 1 t red pepper flakes)  
1 medium tomato, peeled and sliced. It might be easier to use 1-2 whole canned tomatoes.  
½ t peeled and finely chopped ginger root.

Boil the lentils in the water, removing any foam that develops on the top. Add the turmeric, turn the heat to low, and simmer gently for 1 hour and 15 minutes, leaving the top ajar. The lentils will fall apart, forming a thick broth. Meanwhile heat the oil in a skillet and fry the cumin seeds for 3-4 seconds, then add the garlic. Once the garlic starts to brown add the onion, cabbage, and green chiles. Fry for about 10 minutes until the cabbage begins to brown and then add ¼ t salt and stir it in. Turn off the heat.

Once the lentils have cooked, add 1 ¼ t salt, the tomato and the ginger and cook for another 10 minutes. Then add the cabbage mixture, simmer for 2-3 minutes, and enjoy. Serve over rice.

Don't be afraid to add some carrots to this dish.  
*From "Madhur Jaffrey's Indian Cooking"*

### Roasted acorn squash

1 Acorn squash  
½ cup cooked white, brown, or wild rice  
1/3 cup orange juice  
½ t orange zest  
2 T dried cranberries  
2 T chopped nuts (pecans are preferred)

Halve the squash and scrape out the seeds. Rub the flesh with some olive oil, and then place it cut side down and roast at 375° for 25 minutes. While this is cooking mix the remaining ingredients together except the nuts and add to the squash. Then cook, filled side up for another 20 minutes or so, or until the flesh is tender. Sprinkle with the pecans and serve.