

Big Leaf Farm

Winter Season 2009-10

Week#3

Farm News

As you know the weather has been very cold since last week's pickup. We experienced four especially cold nights last week on the farm – the low temperatures hovered between 8 and 10 degrees on Tues-Friday nights.

Due to the cold weather, the ground froze solid for several inches down, making it impossible to harvest any of our root crops. This morning when I went out to harvest the top inch or so of soil had melted from the rain we had on Saturday and Sunday but was still frozen below so I was unable to harvest as much as I planned to. With the exception of the kale which is still recovering from the cold, today's entire share came from our storage rooms. As a result our offering this week is less than we'd like.

The weather continues to be a source of frustration for me – as a farmer we can control many things, the seeds we choose, the way we plant and cultivate crops, the way we protect them from severe weather events. But in the end farming is determined in no small part by something we have completely no control over – the whims of Mother Nature. In my first year of farming, I'm still coming to terms with this, the most elemental of forces.

It's unclear what this weather means for all of you, our shareholders. Obviously, some things we planned to give out are dead or damaged beyond any recovery, but it is still too early to tell how most crops will respond. We'll definitely keep everyone posted in the weeks to come.

Finally, please remember that we are on winter break for the next two weeks. We'll return with our subsequent pickup on January 7th. ***So please don't come to the pickup next week! Have a great holiday season – see you on January 7th!***

Cast of characters

- **Carrots:** Fortunately we harvested some extra carrots before the cold weather and held them in our cold storage room.
- **Kale:** The kale in this weeks share is still recovering from the cold weather. On Saturday as the cold was easing we walked the fields and found the kale plants completely wilted, with their leaves touching the ground. They were able to remove almost all the water from their cells to prevent from freezing. Since then they've recovered a lot, but not completely. After tasting them I decided to go ahead and pick bunches

for the CSA, but not without some hesitation. I'm curious to see what folks think.

- **Winter squash:** This week's squash include Delicata and a buttercup type squash, called 'Gold Nugget' (large share only). Both of these squash are great just cut in half, seeded, and cooked cut side down on a lightly oiled pan. Don't forget, you can eat the skin of the delicata squash, its highly edible.

- **Red Onions:** These red onions are great raw but they also substitute well for yellow onions in cooked dishes.

- **Potatoes:** This week's potatoes are of the fingerling type, these are called 'Russian Banana'. Fingerlings are a different class of potato from what most folks are used to. We like to grow them because they are heavier yielding and take fewer pounds of 'seed potatoes' to plant a row. They are very popular in fancy restaurants these days – many chefs like them because they can be more flavorful than standard types. These Russian Bananas hold their shape in cooking, so are great in stews and wonderful roasted. We recommend washing them well, cutting them into large chunks, and adding them to a soup or stew. Some of the potatoes have some black specks on them – this is called 'black scurf' and it is a fungal growth on the skin. It's completely harmless, but if it bothers you it will remove with some hard scrubbing, or simply cut away that portion of the skin.

Recipes

Pasta with winter squash and potatoes

We haven't tried this recipe, although it looks like a good one. This is probably best made with the delicata squash – the Gold nugget has a very hard skin and might be difficult to peel.

Ingredients

5-6 quarts water

1 small winter squash, peeled and cut into chunks

1 lb Yellow-fleshed potato cut into chunks

2 t salt

14 oz Spaghetti

1 Garlic clove

1 hot red pepper or chile

2 t fresh chopped parsley (substitute dried)

2 T olive oil

1/2 c grated parmesan cheese

Bring the water to a boil and add the squash, potato and the salt and cook for 2 minutes, then add the pasta and cook until the pasta is about ¾ of the way done.

While this is cooking, heat the garlic, hot pepper and parsley in the oil in a heavy skillet until the garlic sizzles. Then drain the pasta/potato/squash, reserving some of the cooking water. Add the drained pasta and vegetables to the skillet with 1 cup of the pasta water and cook on high heat until the pasta is cooked. The squash may break down a make a creamy gravy. You can add more water if the sauce dries out. Serve the pasta in bowls, topped with the shredded cheese.

From www.bigoven.com