

Big Leaf Farm

Winter Season 2009-10

Week 3-4 Jan. 3 – 16, 2010

Farm News

As you all know by now we are recoiling from the damage done to our crops by the cold snap we received in early December. Despite the fact that it has been almost a month, we're still experiencing new losses. For example we've just discovered that our celeriac crop is a total loss. We covered our celeriac in advance of the cold front, and immediately afterwards it looked as if it had come through the cold weather very well. However, when we came back from our Christmas vacation we discovered that all the roots were rotting from the bottom up. The same thing has happened to some degree with our beets, cabbage, and some of our kale plants. Initially they looked like they were going survive, but warmer temperatures have made the damage apparent. This cold snap was some of the coldest weather we've ever experienced in Western Oregon, and we will take away some powerful lessons from it.

Events like this cause us to contemplate the luck that is involved in farming and to reflect on the nature of community supported agriculture, especially what happens when members are called on to share the risks and losses suffered by the farmer. This is the first time we've had to deal with a loss of this degree, and we're doing everything we can keep the losses incurred by all of you to a minimum. We realize that different CSAs have different policies on risk-sharing – we look forward to hearing any feedback from you on how we're managing this situation.

This week we're giving out some of every crop we have that is still available, and we'll do the same at the next and final pick-up in two weeks on Jan. 18th, with the addition of kale or other greens if they continue to recover.

As I noted in an email over the weekend, we've changed our distribution plan somewhat. Instead of having one pickup each week in January, we're switching to only two pickups two weeks apart. We've decided to do this in part to ensure that boxes are of reasonable size and diversity, but also because most of the crops we have left should store well at your house. This change should also reduce some driving on your part. Due to this change, I've given some storage tips for each item in the list below. So there will be no pick-up next week, and the next delivery will be Jan. 18th (I'll send out reminder emails like before). We thank you all for your understanding and flexibility.

Cast of characters

- **Carrots:** Unfortunately, all of our carrots still in the ground froze solid during the great freeze. We're glad we dug enough ahead of time to be able to give some out through Jan. for our members. These should store fine in a plastic bag in your refrigerator crisper. You'll probably want to peel these.
- **Winter squash:** This week's squash is butternut. It's one of our favorites – great for roasting or pureeing into soup. These should last for at least two weeks on your counter.
- **Onions:** Onions store fine on your counter, although they'll last longer (sprout slower) somewhere cooler.
- **Potatoes:** These potatoes are Burbank Russets – great for mashing, roasting or baking. These will store for weeks if placed in a *cool, dark* place. If exposed to light, they will begin to turn green and should not be eaten. Unlike most grocery store potatoes, these are not treated with chemicals to improve storage and prevent sprouting, so they require a little more TLC. Wash them right before you use them and they will store longer.
- **Parsnips:** A relative of the carrot, parsnips are the quintessential winter vegetable – they only really come into their own after seriously frosty weather when some of their starches are converted to sugars. They are great steamed or roasted – see the recipe section for some ideas for cooking this tasty vegetable. Did you know that during Roman times, the parsnip was considered an aphrodisiac? Parsnips will keep for several weeks in your crisper drawer in a plastic bag.
- **Beets:** These are the last of our beets – we sorted through everything that wasn't damaged by the cold. They are great roasted or boiled, but don't forget they can be eaten raw. Try grating them over a salad, and you might be surprised. Larger beets are best roasted, peeled and chopped. These beets are best used sooner rather than later. Store them dry, in a plastic bag or out, in your crisper drawer. Check out a new use for beets in one of the recipes below.
- **Leeks:** Even leeks, the hardiest of winter vegetables were damaged somewhat in the cold. However, there are still plenty left unharmed. They don't store as well as onions, though – if storing them for more than a few days you might remove the top part of the stem along with the leaves that were damaged by the cold.

Recipes

Roasted Vegetables

Roasted vegetables are the quintessential winter meal – everything you bring home this week can be chopped, coated in oil, and roasted in the oven. Some folks like to roast the beets in a separate pan so they don't turn everything red.

Winter vegetables (squash, onions, leeks, and any root vegetable)

Olive oil

Dried spices, (rosemary, basil, thyme, oregano, parsley, etc.)

Salt and pepper

Balsamic vinegar or other flavored vinegar (optional)

Preheat the oven to 375° to 425°. At higher temperatures the vegetables need to be turned more often, but their level of browning and caramelization is greater. Chop vegetables into similar size pieces – denser vegetables like squash and beets should be cut into slightly smaller pieces. Small to medium sizes work best (1/4 - 3/4

inch pieces). You'll want to peel butternut squash, parsnips, and beets. Peeling is optional for carrots and potatoes.

Toss the chopped vegetables with olive oil in a large bowl. Sprinkle with spices of your choice and place in a single layer on cookie sheets in the oven. They'll brown better if there is plenty of room on the sheet. Turn them every 15 minutes or so, until they are tender and brown on the edges. We recently discovered that roasted vegetables are really tasty on a gas grill. Find a sheet that will fit on the grill and cook them with the cover on, turning as above, until they are done.

Some parsnip recipes

Parsnips are often relegated to the 'obscure vegetable bin,' but there's no reason why this should be the case. Here are two recipes that highlight this tasty root vegetable. The second one is a favorite of ours at the farm when parsnips are in season. These are both adapted from 'The New Laurel's Kitchen' by Robertson, Flinders and Ruppenthal.

In pre-Columbian times, potatoes were unknown in Europe and were first brought to Europe from South America in the 1500s. Before that, parsnips were the staple food in much of Europe. Wine was even made out of sweeter varieties! Parsnips are richer in vitamins and minerals than their cousin, the carrot.

Sesame Glazed Parsnips

1 – 1 ½ cup peeled and chopped parsnips
1 – 1 ½ cup carrots, peeled and chopped
1 T sesame seeds
2 t butter or oil
2 T maple syrup
½ t salt
Juice of 1 orange

Steam the parsnips and carrots until cooked, but still firm. Toast the sesame seeds in a dry skillet until they begin to brown, then add the oil/butter, maple syrup, salt, and orange juice, and stir in the carrots and parsnips. Cook at a medium heat until the liquid is reduced to a glaze and the carrots and parsnips are brown and smell nice.

Parsnip patties

4 cups raw parsnips, peeled and chopped
1 onion, finely chopped
1 T oil
1 t dried tarragon
2 eggs, beaten briefly
1 t salt
½ cup finely chopped walnuts
about 1 cup bread crumbs

Preheat the oven to 350°. Steam the parsnips until tender, for 10-15 minutes. Meanwhile, sauté the onion in oil, adding the tarragon. When the parsnips are done, mash them. It's OK if you leave some lumps. Stir the onion into the mashed parsnips, and stir in the eggs, salt, and walnuts. Then form the mixture into small patties and dredge each one in bread

crumbs. Bake on cookie sheets for 20 minutes, then optionally toss with a little vinegar in a bowl before serving.

Beet chocolate cake

This recipe puts a new twist on chocolate cake for those of you who are chocolate lovers. Get your daily allowance of chocolate and beets in one fell swoop! This one is from the book "From Asparagus to Zucchini" by the Madison Area CSA Coalition.

2 cups sugar
2 cups flour
½ t salt
2 t baking powder
1 t baking soda
3-4 ounces unsweetened baking chocolate
4 eggs
¼ cup oil
3 cups shredded beets

Preheat the oven to 325°. Grease two 9-inch round cake pans, then whisk together the dry ingredients. Melt the chocolate, then cool it slightly and blend with the eggs and oil. Combine the flour mixture with the liquid, then slowly add the beets and mix. Pour the mixture into pans, and cook until a toothpick inserted into the middle comes out clean, about 40-50 minutes. You can ice this to make a double-layer cake. Enjoy!

Leek Tart

Leeks make a great winter and spring substitute for onion. When used this way, leeks often dissolve into the background where their flavor and texture support more prominent aspects of a dish. However, here's a dish that places the leek front and center, from Deborah Madison's "Local Flavors" book.

To make the shell, combine 1 cup plus 2 T of white flour with one stick of butter with your fingers or a pastry cutter until it's the consistency of cornmeal. Then drizzle it with the water while mixing it until you can form it into a ball. Chill it for a bit in the fridge, then roll it out onto a 10 inch tart pan, ideally with a removable rim. Then freeze the shell. This can be done several hours or days before you make the tart.

To make the tart, heat the oven to 450°, then bake the crust until lightly browned for 15-25 minutes. You can use some parchment and dried beans to weigh down the crust so that it holds its shape.

For the filling:

3-6 leeks
1 T butter
6 oz goat cheese
1 egg
1/2 cup creme fraiche
1/2 cup milk
2 teaspoons thyme leaves chopped

Preheat oven to 400, then slice the leeks and rinse in water. Drain and pat dry as best you can, then fry them in the butter until translucent. Then mix in the cheese, egg, sour cream, and milk, and mix until smooth. Pour the filling into the cooked shell and bake until set, about 30 minutes. The filling recipe is adaptable – you can add other vegetables as you wish.