



News From Provident Organic Farm

www.providentfarm.org



Season 3, 2004 "dedicated to a safe, just, and sustainable food system"

Sept. 12th - 18th

Notes From the Field v. 3, #23...

Fall is in the air. Daytime temperatures are more hospitable and the nights are fit for sleeping again. Except for the oppressive humidity last week, working conditions are more favorable. Stress levels on both crops and workers are lower.

The summer crops will give out sooner than I had hoped, mostly due to the same rains that benefited the fall crops as they were sown and transplanted. There is a balance in that which demonstrates the wisdom of growing a diversity of crops. I recall a story about a farmer in Somerset County who grew 60 acres of tomatoes under contract with a large packing company. He told me he was within days of picking them when a hale storm hit and wiped out the crop. In ten minutes he lost \$50,000. In that farming scenario, the only option left to the farmer is to clear the fields of the destroyed crop and plant another crop that he will, hopefully, harvest and sell. Depending on the time of year, that may or may not be possible. In Mike's case, there was not enough time left in the growing season to replant a crop valuable enough to recover. He survived that year by taking a job, which he still has 15 years later.

As a farmer growing for a CSA, decisions are made using a completely different set of criteria. This year, I knew some of the crops would not yield as well as they should. But, I also knew I could harvest what was there and, at least, give you something. Some of the crops we have alternated weekly so that you all got a reasonable amount every other week. There is a **huge** difference between growing food for a group of people who are supportive and understanding of your efforts, as in the CSA model, and growing food for a faceless market many miles away. There is a completely different level of caring that goes into the effort.



There is also the freedom to grow crops that I know you will never see in the supermarket and hope you will enjoy. There is a lot of interesting and exciting food out there that will never see the shelves in a grocery store. As I make plans for next years crop selection, your feedback is important.

Onward,
Jay



Notes from Amy...

Thanks to everyone who participated in the Steering Wheels meeting last month. We had a great turnout and a productive discussion about the future of our CSA.

I'll share the fun news first. We are planning a Harvest Festival on Saturday, November 20. This will be everyone's last pick-up day. Susie Wood and Charlotte English are organizing the event, which will include a wonderful potluck dinner. Stay tuned...You will hear from them soon. We are also looking to do something for the kids around Halloween...We'll let you know soon.

The major issue we discussed is how to sustain the CSA and sustain Jay. Simply put, amazing Jay cannot physically continue to do what he does. Farming, as all of you who have toiled in the dirt know, is hard work! The best solution to our situation is to hire an assistant farm manager so that Jay may oversee many of the efforts, but not do them all himself. And he needs someone experienced in farming. The good news is we have a great person who approached Jay for exactly this position. But to hire someone, the farm must serve more members and diversify its membership (e.g. produce food for restaurants, cafeterias etc.) in order to generate more income. Do the math folks--\$500 x 100 members = \$50,000. Then subtract labor, seeds, transplants, fuel, equipment etc. Bottom line...we're not paying our farmer much. So to add an assistant farm manager with experience, we have to make more money. Over the next few weeks we plan to share the budgets with you so that you can better understand our situation.



Notes from Amy...(cont.)

For the CSA to exist next year, we are looking at a minimum of 140 members. Additionally, Jay is exploring other options. We plan to keep the price and length of season the same. But I do need to know if you plan to join next year. We will include enrollment forms with your shares in the weeks to come. In addition to our current members, we also must expand our base...To accomplish this we are looking for a few volunteers to do the following tasks:

- 1) Marketing the Medora Harvest Fund. Thanks to the generosity of members and non-members we have been able to purchase shares for about five families this season. We feel with the right marketing approach to encourage the participation of local businesses, we could increase the Medora Harvest Fund members to about 20. This will take a concerted effort and it needs a special person to take on the task.
- 2) Raising funds for advertising/marketing. We were very successful in reaching Easton last year due to a generous donation that allowed us to advertise on public radio. We need more donations so that we may do this.
- 3) Grant Writing. We have written a few grants and have had some success, but welcome more folks helping out with this.



Please contact me at 410.860.9850 or aliebman@comcast.net if you have any additional ideas or would like to take on any of these tasks.

Upward,
Amy



Marie's Fried Green Tomatoes (courtesy of Ray, her son)

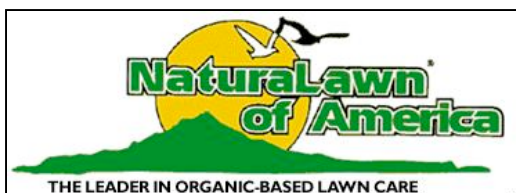
As with all treasured family recipes, this has been passed down verbally, so the directions are both 'too taste' and 'as needed'...

Extrafine white cornmeal (Goya makes this so it's easily found, but regular cornmeal will do in a pinch) mixed with some salt and pepper to taste.

Green tomatoes, sliced approximately 1/2" thick, but if they're really really green slice them just a hair thinner.

Coat both sides of the tomato slices in the cornmeal and salt/pepper mixture. Warm up a skillet on medium heat on the stove and using either a little butter, your favorite oil, or a mixture of both fry the coated tomato slices for two to three minutes per side. Serve immediately.

As it is truly starting to be fall, that means that the winter squash crop is now beginning to be harvested. For some, that means the joyous return of one of our favorite vegetables...and for others it means staring in wonder and befuddlement at these odd shaped, seemingly impenetrable...THINGS. Fear not, oh potential lover of winter squash, the moment of truth (and reckoning) is at hand. Cooking a winter squash used to involve both toil and trouble - toil in terms of heating up the oven for at least an hour to turn that hard mass of squash into a tender mouthful, and trouble in that you had to risk life and limb to hack your way through the tough skin in the first place. Here is some help with both. **Cutting that darned thing open:** Microwaving the whole, uncut squash in 5-minute bursts does amazing things in that it tenderizes the tough outer skin of the squash enough that you can easily cut it in half without losing a finger. **Cooking the squash without heating up the entire house to 85 degrees:** Courtesy of Cook's Illustrated Magazine: Take your halved winter squash, and scoop out the seeds. Sprinkle the cut sides and cavity lightly with salt,



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then place - cut side down, in a microwaveable bowl. Cover the bowl tightly with plastic wrap, multiple layers if necessary. Poke four steam vents in the wrap with a knife, then microwave on high for 15-25 minutes, depending on the strength of your microwave - you essentially want a knife to pass with ease through the squash. Remove carefully. A favorite topping is to mix melted butter and brown sugar in a bowl, and then spoon this fragrant syrup over the cut sides of the cooked squash, then pass briefly under the broiler until the top edges are just caramelized before serving...



COMMENTS & CONTRIBUTIONS

We welcome your comments and contributions, including recipes! Please send to ubuubok@dmv.com or Provident Organic Farm CSA, PO Box 62, Bivalve, MD 21814.

