

# Schreiber & Sons CSA

*It's a Culinary Adventure*

[Schreiberandsons.com](http://Schreiberandsons.com)

August 11, 2009

Week XV

In this week's box, from your farmer you can expect:

- Radishes
- Cucumbers
- Squash medley
- Tomatoes
- Eggplant
- Cilantro
- Basil
- Bell pepper
- Hot pepper (jalapeno)
- Melon
- Melon
- Onion (Walla Walla Sweets)
- Beans
- Dill

**Tomatoes.** We received our first feed back that someone's tomatoes were squished in their box. Over the years, this is probably the most common quality issue we get-their tomatoes fell out of the box, were squished, smashed, cracked or work their way to the bottom of the box and were flatted by a melon or some other felonious fruit. This is an occupational hazard of being a tomato in a CSA. We like to pick our tomatoes ripe so you do not have to wait on them to ripen. Also, many of our varieties are heirlooms which are notorious for not holding together well and being somewhat fragile. In response to this we put them in last so they would be on the top of the other produce, then we put them in bags and finally-starting this week, we are going to put them in a separate container. So for now, when you pick up your box, pick up a bag of tomatoes

from the appropriated labeled lug (if you are a small share member, pick them up from the lug labeled "SMALL" and so on for the medium and large share members.

Get used to this routine as we hope to provide you with some tomatoes almost every week for the next two to three months. We will either vary the variety or provide you with a mix so you do not get the same kind week after week.

**A Tale of a Melon.** In 2007 after a complex set of interactions, I agreed to grow a large amount of melons (24 acres) of an unusual style of melon. The variety was a cross between an American muskmelon, what we commonly call a cantaloupe in this country and a French charantais melon. The variety was a hybrid which means that seeds from the melon itself would not be true to type and to get the true seeds you had to buy them from the seed company and only one melon company could buy the seed from the seed company. That way the distribution of this highly prized melon was strictly controlled. The company I was growing this for had purchased the rights to this variety and had exclusive rights to it for the Western Hemisphere. The melon has a firmer flesh, it is smaller than a cantaloupe-at least half the size, a closed seed cavity and an unusually red (actually reddish yellow) flesh-hence its name.....the Red Moon Melon. The company trade marked the name "The Perfect Melon." We have some left over boxes from this venture and some of you will notice that we are starting to use these boxes in lieu of the eggplant boxes for the small shares. What really got our attention was the taste of these melons. This has to be the most incredible flavor for a melon that I have ever tasted-it is just wonderful. The biggest down side to the melon is that my boys no longer want to eat "regular old cantaloupe" as they now hold out for THE RED MOON MELON.

The company that owned the rights to the melon had grown the variety in several locations around the Western Hemisphere. Out of those locations, the melon had the best flavor when grown here in the Columbia Basin. The combination of our long days and hot day and cool nights made for high sugars and an intense flavor. Interestingly, our yields were 50% higher than any other place they had grown the melons. At this time two years ago, I had visions of becoming a melon magnate and of growing acres and acres and acres of the best tasting melon in the world.... I could have been a contender! Alas, we were inexperienced at growing melons on that scale, did not have the infrastructure to handle the volume which resulted in higher costs, the Pacific Northwest is distant from most of the U.S. population which means high trucking costs ,and most interestingly, the company felt that due to our northerly location that the length of our season was not long enough to give them window they liked. The reasons collectively spelled the end of the Red Moon project. Besides the left over thousands of boxes, there was one other legacy coming from the ill fated project.....2,000 seeds.

I grew a few Red Moon last year, and I grew a few this year. Melon seed only lasts for a few years and I have been trying to find some other melon as good as this one-but so far

it has not happened. In this week's box you are receiving a Red Moon Melon. Eat it quickly as it has a short shelf life-its legacy from its mother melon, the charantais, which has a shelf life of a week or so. Enjoy it and if we have additional melons later in the season you may get one more-maybe. Also, we have enough seed for next year's CSA member but after that we will have to find another variety.

**What's going on at the farm.** The @#\$%&#! weeds are taking over the farm. Most of us spent most of yesterday weeding-mowing, disking, spraying Roundup and hand weeding. Irrigation. Picking. Cleaning up. It never ends. Sometimes I wished for an early frost. A semi truck pulled up this morning with 1200 bins for our cantaloupe harvest. We have a crew out picking eggplant-we estimate that there is 15 pallets of eggplant ready to harvest. We have lots of research projects going on. We notice that it is not getting light out as early as it used to, signaling that fall is approaching. We are planting our fall crops and thinking about making sure that everything is seeded that we want to plant. Soon we will plant our overwintering crops such as onions, leeks, garlic, lettuce, etc. We have stopped fertilizing most of our crops (melons and eggplants excepted). For some crops, such as asparagus and blueberries, fertilizing in August can significantly damage a crop. As usual there is lots and lots going on. Our 13 year son has been working at the farm 3 days a week and at the Farmer's Market on Saturday. I love having him working at the farm, even if he does not. I looked at the calendar and noticed that he will be out here only 9 more days before school starts and felt a little lump in my throat. He, of course, is looking at it in a different way.

Your Farmer

Alan Schreiber