

Schreiber & Sons CSA

It's a Culinary Adventure

Schreiberandsons.com

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Week IX

In this week's box,

- Carrots
- Salad- green lettuce, red lettuce, endive, radicchio, & Mizuna mix
- Beets
- Dill
- Cucumbers
- Cherries
- Garlic
- Broccoli or Cabbage
- Herb- oregano or chives
- Head lettuce
- Chinese Cabbage

Cherries are here. As you will see, cherries are available in ample supply. We will see how they fruit holds up in storage, but I hope that you will get at least two more weeks of cherries. (If you want extra cherries we have them for sell for \$2 per pound.)

The list of produce we provide on Monday should be considered a guide and not a guarantee of what will be in your box. Tracy and I walk the fields each Monday morning as early as possible to decide what will go in this week's box. As we pick the crop we sometimes find out that we are short a crop or when we harvest the produce that there may be a quality issue or a pest problem we did not notice. Sometimes we have to make changes during the week. We expect that the sheet of information in your box will contain a list of is actually in your box.

The Washington State Diet. I think we may have our 11th and 12th members of the Washington State Diet. We are getting ready to launch our electronic bulletin board and are about to set a date for our next meeting. In a recent email I told you we could not find local cooking oils and one of you came up with a source of grape seed oil and camelina oil. *Now if someone could just find a source of salt produced in Washington, it would be great.*

What's coming. We are in the midst of Bing cherry harvest and will probably start picking Rainier cherries later this week. We will pick our first eggplants later this week. I am not sure how many we will have, perhaps enough to put some in the Thursday boxes-but it will be very limited. Never fear, the eggplant torrent is about ready to be unleashed. Get your eggplant recipes out. For those who do not really appreciate eggplant (myself included) inoculate yourself. This first variety will be the Japanese style eggplant, long, parallel sided and deep purple. Cabbage is in your future-green this week, then savoy, and then red red. Chinese cabbage and iceberg head lettuce is coming.

Your Farmer

BEETS

The status of beets has been elevated over time. Formerly considered lowly peasant food, a useful winter vegetable, the root now graces the most elegant tables. Famously, the main ingredient in the traditional eastern European soup, borscht, beets are delicious eaten raw, but are more typically cooked or pickled. With its rise in status, new uses, cooking techniques and cultivars have emerged. Although typically a reddish-purple hue, beets also come in varieties that are white, golden-yellow rainbow colored, or the Chioggia (candy-striped) that you will receive today.

The [Chioggia beet](#) comes from the Italian region of that name. It has dramatically two-toned, concentric circles of ruby and white when raw. When cooked, these rings turn to orange and rose, or to uniform warm rose (there is no predicting which). Like [golden beets](#), they do not bleed and are therefore useful in dishes where contained color is desirable.

Both beets and chard are different varieties within the same plant family—*beta vulgaris*—and their edible leaves share a resemblance in both taste and texture. [Beet greens](#) are part of all good beets, but they behave like another vegetable entirely. Earliest of cooking leaves, beet greens have an intense, mineral flavor that compliments the sweetness of the root and are thus taste delicious when the two are cooked together.

Attached to the beet's green leaves is a round or oblong root, the part conjured up in most people's minds by the word "beet." The sweet taste of beets reflects their high sugar content making them an important raw material for the production of refined sugar; they have the highest sugar content of all vegetables, yet are very low in calories. It is difficult to believe how the hardy, crunchy often rough looking exterior of raw beets can be transformed into something wonderfully soft and buttery once they are cooked.

History

The wild beet, ancestor of the beet with which we are familiar today, is thought to have originated in prehistoric times in North Africa and grew wild along Asian and European seashores. In these earlier times, people ate the beet greens and not the roots. The ancient Romans were one of the first civilizations to cultivate beets to use their roots as food. The tribes that invaded Rome were responsible for spreading beets throughout northern Europe where they were first used for animal fodder and later for human consumption becoming more popular in the 16th century.

Beets' value grew in the 19th century when it was discovered that they were a concentrated source of sugar, and the first sugar factory was built in Poland. When access to sugar cane was restricted by the British, Napoleon decreed that the beet be used as the primary source of sugar, catalyzing its popularity. Around this time, beets were also first brought to the United States, where they now flourish. Today the leading commercial producers of beets include the United States, the Russian Federation, France, Poland, France and Germany.

How to Store

If possible (or desirable) use the beet greens as soon as you can. We sautéed some the other night and were surprised how mild their flavor can be. If you haven't tried beet greens yet—don't just discard them without giving them a chance.

Store beets unwashed in the refrigerator crisper where they will keep for two to four weeks. Cut the majority of the greens and their stems from the roots, so they do not pull away moisture away from the root. Leave about two inches of the stem attached to prevent the roots from "bleeding." Store the unwashed greens in a separate plastic bag where they will keep fresh for about four days. Raw beets do not freeze well since they tend to become soft upon thawing. Freezing cooked beets is fine; they'll retain their flavor and texture.

Tips for Preparing Beets

Despite their appearance, beetroots aren't as hardy as they look; the smallest bruise or puncture will cause their red-purple pigments, which contain beneficial flavonoids called anthocyanins, to bleed, especially during cooking. Cook beets lightly. Studies show beets' anti-cancer activity is diminished by heat. Don't peel beets until after cooking. When bruised or pierced, beets bleed, losing some of their vibrant color and turning a duller brownish red. To minimize bleeding, wash beets gently under cool running water, taking care not to tear the skin--this tough outer layer helps keep most of beets' pigments inside the vegetable. To prevent bleeding when boiling beets, leave them whole with their root ends and one inch of stem attached.

Beets' color can be modified during cooking. Adding an acidic ingredient such as lemon juice or vinegar will brighten the color while an alkaline substance such as baking soda will often cause them to turn a deeper purple. Salt will blunt beets' color, so add only at the end of cooking if needed.

Since beet juice can stain your skin, wearing kitchen gloves is a good idea when handling beets. If your hands become stained during the cleaning and cooking process, simply rubbing some lemon juice on them will remove the stain.

A Few Quick Serving Ideas

- Grate peeled, raw beets for a delicious and colorful addition to salads, salsa or decorative garnish for soups.
- For composed salads, cook beets only until they lose their rawness (not their crunch). Chill in cold water, peel, then cube before combining with smoked meat or fish, grains, fruit or nuts.
 - Bake beets for maximum flavor, sweetness and ease of peeling.
 - Add chunks of beet when roasting vegetables in the oven.

Nutritional Information

This food is very low in Saturated Fat and Cholesterol. It is also a good source of Vitamin C, Iron and Magnesium, and a very good source of Dietary Fiber, Folate, Potassium and Manganese.

[Hot Spice Beets Recipe](#)

[Vegetarian Borscht Recipe](#)

