

Schreiber & Sons Winter CSA

We need to talk about the Winter CSA. Last year we took our first crack at a Winter CSA with mixed results. The good news is that we delivered a lot of produce to 75 members. We learned to store produce, grow in the greenhouse and grow crops in cold weather. What we are going to call "*learning opportunities*" were 1) we need to learn how to store certain items of produce better, 2) make sure the greenhouse heating system functions at very low temperatures, 3) put a little more heat into the greenhouse and start planting in the greenhouse earlier. Because of the latter four items we had some challenges last year. However, we gained from our *learning opportunities* and are well on our way to launching our second Winter CSA-which will hopefully be better than last year.

The Basics. The Winter CSA will start on November 23 and go until April 26th-12 deliveries-every two weeks, with an extra delivery in April. Our goal is to provide twice the value per delivery as we did in the Summer CSA-not twice the produce, but twice the value of the produce. This is based on a medium sized share. If we deliver twice the value per delivery, but deliver half as often, then the cost should be about the same per unit of time. The cost of the CSA is \$540 (which by the way is less than last year.) The reason that I am drawing the distinction between the volume of produce and the value of produce is that produce generated in the winter is greater than the value of produce grown in the summer. For example, an 8 ounce serving of mixed greens provided in January has a higher value than the same item produced in June.

To join the Winter CSA you have two options. Option 1) pay half (\$260 prior to the first pick up on November 23) and then pay the second half by February 1 (\$260). Option 2) pay all prior to November 23.

Delivery Sites. We have not established the delivery sites. You can always pick up at the farm and we know there will be a pick site in Richland. The remaining site(s) will depend on the location of the folks signing up. For example, if we have a lot of west Kennewick sign ups, then we will put a pick up location there.

Challenges Of Last Year. We laid up hundreds of bunches of herbs and chillies in our refrigerator trailer. It is dry, dark and protected. It seemed like a perfect place to store dried goods. Who knew that mice would crawl up a semi tire, crawl along the frame and find a tiny tube in the floor that is used to drain water. Never bet against mice. They came in droves and in the middle of winter they had destroyed over half of our herbs and chillies. Who knew that rutabagas can with stand freezing temperatures when in the grown, but once you pick them you have to store them in temperatures just above freezing. Before last year the heater in the greenhouse had always been used to raise transplants in the spring-

never to keep things above freezing when it was 20 degrees outside; new wiring was needed. We learned that if the plants in the cold greenhouse are frozen-do not pick them, wait until it warms up-then you can pick them. These were among the biggest lessons. So we have already started planting for the winter CSA, the greenhouse is ready, better mouse protection and controls, a little more heat in the greenhouse.

What Will You Get In Your Box? After last year, I realized that this is a very tough question to answer. Sitting here at the end of August in front of my spreadsheet, it is easy to make all sorts of plans, projections and timings. I have a very elaborate scheme outlining a nice set of items delivery by delivery. I learn in the most brutal fashion last year that things do not work out like you plan. I have a list of 66 items that are PROJECTED to go into your boxes. Some of these items you will not see singularly, but will be part of mixed greens, salad mixes or braising greens. You will not see things such as claytonia, cress, misome or tatsoi in your box except as part of a mix. However, if things go as plan the number of items in your box should approach sixty.

To start with you will get a lot of fall grown items such as winter squash, turnips, spinach, arugula and carrots. The first delivery will probably have some late season items that we have tried to save such as tomatoes and peppers. In the after the first few of deliveries it will be a combination greenhouse grown items, purchased items and dried items. For the last deliveries it will be a combination of greenhouse grown items and spring items such as asparagus, radish and cool season leafy greens.

Following is a list of what we are planning to arrange to be in the Winter CSA boxes. We cannot promise you that you will have all of these. Most of them are likely to end up there, but who knows what the weather will bring.

Fall Crops. Arugula, beets, Brussels sprouts, carrots, kale, kohlrabi, leek, potatoes, radish, rutabaga (maybe), spinach, winter squashes, tomatoes and turnips.

Greenhouse Crops. Arugula, beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, card, Chinese cabbage, cilantro, collards, fennel, kale, head lettuce, leaf lettuce, romaine lettuce, pak choi, parsley, radish, spinach, turnips and various kinds of greens.

Spring Crops. Asparagus, cilantro, radish, spinach and various kinds of greens.

Purchased Crops. Apple, onion, pears and possibly cranberries.

Dried Goods. Garlic, thyme, sage, oregano, chilies, dry peas, chickpeas, lentils and barley (the last four are also purchased.)