

Schreiber & Sons CSA

It's a Culinary Adventure
www.schreiberandsons.com

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Hello CSAers,

Now that the 2009 Season is drawing near (I've anxious to get seeds in the ground), I thought it was high time to share the excitement of a new season, to answer some of the questions I've been getting from members during the last few months, and to introduce some new items that will be available this year.

New Pickup Site. For what it is worth, we have had inquiries from some families living in Othello, Washtucna and Lacrosse about joining the CSA. We are checking into setting up a pick up site somewhere in Northern Franklin County, perhaps Connell, to serve our northern brethren. If you know someone in that area that might be interested in the CSA let us know.

Why Join A CSA? The advantages of becoming part of a Community Supported Agriculture group may be old hat to veteran CSA members, but I think they bear repeating for the benefit of newer members..

Local. Buying local seems like such a trendy thing to do right now—but I suspect this will be more than a trend. Nothing bugs me more than seeing Mexican, Peruvian or California asparagus in our grocery stores in April, May and June. We should buy asparagus that comes from Benton and Franklin County rather from just north of Lima Peru, or from the Baja Peninsula of Mexico or the San Joaquin Valley of California. Asparagus from Peru comes to us after being flown in the underbelly of a passenger plane. It gets here after being fumigated with methyl bromide. Maybe that is okay in December, but NOT when a fresh crop is being picked just down the road. The average distance traveled by the food in our stores is between 1,000 to 1,500 miles--holy cow!

When you buy salad mix in a grocery store, some of that money you pay goes to the farmer, some to the company buying the produce and making the salad, some to a broker, some to a trucking company and some to the grocery store; virtually none of the money that you pay stays here. Much more of what you pay to the CSA stays here than if you buy from a store. I wish I could say most of it stays with me, but it does not: about half the money goes to salaries, which in turn is spent locally. We buy 95% of seed in the state of Washington, our fertilizers and pesticides (both conventional and organic) are purchased locally, our equipment, the fuel and most of the supplies are purchased locally.

Nutrition. This is a bit tenuous link that I cannot clearly prove, but I believe it so strongly that I say it and I stand behind it. I believe that all other things being equal, our food is better for you than food that comes from a store. In almost all cases, the food we produce is picked within 48 hours of when you receive it. It is fresh. Most of the produce in the stores is several days to several weeks old by the time it is placed on your table. I was involved in a study by Washington State University that looked at the antioxidants in asparagus from different locations of the world. There was a clear finding that fresh asparagus from Washington had more antioxidants than asparagus from Peru, Mexico and California. (California was lower but close to Washington's level.) The conclusion drawn from the study is that the higher level of antioxidants in Washington asparagus is due to it being tested when it was only a day or two old while the other asparagus was several days old by the time it was tested.

A second reason for joining the CSA is that it will lead to you eating better. This is a two part answer. First, you will be forced to eat a wider variety of produce. I guarantee that you will be eating things you did not think of buying before joining Schreiber & Sons CSA. Second, you will be eating more fruits and vegetables than you did before joining. I promise that you will eat better if you eat what comes in your box. (I DON'T guarantee that you will save time in food preparation. CSA produce will take a little more time to prepare and may require that you track down a few new recipes, but it will be better and more diverse.)

Taste. This one is easy to prove. Just ask the Sons of Schreiber & Sons. Give them a choice between what they call "store carrots" and "farm carrots." There is just no comparison. We see (rather taste) this all of the time. When you pick up your box, put your nose inside and smell. Next time you bring home a bag of groceries from the store, smell that and tell me which smells best. Our produce tastes better, if for no other reason than because it is so much fresher. Then there are other reasons such as that our tomatoes are picked when they are at the peak of ripeness, store tomatoes are generally picked green and gassed with ethylene oxide to ripen them in the box.

Money. Last year we compared what we offered in a medium conventional box during a week in August and one week in September to similar produce from two grocery stores (Yokes for a higher end store and Winco for a middle of the road store). If you purchased the contents of our box at a store, it would have cost significantly more than what you paid for it through the CSA. Additionally, there were some items in your box that you just could not get in the Tri-Cities. There are no heirloom beets, no fingerling potatoes (at the time we looked), no Red Moon melons and on and on and on. The cost at Winco was \$32.54 and \$34.08 and Yokes was \$50.33 and \$47.60. We realize that August and September are peak produce time, but it is also a time when produce in stores is a little lower. Our point is that our produce is cheaper than what you can get in a grocery store. We think our produce is better than most of what is in the grocery store. We believe that cost aside, joining the CSA is better than buying from a store.

We fret that people will look at joining the CSA as a luxury and will hesitate to join. Our only response to this is, if you join the CSA and eat what is in the box, you will save money. Additionally, this year we are going to make it easier for you to buy extra produce at a reasonable price, so if you want to make preserves or freeze extra quantities, you can.

A Culinary Adventure. Eating should be fun and a pleasure. We have ordered seed for bell peppers that are green, red, orange, yellow, white, cream, purple and chocolate colored. Now, how cool is that! We have ordered seed from a watermelon that is called Stars and Moon. It is an old, old fashion melon (details to come later if we can get them to grow) that is red fleshed and seeded, but the rind is green with a yellow full moon with yellow speckles that look like stars in the distance. We have a lot of things planned for you, we have a variety of bok choy that is supposed to be purple, pointed cabbages (yes, pointed, you will just have to wait to see it) and on and on and on. We believe your diet will be better and more diverse if you join the CSA. We say this is because we literally eat every single item that we grow and our diets have never been better. (Tanya tries to cook something from the farm every day of the year, at least when we are at home)

You should know where your food comes from. You know your doctor, your dentist, your accountant, your preacher, but do you know your farmer, do you know where your food comes from. The Tri-Cities is in the middle of a Garden of Eden (obviously not THE Garden of Eden) and most people do not know where their food comes from. This is a chance for you to know the farmer (and his family), the farm, the fields, right down to the row your food comes from. We have at least two events at the farm--one is Memorial Day weekend, the other is in the fall. There are other opportunities for people to learn about where your food comes. Talk about food security.

Organics. Organic produce can be either hard to find in the Tri-Cities or quite expensive or of poor quality by the time it makes it way to the grocery store. If you want organic produce we have it and we have lots of it. Whether you want organic eggplant, tomatoes, melons, leeks, radishes, salad mix or whatever, we have over 200 different types of organic produce.

What's New on the Farm. We are finishing up on our equipment repair and are shifting our attention to gearing up for the farming season. All of our seeds are ordered. All of the compost and goat manure has been applied to the organic ground. We are figuring out where everything is going to be planted. Today we met with a contractor to finalize the plan for a cold room--something that should help cool our produce more quickly and increase the quality of our vegetables and fruits. (We have had a problem with the shelf life of our salad mixes sometimes and we think a new cold room will help us keep our leafy greens fresher.) We are ordering our drip tape, plastic for row covers and plastic for the crops that get drip tape. Next week we start taking soil samples to determine soil fertility (once we have these results we finalize our soil fertility programs. We have to put a new roof on the greenhouse, and are putting up tables because we are running more plants through our greenhouses.

The Future. I woke up today and the ground was covered with snow. Obviously the ground hog who predicted six more weeks of winter knew what he was talking about. Regardless of the cold and snowy weather, we expect to start planting about one month from now. Can you believe it! It is snowing out and we are gearing up for planting.