

Schreiber & Sons

It's a Culinary Adventure

www.schreiberandsons.com

Week 21 - Week of September 22nd

1. Colored carrots
2. Potato
3. Sweet corn
4. Radishes
5. Bok choy
6. Spinach - medium and large shares
7. Swiss chard or kale
8. Pepper, bell - colorful medley
9. Pepper, hot - Anaheim
10. Cucumbers
11. Apples - Gala
12. Herbs - dill
13. Melon medley - small shares 1 melon, medium shares 2 melons, large share 3 melons
14. Tomatoes - A mixture: Carolina Gold or Dixie Gold, Green Zebra, Mr. Stripey, Garden Peach, Roma, Big Beef, Cherokee Pink, Purple, or Yellow
15. Leaf lettuce - green
16. Tomatilloes - small shares
17. Squash -- large and medium shares
18. Farmer's Choice

All conventional produce is conventional, all the organic produce is organic except for the grapes and apples.

One of the common words that you hear about CSA's and eating locally produced foods is "seasonal." If we sourced our food from large chain grocery stores exclusively, we could eat most produce items year around. You could buy Peruvian asparagus from October through January, Mexican asparagus from February through April, Washington asparagus April through May, Mexican asparagus in July through September and have the vegetable year around. If you rely on locally sourced produce I can promise that with the exception of certain items we have learned to store year around (onions, potatoes and apples), you will be eating seasonally. The downside for local seasonal produce is that you get items only for a short period of time. **The benefits, however, are many, including helping the local economy, having items that are fresher and probably more nutritious, and having a connection to your food.**

If you are a grower producing for the local market one of the challenges you have is seasonality. Consumers have been habituated to the concept of year around availability and expect this kind of convenience. This is THE bane of **existence for** the local producer. We do things to try **and** address this within the limitations we have: a killing frost is always going to be a killing frost. One of the things we do is to start things in the greenhouse, that often gives us a month or more jump on the season for some crops. We use row tunnels and a few other tricks to do something generally termed "seasonal extension."

Ultimately, growers have to accept and embrace the season that you are given. While this does limit what we can grow and when we can grow **it, this** also forces us to be creative and do things that seem unusual. Bear in mind that in the days before electricity, refrigerators, freezers, ice in the summer, and long distance hauling of produce and before California fed the nation its fruits and vegetables, all produce was local **and seasonal**. People did not eat apples in March, asparagus in July and so on. Eating local means a return to eating habits that **have** more in common with **those of** a hundred years ago. I prep for the season by reading **old** agricultural books (and new ones as well.) A lot of what I need to know about running a CSA and growing so many different things is already known and written down, I just have to find it.

You will notice a couple of items in your boxes this week that illustrate what happens when you try to grow as wide **an** array of produce as possible and have to obey the laws of the season. Radishes, spinach and bok choy are early season crops. They grow well in cool weather. Radishes turn pithy and bitter in hot weather, spinach stops growing when it is hot and bok choy bolts in the presence of warm temperatures and increasing day length. All CSA's have them as spring crops.

The fall also has cool weather and is a reverse of spring. Four weeks ago we planted the radishes, spinach and bok choy in anticipation of cool weather. While the weather has cooled down a little, it has been warmer than usual. You will note when you eat the radishes that they are a little hot-the tell-tale sign they were raised when the **temperature** was still a little too warm. We have some subsequent plantings of radishes and I bet when you get them in three to five weeks from now they will be sweeter.

Planting of fall crops is a very long tradition in gardening and truck farming. Other crops that we have planted for fall harvest include cabbage, broccoli, beets, Swiss chard, arugula, lettuce, mizuna and a few other leafy greens. Additionally, we have planted leeks and onions for next year.

Bulk Purchases.

We are at a point in the season where we are ready for CSA members to purchase bulk amounts of produce. We have the following items available in bulk amounts: heirloom and round red tomatoes (great for canning and freezing for winter months... have summer fresh tomatoes all winter long!!!), cucumbers (both picklers and slicers), melons, apples, potatoes, green onions, collards, kale, Swiss chard, carrots,

and many other items. Please let us know what you would like to purchase and the quantity and we will deliver it to your drop site along with your box.

Bok Choi (also called Pak choi)

Bok choi is known to have been cultivated in China since the fifth century ad and is older than Chinese cabbage. Originally a south Chinese vegetable, it has now spread throughout China and the rest of Asia, to Europe and the America. One of the beauties of bok choi is its versatility. The whole plant is edible - leaves, crunchy leaf stalks and the young flowering shoots. It can be used at virtually any stage of growth. Because its leaves are darker green it is also more nutritious than Chinese Cabbage. The leaf stalks are notable for their refreshingly crisp and juicy texture rather than their flavor, which can be bland. The white stemmed vareities are generally juicier than the green type.

Bok choi, which in Chinese roughly translates in to "green plant", can be cooked in countless ways; by simple stir frying; added to soup for the final minutes of cooking; as an ingredient in meat, fish, chicken, and noodle dishes.

The type of bok choi we have is the green leaf stalk type. This type is unique in that the leaf stalks are a beautiful light green; they are broad and flattish, widening out at the base in the classic bok choy manner. The leaves are rounded, smooth and emerald green. The plants, which are compact and sturdy, are usually harvested when small. Earlier this spring we had both this type and another common style the white stemmed type. This type of bok choi originated in the Shanghai area. This particular variety is called Mei Qing and is one of the most widely grown varieties of this type. It is a hybrid and has good bolting resistance. The varieties name aptly means "beautiful green."

Recently I purchased two books, one titled "Oriental Vegetables", the other is called "Chinese Vegetables." I am looking for information on how to better grow the varieties we currently have and to get ideas on new and different ones to grown next year. One thing I have noticed is that Asian vegetables are heavily weighted towards leafy greens, and in particular, dark leafy greens. This type of vegetable is supposed to be among the most nutritious. It is tempting to try a lot of these new and exotic sounding items with names such as choy sum, komatsuna, mibuna, chicken mustard, luffa and hinona kabu turnip. However, I am reluctant to send out too many of these strange items to eat for fear of alienating those of us used to eating corn, peas and potatoes. Also, sometimes it is hard to find seed for Asian produce.

Winding down the season.

I expect that by the end of September you will notice the diversity of items in your box will decline. By mid to late October our offerings to you will be half or less of what it is

now. It is our goal to go to about the third week of November (weather permitting). I expect by November we **will be** providing you with weekly rations of potatoes, apples and hardier fare that we have been able to either store or **which** can withstand frosts. There are a number of crops that are thought to taste better after a frost such as carrots, cabbage, parsnips and certain winter squash. I expect we will find this out. Also, whether we get our fall plantings of rutabaga, cabbage and broccoli will depend heavily on how soon the killing frosts come.

Your Farmer,

Alan Schreiber