



# Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

May 8-9, 2015

## Welcome to Another Great CSA Season!

Welcome to the 2015 CSA season! We're excited to have fresh, green food again after a long winter. We hope you enjoy the fresh spring flavors in this week's box. You may be less familiar with some of the vegetables this week, but rest assured we're here to help you enjoy them! Please take the time to read this week's vegetable features in the newsletter to learn more about ramps & nettles. If you're looking for more recipe ideas or suggestions for how to use some of the other things in your box, consider checking out our website. We have a searchable recipe database that archives all the recipes we've featured in our past newsletters. It's a great resource to get you started as you're learning about vegetables with which you may not have much experience.



This week we've also sent a special "Choice" item—Decorative Willow Bunches. These are not intended to be eaten, but they do make a beautiful adornment to your home or patio. This is just a little something extra that we'd like to share with you. While we specialize in growing food crops, we include some of these "decorative" plants as part of our production system. We plant curly willow, dogwood, and a variety of pussy willows in our field hedgerows to provide habitats for beneficial insects and birds. These creatures are an important part of how we manage pest insects and promote pollination for our vegetable crops. Every winter we trim these hedgerows to keep them from becoming overgrown. Our winter crew takes the time to trim and bundle the cuttings to turn them into beautiful arrangements that can be enjoyed throughout the year. You can trim your bundle to the size you would like it to be and you don't need to add water. Over time the branches will dry out and the color may fade, but they will last for years! We hope you enjoy this little piece of our farm as a reminder of the place where your food is grown!

Thank you for being a part of our farm!

Farmers Richard, Andrea and the Entire HVF Crew



## Welcome To the 2015 CSA Season!

### This Week's Box

**RAMPS:** See this week's vegetable feature below.

**OVERWINTERED SPINACH:** This spinach is unlike any other spinach of the year. It was planted last fall and survived the cold winter. This spring we're harvesting the new growth which you'll find to be sweet and flavorful. Get your fill of spring spinach salads, or wilt it down and add it to egg dishes, cooked grains, etc.

**OVERWINTERED PARSNIPS:** While these parsnips were planted last year, we didn't harvest them last fall. We left them in the ground over the winter and dug them this spring. You'll find them to be sweet as candy and delicious! They are excellent when simply sautéed in butter or roasted until golden. They can also be used in cakes, cookies and muffins in any recipe that might call for shredded carrots.

**OVERWINTERED WHITE SUNCHOKES:** Remember, "Anything you can do with a potato you can do with a sunchoke." Use them in spring soups, roast them, or simply sauté them. Sunchokes contain inulin, a non-digestible fiber. Some individuals may have some tummy discomfort if they eat too many sunchokes at a time. If you're trying them for the first time, eat a small portion to start with until you see how your body responds to them.

**CHIVES:** Store chives in the refrigerator wrapped in a damp paper towel or cloth. Use them in any dish you want to add a bright onion flavor to.

**SORREL:** This week the sorrel is packaged in a clear Ziploc bag. Sorrel is a green with pointy arrow-shaped leaves that are thick in texture and bright green in color. It has a bright citrus flavor and is slightly tannic. It can be used raw in salads, blended into drinks or used to make salad dressing. When cooked, it turns to an olive color and melts into the cooking liquid. Thus, it's popular in soups & sauces.

**NETTLES:** See this week's vegetable feature, on the back page.

**ASPARAGUS:** For this delivery we supplemented our first week of asparagus harvest with a small amount of certified organic asparagus from our friend Elmer Beechy at Tilth Farm. Our new fields are looking good, so we're hopeful for larger harvests soon!

**CHOICE:** Decorative Willow Bunches—We sent enough willow to the sites this week for one bunch per vegetable share. Display them in your home and enjoy their beauty! Note: Please do not eat them :)

### Featured Vegetable: Ramps

We're so thankful that ramp season overlapped with the start of this year's CSA deliveries! Ramps are a special spring treat that are available for only 3-4 weeks on average. They are a wild-foraged vegetable that we harvest from north-facing hillsides in the woods. We take care to sustainably harvest them to ensure they'll continue to grow in our valley for years to come. Our harvest crew treads lightly as they walk the woods and only takes half of any bunch of ramps growing in an area, taking care to leave the remainder undisturbed.

You can use the ramp bulb and leaves, simply trim away the root end. The flavor resembles garlic & onions, but it really has its own distinctive "rampy" flavor. Ramps are excellent in any egg dish from simple scrambled eggs to fancy quiche. They are also often used in risotto, pasta dishes and baked goods such as biscuits or cornbread. You can use the leaves to make a tasty pesto or try the chimichurri recipe in this week's newsletter.

If you're looking to preserve the delicious ramp flavor to enjoy later in the year, consider freezing ramp pesto or ramp butter. We featured a simple recipe for ramp butter in our May 9-10, 2014 newsletter. This recipe is archived on our website in our searchable recipe database.

Ramps are a delicate vegetable, so I'd encourage you to use them within several days. Store them in the refrigerator in a plastic bag. To preserve the delicate greens, wrap them gently in a moist paper towel or cloth.

### Maple Syrup is Back!

We are happy to be working with the Alvin Miller family again to offer you certified organic, premium Grade A, medium-amber syrup! Quantities are more limited than previous years, so be sure to order early as we will sell out!

**Certified Organic, Grade A, Medium Amber Maple Syrup:** ½ gallon glass jug: \$32

To order email [csa@harmonyvalleyfarm.com](mailto:csa@harmonyvalleyfarm.com) or call 608-483-2143x2

To process your order we will need: **Full Name, Quantity, Delivery Site, Delivery Date, and Phone Number**

**Delivery Dates are:** Twin Cities: May 28th (brown) or June 4th (green), Local: May 29th (brown) or June 5th (green), Madison: May 30th (brown) or June 6th (green).

## Vegetable Feature: Nettles (yes, the stinging kind...please read this feature for more information)

We look forward to nettles every spring as they are one of the most nutrient-dense spring greens we have available early in the season. Please be forewarned that these nettles are the “stinging nettles” many might consider a weed. They have little fibers on the stems that contain formic acid which will give you a “stinging” sensation if you brush up against them before they’ve been washed or try to harvest them with bare hands. Washing the nettles will remove most of the stinging fibers and there is no sting remaining after they are cooked. We have vigorously washed the nettles in your box and put them in a bag to make handling easier for you. Even though we’ve washed them, I would still recommend you handle them carefully and avoid touching them with your bare hands prior to cooking them. With a flavor similar to spinach, they contain a whole host of nutrients including protein, calcium, magnesium, potassium, boron, carotenoids and iron. They are also reported to relieve eczema and seasonal allergies.

*Nettles should always be cooked prior to eating them.* Here are a few guidelines for handling them in your kitchen. First, put some cold water in your kitchen sink and empty the bag of nettles into the sink. Use either a pair of kitchen tongs, kitchen gloves, or a plastic bag inverted over your hand to handle the nettles until they are cooked. Swish the nettles around in the sink. Remove the nettles from the cold water in the sink using your tongs or gloved hand and put them directly into a pot of boiling water. You should boil them for about 1 minute. You’ll notice their color will intensify to a beautiful deep emerald green and the water will turn the same color. After one minute, remove the nettles from the boiling water, put them in a strainer, and rinse with cold water until they are cooled. The stinging factor is no longer a concern after cooking, so you can use your bare hands to squeeze all the excess water out of them and remove the leaves from the thicker stems. If the stems are small, there’s no need to sort them out. Now your nettle greens are ready for use.

Nettle leaves are perishable, so it is best to cook them shortly after you receive them. Even if you don’t want to eat them right away, it is better to store them in their cooked form for a few days until you are ready to use them. The cooking water actually makes a beautiful tea, so don’t discard it. You can drink the tea either hot or cold and mixed with honey and lemon. It’s delicious and makes the cooking process dual purpose. Nettles originated in Europe and Asia, so are a familiar vegetable in many of the cuisines from these regions. They are often used to make soups, but you can also use the nettles in a pesto, to top off a pizza, or incorporated into a risotto or pasta dishes. Nettle puree may be used in pasta or gnocchi dough to make a stunning appearance, or the nettles can be used in a ravioli filling. Nettles pair well with cheese, cream, mushrooms and other spring greens.

## Sesame Nettles & Rice

By Andrea Yoder

### Serves 2-4

1 bunch nettles  
1 to 1 ½ Tbsp sunflower oil  
1 Tbsp minced garlic cloves or ramp bulbs  
1 cup cooked rice  
2 Tbsp rice wine vinegar  
1 ½ tsp sesame oil  
¼ tsp red pepper flakes or to taste  
Salt & Black pepper, to taste  
Toasted sesame seeds, to garnish

1. Bring 4-5 quarts water to a boil in a small to medium stockpot. Using gloves, tongs or an inverted plastic bag on your hand, remove the twist tie from the bunch of nettles and vigorously wash them in a sink or bowl of clean, cold water. Once the water is boiling, add the nettles. Cook for approximately 1-2 minutes. Immediately remove the nettles from the boiling water and put them in a strainer or colander. Rinse with cold water until cool enough to handle.
2. Remove the leaves and thin stems from the thick main stem. Discard the main stem. Roughly chop the nettle leaves into coarse pieces.
3. In a medium skillet over medium-high heat, heat the sunflower oil. Once the oil is hot, add the garlic cloves or ramp bulbs. Sauté until golden, then add the rice & nettles and stir. Immediately add the vinegar and put a lid on the pan. Simmer for about 2 minutes.
4. Remove the lid from the pan, reduce the heat and add the sesame oil, red pepper flakes, salt and black pepper. Stir to combine and remove from heat.
5. Serve with toasted sesame seeds to garnish.



## Wanted: Adventurous Eaters Looking for a Seasonal Eating Experience!

We still have many CSA Shares available in all of our delivery areas for the 2015 CSA Season.

Even though deliveries have officially started, it’s not too late to sign up for vegetable, fruit, coffee or cheese shares!

If you have friends, family members, neighbors or co-workers who might be interested in joining a CSA, please let them know we’d like to grow for them this year. They can find our sign-up form on our website.

[csa@harmonyvalleyfarm.com](mailto:csa@harmonyvalleyfarm.com)

608-483-2143x2

[www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com](http://www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com)

## Ramp Chimichurri

### Yield: about ½ cup

1 bunch ramps  
¼ cup olive oil  
2 Tbsp red wine vinegar  
½ tsp salt  
¼ tsp red pepper flakes  
Dash of pepper

1. Clean the ramps; if necessary, remove the roots. Chop the bulbs off the stems and into some rough pieces. Chop the leaves into rough pieces.
2. Place just the bulbs into a food processor or blender and process until minced. Then add the leaves, olive oil, red wine vinegar, salt and red pepper flakes. Blend until smooth.

This recipe was borrowed from a *Couple Cooks* blog. They feature it on their blog as a topping for a cheese omelet. Chimichurri is traditionally made with parsley and garlic, but the ramp bulbs and leaves adapt nicely to this preparation. You can use this as a topping for grilled or roasted fish, chicken or steak. It is also a nice accompaniment to eggs and sandwiches. You could also try a recipe for **Ramp Chimichurri Bread with Lemon Thyme Butter** featured at [vegetarianventures.com](http://vegetarianventures.com) (check out the amazing pictures of this tasty loaf of bread!)