



# Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

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

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## Time to Ramp Up!

By Andrea Yoder & Richard deWilde

Ramps are a special sign of spring we look forward to every year. We've been wild-harvesting them for over 30 years in our valley and still get excited when we see the first green ramp leaves emerging from the forest floor. Ahhh....spring has returned! With their lily-like, delicate, rounded leaves and distinct aroma, there is nothing else that can be substituted for a ramp. They are sometimes referred to as "wild leeks" and have their own distinct "rampy" flavor, but if they must be likened to another vegetable they may be described as having a garlic-onion like flavor and aroma. Ramps are only available for a few weeks in the spring. Most years we get about 4 weeks of harvest, but we've also seen years where the season is only 3 weeks and then they're gone.

## Sustainability

When you stand in the forest at the beginning of the year and look out over the sea of green leaves, it seems impossible that you could ever harvest so many that eventually they'd be gone, but we must remember nature is delicate and likes to maintain balance. Ramps are a very slow growing crop and propagate themselves by bulb division as well as producing seeds. They grow in many places around the world, mostly on steep hillsides and in ravines. Since we started harvesting ramps back in the mid 80's we've been aware of the need to manage our harvests responsibly so they continue to come back and flourish year after year. It's tempting to harvest the ones closest to the entry into the woods so you don't have to hike as far to carry out the harvest....but, we understand that if we were to do that year after year the ramp population would

decline. So, with respect, we enter the forest and carefully climb the steep hillsides taking care to tread lightly and carry out anything we carried in.

We have a very skillful crew who has been trained on proper harvest methods. Ramps grow in clumps, and we are careful to only take a portion of a clump. We intentionally leave some behind that will continue to grow and divide and are careful to do so with little disturbance to the soil. Our forest hillsides have remained abundant with ramps for over 30 years as a result of these practices. In fact, when we leave a portion of a clump behind, it may be 5 years or more before we come back to that area! While most ramps grow wild in the forests, often on north-facing hillsides, they can be cultivated either from seed or by transplanting a ramp with the bulb and roots intact. We have successfully transplanted ramps in suitable areas on our land where they were not previously growing, but we understand it may be many years before they are established enough that we can harvest them.

Sadly, not everyone practices sustainable and ethical harvesting practices which does raise the concern that ramps may be overharvested. When there is a demand for ramps and someone is willing to pay the price for them, opportunists may seize the opportunity to make a dollar with no regard for the plant or environment itself. We share these concerns and feel it is important for consumers to know how the ramps they are purchasing have been harvested. As with so many other aspects of our food system, it's important to understand the story behind your food so you can make informed purchases! It takes more time and effort to carefully hike into

the woods and up the steep hillsides to harvest ramps than it does to just walk into the base of the forest near the access point and easily walk them out. If you ever wondered why ramps are a bit more expensive than other vegetables, it is because of the time we invest to harvest and carefully clean them.

While ramps are not an endangered species, we do feel it's important to be proactive in managing ramp populations to make sure we have them for years to come. As part of our annual inspection, our organic certifier (MOSA) reviews and inspects our ramp woods and harvest practices. They are concerned with maintaining organic integrity of the product as well as ensuring that we are using sustainable practices. We support further regulation of ramp harvesting in public areas, as these are the most vulnerable locations where overharvesting and disturbance of the ecosystem may take place. If you are harvesting ramps yourself, please do so responsibly so they will be there for others to enjoy in the future as well.

## Storage & Use

Ramps are a delicate vegetable and should be handled with care. It's important to store them in the refrigerator until you are ready to use them. The leaves are delicate and can wilt very quickly, so we recommend wrapping them in a damp towel and storing them in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. The bulb portion of the ramp will store longer than the leaves, so some people choose to separate the bulb from the leaf and store them separately.

The entire ramp is edible with the exception of the roots on the very

bottom of the bulb which should be trimmed off. Ramps may be eaten either raw or cooked. The flavor and aroma is a bit more pungent when eaten raw and mellows a bit with cooking.

Ramps pair very well with other spring vegetables. Mushrooms (morels in particular if you can get your hands on them!), overwintered spinach, and asparagus are a few of our favorite companions for ramps. They also pair nicely with eggs and may be used in any kind of an egg preparation ranging from scrambled eggs to quiche, frittatas, omelets, deviled eggs or even egg salad. Ramp risotto is a popular spring dish that many of our longtime CSA members make every year as a way of ushering in spring. Ramp pesto and pasta dishes are other common favorite ways to prepare ramps. Over the past few years, we've noticed an increasing affinity amongst our market crew members and customers for ramp butter--and rightly so! The beauty of ramp butter is you can make and eat it when ramps are in season, but you can also freeze it to enjoy later in the year; perhaps in the middle of winter as a reminder that the season won't last forever.

If you are trying ramps for the first time, start with something as simple as adding them to your scrambled eggs. Finely chop the bulb portion of the ramp and saute it briefly in butter before you add the eggs to the pan. Just as the egg is starting to become solid, fold in thinly sliced ramp leaves, season with salt and pepper and then cover the pan with a lid so the leaves wilt down and the eggs finish cooking. You can find ramp recipes we've featured in previous newsletters in our searchable recipe database on our website (including the ramp butter recipe). There is also a collection of tasty ramp recipes available at [www.cooking.NYTimes.com](http://www.cooking.NYTimes.com) including Ramp Focaccia and Egg and Lemon Soup with Ramps.

We hope you enjoy this spring vegetable treasure as we enter into another year of seasonal eating. As you try new recipes and find your own "favorite" way to enjoy ramps, please keep us in mind! We enjoy learning about new recipes and being reminded of the "oldies but goodies." Happy Spring!

### **Spaghetti with Ramps and Mushrooms**

Yield: 3-4 as a main dish or 6 as a side dish

8 oz spaghetti  
4 oz fresh mushrooms  
2 bunches ramps (approximately 6-8 oz)  
2 Tbsp butter  
2 Tbsp olive oil, divided  
4 oz grated Parmesan or sharp cheddar, plus more to garnish  
2-3 Tbsp fresh lemon juice  
1 tsp salt, plus more to taste  
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste  
5 slices bacon, cooked and crumbled (optional)

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Once the water is boiling vigorously, add the pasta and cook until it is al dente. Reserve one cup of pasta water before draining the pasta.
2. While the pasta is cooking, prepare the remainder of the dish. Thinly slice the mushrooms and set aside. Separate the ramp bulbs and leaves. Thinly slice both the ramp bulbs and the leaves and set aside.
3. Heat a large skillet over medium heat. Melt the butter and one tablespoon of olive oil in the pan. Add the mushrooms and 1 tsp salt to the pan and saute' for 3-5 minutes or until the mushrooms are soft. Add the ramp bulbs and saute for an additional 3-5 minutes or until the ramps are translucent.
4. Add the ramp leaves to the pan and stir to combine. Let the leaves wilt slightly and then add the spaghetti and about ½ cup of the pasta water to the pan. Season generously with black pepper and stir to combine.
5. Next, add 4 oz of grated Parmesan or sharp cheddar, about 2 Tbsp lemon juice, and the remaining one tablespoon of olive oil. Stir to combine, adding more of the pasta water if needed to form a glossy sauce that lightly coats the pasta. If you choose to include the bacon, add it now. Taste and adjust the seasoning to your liking by adding more salt, black pepper and/or lemon juice as needed.
6. Serve hot topped with additional cheese.

Recipe adapted from Alison Roman's original recipe for "Spaghetti with Ramps" (*Bon Appetit*, April 2016)