



# Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com

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## "How's the Weather?"

By Farmer Richard

This is a continuation of our series of newsletters on the subject of "the future of our food" as we discuss what kind of food system we want going into the future. This week I'd like to discuss a topic that's always on our minds, but even more so over the past week....WEATHER.

Weather has been with us forever! In my case I only have 60 years of weather memory. Starting on the South Dakota plains, with winter blizzards when we went to the neighbors' house a mile away with Smoky and Barney pulling the bob sled for a Saturday night taco and card game evening. A night when only a team of horses could have made the trip. And then there was the ice storm of '59 when a heavy buildup of ice snapped off power poles for miles. We were without electricity for two weeks. My brother Dennis, my Mom and I milked our cows by hand while Dad was off helping the electric linemen put in new poles. I know something about weather, I've farmed around weather for most of a lifetime. Sometimes it is too wet and sometimes too dry. We have learned to farm around it. We watch weather forecasts day and night and plan accordingly! We make the absolute most of dry days to keep planting schedules and do our weed control.

Twenty five years ago we converted to farming with a system of raised beds so excess moisture immediately drains to the wheel tracks and off the fields. We watched the water run during rain storms so we could observe how it moved and then made ditches and berms to protect fields and drain off excess water. We built high organic matter in the soil that allows it to be more resilient, absorbing water and at the same time draining well so it can be worked very soon after a rain. When it was dry, we irrigated. We learned to use a variety of different irrigation methods including buried drip irrigation lines to efficiently deliver water and nutrients to plant roots without watering the

soil surface and germinating new weeds.

We are very good farmers and have consistently raised good to excellent crops through a variety of weather variations that we considered "normal." But over the past ten years, that has changed for the worst! For example, lets look at the history of the Bad Axe River watershed we live and farm in. Human beings have lived and survived here for 10,000 years, but farmed for only the last 1,500 years. European settlers have farmed here for less than 200 years. The Bad Axe River would

periodically flood over its banks and damage the rich valley farmland. So starting in the 50's a series of dams were built on the North and South forks of the Bad Axe River to hold excess water and prevent flooding. The dam that is 5 miles above our farm is the Runge Hollow Dam. It successfully ended flood events until 2007 when we had what was called a "100 year flood," with an unprecedented 18 inches of rainfall in 24 hours that overflowed the dam and flooded our valley crops.

*(See our [blog](#) for the rest of Richard's article)*

## What's In The Box?

**SWEET ONIONS:** Sweet onions have a higher natural sugar content making them a mild onion that may easily be eaten raw and caramelizes nicely when sautéed, roasted or grilled. Our early season sweet onions are meant to be eaten fresh as opposed to being a storage onion that develops a thicker skin to protect the onion in storage.

**FRESH ITALIAN GARLIC:** We have almost finished selecting our seed stock from this year's crop in preparation for replanting in October! Store garlic in a cool, dry place out of direct sunlight until you are ready to use it.

**GREEN BEANS:** These were not the easiest beans to pick this week as the plants were blown over by the winds in last week's storms. Nonetheless, the crew did a good job harvesting them and we're happy to have them as the next crop is still pretty small and will not be ready until next week.

**ITALIAN OR GREEN ZUCCHINI OR SCALLOP SQUASH:** Don't forget you can freeze zucchini. Shred it and portion it into freezer bags in the quantity you need for your favorite zucchini bread or cake recipe and pop it into the freezer. Pull it out in the middle of winter to make a loaf of bread and remember the warm days of summer.

**GREEN TOP CARROTS:** These carrots are still our early season variety, so you'll find these to be very tender yet sweet and tasty.

**BROCCOLI OR WHITE CAULIFLOWER:** The broccoli is tapering off, just in time to make room for cauliflower! We didn't have enough of either vegetable for all boxes, so you will receive one or the other this week.

**SWEETHEART CABBAGE:** Please refer to last week's vegetable feature and recipes which may be found in our newsletter or on our blog.

**LACINATO KALE:** This kale may be eaten either raw or cooked. If you eat it raw, be sure to slice the leaves thinly and toss the greens with a light vinaigrette to soften them a little bit before eating.

**GREEN TOP RED BEETS:** We may not have too many more opportunities to include beets in the boxes as we lost much of our fall plantings in last week's storms. We thought we'd include them in the box again while they are available. As always, eat the greens!

**GREEN ITALIAN FRYING PEPPERS:** This is classified as "sweet pepper" so it is not hot. Green peppers are actually considered immature. Once they start to change color, they will become sweeter.

**EGGPLANT:** Refer to our newsletter and blog for more information about how to identify and use the eggplant in your box.

**CHOICE--SWEET ITALIAN BASIL:** Please only take a small handful per vegetable share. We will be sending more basil as a choice item in future weeks, so there will be plenty for you to enjoy over the season.

## Cooking with This Week's Box!

As we think about how to use this week's box contents, let's start with our featured vegetable of the week... eggplant! The **Eggplant and Chickpea Patties** (recipe below) is a great way to incorporate eggplant into your meals and yields a tasty vegetarian entrée complete with Sweet Onion Yogurt sauce using the mild, sweet onions in this week's box. The patties also reheat well, so leftovers won't go to waste!

I've had my eye on another recipe by Alexandra Stafford, the blog writer we featured last week, and I think this is the week to try it. Her recipe for **Cabbage Pad Thai with Baked Tofu** is featured at *Food52.com*. In place of pad thai noodles, you use thinly sliced cabbage along with shiitake mushrooms and marinated baked tofu with a garnish of cilantro and peanuts. This will be a great way to use this week's sweetheart cabbage.

Somehow I have accumulated four packages of fettuccine noodles in my pantry, so I knew I wanted to include a pasta dish in this week's menu. I'm going to take the zucchini and turn it into this **Summer Squash Sauce with Pasta**. You take two to three medium sized zucchini and melt them down into butter and olive oil along with onions and garlic. Then toss this simple "sauce" with hot pasta to make a main dish pasta garnished with Parmesan cheese.

(See our **blog** for the rest of this article & Chef Andrea's suggestions for utilizing every item in your box!)

## Featured Vegetable: Eggplant

Eggplant is one of the most beautiful crops we grow. The plants grow several feet tall and, in their peak, are loaded with beautiful glossy fruit hanging heavy on the plant. There are many varieties of eggplant ranging in size from small round eggplant the size of a golf ball to large globe eggplant weighing over a pound. They come in a variety of colors ranging from various shades of purple to black, green, lavender, white and orange. We have narrowed our lineup of eggplant to our four favorite varieties including Lilac Bride, Purple Dancer, Listada and the traditional Black eggplant.

Eggplant is a member of the nightshade family and must be cooked. While it is thought to have originated in the area around India and Pakistan, it has now been spread around the world. Since eggplant is part of so many cultures, there are a lot of ways you can use eggplant in your cooking. It is often incorporated into curry and stir-fry dishes in Indian, Thai, and Chinese cuisine. Sicilians are famous for eggplant caponata while Middle Eastern dishes include baba ganoush. The French put their mark on eggplant with the traditional Provencal dish, ratatouille. Eggplant has a mild flavor and soft texture when cooked. Many resources will tell you to salt eggplant before cooking it to remove bitterness. While some older varieties were bitter, the new varieties we grow have been selected because they are not bitter, thus you can skip the salting step. Most of our varieties of eggplant have skin that is tender enough to eat, thus you do not need to peel them.

Eggplant does not store terribly well, so it is best to use it soon after getting it. It is best stored at a temperature of about 45-50°F, but your home refrigerator should be colder than this. Thus, we recommend storing your eggplant on the kitchen counter and use it within 2-4 days.

We encourage you to refer to our blog post from last year ([harmonyvalleyfarm.blogspot.com/2016/08/vegetable-feature-eggplant.html](http://harmonyvalleyfarm.blogspot.com/2016/08/vegetable-feature-eggplant.html)) which includes pictures and descriptions of each of the eggplant varieties we grow and will help you identify the eggplant in your box this week.

## Eggplant and Chickpea Patties

Yield: 6 - 8 patties

### Yogurt Sauce with Onions:

¾ cup Greek yogurt  
½ cup finely minced onion  
2 Tbsp fresh cilantro, minced  
1 tsp lemon juice  
¼ tsp salt  
Pinch cayenne pepper

### Eggplant Patties:

4 cups eggplant, small dice  
3 Tbsp sunflower oil, divided  
1 Tbsp minced garlic  
1 can (15 oz) garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed  
½ cup finely minced onion (if using green onions, save some green top for garnish)

¼ cup fresh cilantro, minced  
1 Tbsp lemon juice  
1 tsp salt  
¼ tsp black pepper  
¼ tsp red pepper flakes  
½ cup panko bread crumbs  
2 eggs, lightly beaten

1. Make the yogurt sauce: In a small bowl, combine all ingredients. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.
2. Make eggplant patties: In a large skillet, combine 2 Tbsp sunflower oil along with the eggplant and garlic. Cook over medium heat, stirring frequently, until eggplant is tender; remove from heat and set aside.
3. Add garbanzo beans to a food processor and pulse until coarsely ground. Add to a large bowl.
4. Add eggplant, onions, cilantro, lemon juice, salt, pepper, and red pepper flakes to bowl with garbanzo beans; mix well.
5. Add panko and eggs; mix well.
6. Preheat a cast-iron griddle or pan over medium-low heat. Once the griddle or pan is hot, brush the pan with the remaining sunflower oil. Form mixture into patties (about ½ cup each so you have a total of 6-8 patties) and slide them one at a time into the hot pan. The mixture may be fairly wet, so it may be easiest to form the patties on a large serving spoon that you can slide them off of when putting them in the pan.
7. Cook on each side for about 6 minutes, or until golden brown. Remove from the pan and serve warm with yogurt sauce.

This recipe was adapted from one featured in *Mary Janes Farm Magazine*.