



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com

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Labor and the Cost of Food

By Farmer Richard

Chef/Farmer Andrea and I work very hard to make it all happen, to set the standards for our farm and to lead the way. But there would be a very different HVF if it were not for Kelly, Scott, Simon, Gerardo, Beatriz, Rafael and his brothers, JMC, Juan and every other person on our crew. Our core group of employees has been the same for 5, 10, and some approaching 20 years. Their years of experience and expertise are what make this farm "work" and they are dedicated to continuing to keep this farm going into the future because, as many of them say, "it is the best job they have ever had!" From our perspective, they are the best work force we have ever had!

Here's a little history for you. Labor costs on our vegetable farm make up half (50%) of gross revenue. Hiring and managing that labor force occupies more than 50% of our time. It takes a full year of on-the-job experience for a new crew member to learn how our farm operates. Once they enter the second year of experience, they really start to build skills and build on their initial training investment. Thus, we are really looking for long term crew members who will be with us for more than one or two seasons. Over the forty plus years I have farmed, I have had many different employees. "Interns" who work only one season for low pay and to gain experience, older Laotian Hmong people who had few other job opportunities, local high school and college students who start too late and leave just when our peak fall season starts, not very workable! The inmates from the Vernon County jail work program were very dependable! That is until they got out of jail and could not make it to work on time for even 5 days in a row! We've also had many excellent employees that were with us for a season or two and showed great potential.

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

What's In The Box?

GARLIC: Garlic pairs very well with broccoli raab, this week's cooking green. Check out the recipe for **Garlicky Pasta with Broccoli Raab** in this week's newsletter.

JALAPEÑO PEPPERS: This week's [Cooking with the Box](#) section on our blog includes a link to a recipe for **Jalapeño-Cheddar Scones**. These would be excellent for breakfast along with scrambled eggs.

ORANGE ITALIAN FRYING PEPPERS: This sweet pepper adds a splash of color to a vegetable stir-fry. They don't take as long to cook, so add them closer to the end of cooking

BROCCOLI OR CAULIFLOWER: Don't forget, *brassicas* such as these are packed full of phytonutrients that benefit our health in many ways. This week's box has three vegetables in the *brassica* family. Broccoli or Cauliflower is one of the three, can you guess the other two?

ORANGE CARROTS: I've included an interesting recipe for **Carrot Tahini Muffins** in this week's [Cooking with the Box](#) section on our blog. They'll make a great after-school snack.

SPINACH: Make a tasty spinach salad with chunks of apple, toasted sunflower seeds and either balsamic-dijon vinaigrette or a warm bacon dressing.

ARUGULA: This is the light green bunched leafy vegetable in this week's box. If you taste a little bit of the leaf, you'll find it to be very pungent and on its own it might be considered overpowering. Don't discount it though, the pungency of this green is toned down when it is paired with something fatty (cheese, meat, olive oil) and/or acidic (fruit, vinegar). Use it as a topping for a pizza or make arugula pesto to spread on bagels with cream cheese, mix into scrambled eggs, or use it as a spread on a roast beef and provolone sandwich.

MINI SWEET PEPPERS: Make a pan of roasted potatoes and add chunks of onion and mini-sweet peppers for color and sweetness. Toss all the vegetables with oil, salt, pepper, rosemary and thyme and then roast until the potatoes are tender.

RED & YELLOW ONIONS: Thinly sliced red onions are excellent on sandwiches, such as the roast beef & provolone sandwich with arugula pesto mentioned above. Yellow onions make a nice base for any soup, stir-fry, etc.

KABOCHA SQUASH: Check out last week's newsletter and blog post for more information about kabocha squash as well as recipes. This variety is very sweet and delicious, but it has not been storing very well. We recommend you eat it within a week or two and store it at room temperature until you're ready to cook it. If you notice a bad spot starting to form, cut that spot out and cook the remainder.

PETER WILCOX POTATOES: This is a waxy potato with purple skin and gold flesh. It's a great choice for roasting and holds up well in soups.

BROCCOLI RAAB: This is the darker green bunched vegetable with thick broccoli-like stems in this week's box. You may see small broccoli-like florets growing out of the center of the stems. See this week's vegetable feature for more information.

BABY BEETS: The beauty of these little beets is their quick cooking time. Cook the entire amount at one time. Cool them and then peel them. Now they're ready to add to salads or reheat them with a pat of butter for a quick side dish.

SPAGHETTI SQUASH: This is the golden yellow, oblong vegetable in this week's box. See this week's vegetable feature for more information.

Featured Vegetables: Broccoli Raab & Spaghetti Squash

Broccoli Raab was one of the vegetables members requested on the survey we conducted at the end of last year. You asked for it and here it is! There are two bunching greens in this week's box, the broccoli raab and bunched arugula. They look a bit similar, but you can tell the difference between the two by first noticing the color. Broccoli raab is darker green and the arugula has a lighter, lime green color. Broccoli raab also has thicker stems that resemble broccoli stems and if you look in the center of the stem you'll likely see some small broccoli florets pushing up. Broccoli raab is in the *brassica* family and has a mild mustard flavor with a slight bitterness. We like to grow broccoli raab in the fall when the flavor is more mild and well-balanced. You can eat nearly the entire bunch including the stems. Sometimes the lower portion of a thick stem can get a little tough so you may need to discard the bottom inch or so if you find this to be the case.

Broccoli raab is a popular Italian vegetable, but is also found in Asian cuisine as well. It is often used in pasta and pizza dishes paired with sweet Italian sausage, garlic and cheese. Nothing wrong with a combination of those ingredients! While you can eat broccoli raab raw, it is most often cooked. It's tender enough that it doesn't require a very long cooking time. It can be boiled, steamed or sautéed. In Italian cooking, you may find recipes that have longer cooking times to ensure the leaves and stem are very soft and tender. Many times this preparation is done with a lot of garlic and olive oil.

(See our [blog](#) for the rest of this vegetable feature article and a bonus recipe for [Spaghetti Squash Cakes with Crispy Sage](#))

Cooking With This Week's Box!

Welcome back for another week of [Cooking With the Box](#). After this week we only have 6 more CSA boxes! How are we going to fit all the vegetables we still want to send you in just 6 boxes! I'm excited to be transitioning to fall cooking and seeing the sweet potatoes piled in the greenhouse after this week's harvest makes me even more ready! Pull out your favorite sweet potato recipes...they'll be in your box within the next few weeks!

Lets start off with Broccoli Raab, one of the bunching greens in this week's box. If you aren't familiar with this green, take a minute to read more about it on our [blog](#) and/or in the newsletter. It goes very well with garlic and pasta, which is why I recommend using it to make the pasta recipe in this week's newsletter, **Pasta with Garlicky Broccoli Raab** (see below). I adapted this recipe to include a few more vegetables, shredded carrots and sweet peppers, which add some color and sweetness to the dish. Of course there's lots of garlic as well! Don't forget to serve this dish with shredded Parmesan cheese.

Our second featured vegetable this week is Spaghetti Squash. This week I'm going to try Sarah Britton's recipe for **Spaghetti Squash Cakes with Crispy Sage** which we've included on our [blog](#).

(See our [blog](#) for the rest of this article & Chef Andrea's suggestions for utilizing every item in your box including recipe links!)

Pasta with Garlicky Broccoli Raab

Yield: 4 servings

12 oz pasta (shape of your choosing, spaghetti and fettucine work well)

½ cup olive oil

5 garlic cloves, minced

½ tsp red pepper flakes

1 heaping tsp kosher salt, plus more to taste

2 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into bite-sized pieces (Optional, see note below)

2 cups (8 oz) shredded carrots

1 ½ cups thinly sliced sweet peppers
1 bu broccoli raab, chopped into bite sized pieces

Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
Grated Parmesan cheese, for serving.

1. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the pasta and cook to al dente according to package instructions. Before you drain the pasta, save 2 cups of the pasta water. Drain the pasta and set it aside.
2. Put the olive oil in a small saute pan and add the minced garlic, red pepper flakes and 1 teaspoon of salt. Heat the oil over medium low heat. You want to infuse the oil and cook the garlic gently just until the garlic becomes light golden. It's better to keep the heat low and do this slowly while you prepare the rest of the recipe so the garlic doesn't get too brown. If you notice the garlic starting to turn golden, remove the pan from the heat.
3. Heat a large saute pan or skillet over medium-high heat. Take 2 Tbsp of oil from the small pan and add it to the large pan. When the pan and oil are hot, add the pieces of chicken and cook until browned on both sides.
4. Once the chicken is browned, add the shredded carrots, sweet peppers and 1 cup of the pasta water to the pan. Simmer until the liquid is reduced by about half the volume. Next, add the broccoli raab and allow the greens to wilt down. Stir the vegetable mixture to combine them well and continue to simmer until nearly all the liquid has evaporated. If the vegetables are not yet cooked to your liking, add more pasta water and simmer a little longer.
5. Add the cooked pasta to the pan and stir to combine. Carefully pour the garlic oil over the pasta and toss to combine and evenly coat the pasta and vegetables. Season with freshly ground black pepper and more salt as needed.
6. Serve the pasta hot with freshly grated Parmesan cheese.

This recipe was inspired by a similar recipe originally featured in *Gourmet* magazine, September 2006.

Note from Chef Andrea: I wrote this recipe to include chicken, but this would also be delicious if made with Italian sausage, ground pork or shrimp in place of the chicken. If you do not care for meat or seafood, just omit all protein options and prepare the dish vegetarian style. The flavors of the vegetables are bold and delicious on their own.