



# Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com

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## A Giant Success for One Small Municipality

by Gwen Anderson

The story we want to share with you this week is filled with hope and encouragement. It has been exciting for us here at Harmony Valley Farm over the past few weeks as we've dug deeper into this rich story. There is far too much for us to be able to sum up in one article, so we've shared some resources for you at the end of article and encourage you to dive into this story and learn more. The story is about a small township called Mals, which is (to our knowledge) the first municipality in the world to ban pesticides. We first leaned about Mals when we read about it in an article in September's issue of *Acres U.S.A.* The article was an interview with Philip Ackerman-Leist, a farmer and professor of Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems at Green Mountain College in Vermont, who is also the author of *A Precautionary Tale*. Ackerman-Leist is very familiar with the area surrounding Mals, since he lived and worked in the area as a farmer in the early 1990s. In both his book and the article we read, he highlights the struggles Mals went through on its long and difficult journey to become a pesticide free municipality. Their story is one of perseverance, tenacity, convictions, and the desire to, as Farmer Richard would say, "do the right thing."

Mals (pronounced Mahltz) is a township located in the Upper Vinschgau Valley of the Italian Alps, in a region called South Tirol. The township is made up of 11 villages ranging in altitudes of 3,000 to 5,500 feet. The largest of the villages lends its name to the municipality, so the villages are collectively known as Mals. Even though the township is in Italy, the inhabitants speak German and retain their Austro-Hungarian heritage. The residents of Mals have been farmers for 30-35 generations, tending their small family farms and carrying on traditions of rotating grain crops with vegetable crops and keeping their soil healthy. Most of the farms are small dairy farms, owning 8-12 cows, who grow their own vegetables and have a handful of fruit trees near their homes.

See our **blog** for the rest of this article!

## What's In The Box?

**PURPLE MAJESTY OR PURPLE VIKING OR GOLD POTATOES:** Purple Majesty potatoes have purple skin and flesh. They are a waxy potato similar to the Gold potatoes. Purple Viking potatoes have purple skin and white flesh. They are more of an all-purpose potato and may be mashed.

**LEEKS:** This is a more mild flavored, delicate member of the onion family. You may find some dirt in between the layers, so be sure to wash them well.

**ORANGE CARROTS:** These sweet carrots make the perfect snack to munch on. They are tender and slim to a bit on the smaller side, so no need to do much cutting or peeling. Just trim off the top and the tip.

**SWEET YELLOW ONIONS:** This is a mild, sweet onion with a noticeably thinner skin. This variety is delicious when roasted, such as in this week's featured recipe.

**PORCELAIN GARLIC:** Don't forget the medicinal importance of garlic as we head into fall and changing temperatures. Include it in your meals every day and keep your immune system strong!

**VARIETY OF TOMATOES:** Given the rainy weather we had recently, you may notice the shelf life on your tomatoes is less than earlier in the season. Watch them carefully as they ripen. If you notice a spot forming, it's time to eat the tomato. Alternatively, use them more as a "green" tomato. Check out this week's **Cooking With the Box** article for suggestions.

**GOLDEN GRAPE TOMATOES:** Chop these up with some of the red bell peppers, sweet onions and garlic to make a beautiful fresh salsa!

**ORANGE ITALIAN FRYING PEPPERS:** This is one of our most disease resistant varieties and is producing well in a somewhat challenging pepper season. This is a SWEET pepper that is good raw or cooked.

**RED BELL PEPPER:** Red peppers are at their peak of ripeness. We recommend using them within a few days.

**BROCCOLI:** This is the start of our fall broccoli season. Consider pairing broccoli with other vegetables in the box for a No-Bake Veggie Pizza.

**CAULIFLOWER OR RED CABBAGE:** Our fall cauliflower is trickling in, but we hope to have more over the next week or two (possibly a nice crop of yellow cauliflower!) Some boxes will receive cauliflower and others will receive red cabbage!

**EDAMAME:** We're nearing the end of edamame season, possibly just one more week. Don't forget you can easily blanch edamame and freeze it for use throughout the winter.

**PURPLE OR GREEN TOMATILLOS:** Some boxes may receive a small variety of tomatillo that is green with some hints of purple. This is a new Mexican heirloom tomatillo that's supposed to store well and has some purple coloring. It's best to store all tomatillos at room temperature.

**MINI-SWEET PEPPERS:** These are packed in a brown paper bag and are a sweet pepper appropriate for eating raw or cooking. See this week's vegetable feature for more information.

**POBLANO PEPPERS:** This is the only green pepper in this week's box and it is a **HOT** pepper. The flavor is enhanced with roasting and it adds a lot of flavor to fresh tomatillo salsa.

**SPAGHETTI SQUASH:** We grow a small, golden variety called "Angel Hair." Cut in half and bake in the oven until tender. Cool enough to handle and then use a fork to scrape the spaghetti like strands of flesh out of the shell.

**CHOICE--KOREAN PEPPERS:** Please note these are a **HOT** pepper. Refer to our blog post from last week where we give you more information about this pepper as well as suggestions for using and preserving them. We've sent enough for a small handful per vegetable share.

## Featured Vegetable: Mini - Sweet Peppers

These sweet little gems have become something many of our members look forward to every year, and what's not to like about them! They are cute, colorful, sweet and easy to eat. They travel well, require very little if any preparation, store well on the countertop during the season and are easy to preserve. They are delicious raw, roasted, sautéed and are excellent for dipping or stuffing. If I had to choose just one pepper to grow, this would be the chosen one.

For those of you who have been members with our farm for several years, you likely remember the story about how this vegetable came to be part of our repertoire. It's a relatively new addition to our crop plan and we're grateful to one of our longtime CSA members who introduced us to them. Upon his suggestion, Richard picked up a pack of these peppers at the co-op and saved the seeds from them. Please note, each pepper only has a few seeds inside, so the amount of seed we had to start with was pretty slim. He planted out the seeds that year, selected more peppers to save seeds from and thus began the process of developing our own line of seed. At the time he first saw these peppers, they were not very wide-spread in the stores as they are now and seed was not commercially available in this country. Times have changed and mini-sweet peppers, or snacking peppers as they are also called, are much more mainstream. Seed is now commercially available in this country. Several years ago we purchased some seed to try.

*See our **blog** for the rest of this vegetable feature article!*

## Cooking With This Week's Box!

Here we are in mid-September and while the trees are still mostly green, you can see they'll be transitioning to their fall colors soon. Yesterday we finished winter squash harvest and our greenhouse is filled with bins of colorful squash! We hope you'll consider joining us for our **Fall Harvest Party** coming up on September 23. Come and see the farm and enjoy delicious food, great conversation with other CSA members and tour the fields!

Lets kick off this week's cooking extravaganza with a focus on this week's featured vegetable, the beautiful mini-sweet peppers. These little gems are delicious just on their own, but they are also really great when roasted. This week I suggest using most of your mini-sweet peppers to make **Sheet Pan Roasted Chicken with Potatoes & Sweet Peppers** (see below). This is a simple recipe featuring herb-roasted potatoes, mini-sweet peppers and sweet onions, but very tasty and filling.

I'm excited that we have both spaghetti squash and leeks in this week's box so we can use them to make **Spaghetti Squash & Leek Skillet Gratin**. I have shared this recipe with anyone who tells me they don't care for spaghetti squash and everyone who's tried it has had to admit it's a pretty good way to prepare this unique squash! This dish is easy to put together and includes sweet peppers as well as spaghetti squash, leeks and garlic. Leftovers are pretty good the next day too. You might want to save one leek to make this recipe for **Apple, Leek & Cheddar Quiche** which we featured several years ago in a newsletter. I had forgotten about this until one of our members reminded us about this recipe in our Facebook Group last week. This will make a great weekend brunch item with some leftovers for breakfast on Monday morning.

While the tomatoes in this week's box aren't technically green tomatoes, most of them were a bit on the under-ripe side when they were picked. We know tomato season won't last forever, so I'm going to pull the trigger on making our annual dinner of **Fried Green Tomatoes**. This recipe also includes a simple sauce to serve alongside.

*See our **blog** for the rest of Chef Andrea's suggestions for utilizing every item in your box including recipe links!*

## Sheet Pan Roasted Chicken with Potatoes & Mini-Sweet Peppers

Yield 4-5 servings

4 cups diced potatoes (about 1 ½ pounds)	½ tsp fennel seeds
2 cups mini-sweet peppers, stem removed & quartered (about 1/2 pound)	1 tsp salt, divided
1 medium sweet onion, diced	Freshly ground black pepper, as needed
1 tsp dried thyme	3 Tbsp sunflower or vegetable oil, divided
1 tsp dried parsley	6 pieces chicken thighs, legs, wings or a combination, skin-on
½ tsp dried rosemary	

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F. Combine potatoes, mini-sweet peppers, and onions in a medium mixing bowl. Add dried herbs, freshly ground black pepper and about ½ tsp salt. Drizzle with 2 Tbsp oil. Toss the vegetables to thoroughly mix the vegetables with the herbs and coat everything with oil. Spread the vegetables evenly on a sheet pan and set aside.
2. Put the pieces of chicken in the same bowl you mixed the vegetables in. Drizzle with 1 Tbsp oil and sprinkle with about ½ tsp salt as well as freshly ground pepper. Mix well with your hands and make sure all sides of the chicken are thoroughly coated with oil and seasonings.
3. Put the pieces of chicken on top of the vegetables, skin side up.
4. Put the chicken and vegetables in the oven and roast for 30 minutes. If necessary stir the vegetables a bit so they brown more evenly. Return to the oven for an additional 10 minutes or until the vegetables are golden brown and tender and the chicken is golden, crispy and cooked through.
5. Remove from the oven and serve hot.

By Chef Andrea, Harmony Valley Farm