



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993
Twin Cities Edition - Green Week Delivery

May 7, 2009

Meet the Chef by Brianna Carrow ("We have a winner!" says Richard)

It's the end of the second week of April, sunny and warm. My hands are in a hot, soapy sink full of dishes and I am watching through the kitchen window as the chickens kick up dead leaves on the hill behind the house. All around me is the buzz of activity as new employees arrive to begin the season, new members call for CSA subscriptions, and the crew begins entering busy season mode.

I have just started the season as Harmony Valley's Farm Chef for 2009. After tossing the idea around for five years, the timing was right when I finally decided to apply this year. I was ready to leave my job as a restaurant manager, as much as I loved the little café I'd been working for. After Andrea called to offer me the job, it seems, in the blink of an eye I had packed up my life in Michigan, said goodbye to my friends and job of six years, and found myself suddenly plopped down in southwest Wisconsin. Just like that.

After graduating from high school in Romeoville, Illinois, I attended Northern Michigan University and earned a bachelor's degree in restaurant management, with the intent to someday open a little restaurant of my own. I loved cooking for family and friends as a youngster and believed that this meant I should strive to open my own restaurant. As it turns out, working in a restaurant is nothing at all like cooking for family and friends. (Who knew?) Nonetheless, I have had a great time and met wonderful people while meandering on this path. I have spent the last six years working at a darling, quirky little restaurant in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, in an awesome town called Marquette, which is right on the shore of Lake Superior. After working there as a cook, a baker, a server, a host, and finally a manager, I have decided I am ready to get back into the kitchen.

Like all of Harmony Valley's past chefs, I have come here because this is where the best food is. It is a rare privilege to



Storage: Everything in the fridge.

Use first: Ramps, sorrel, chives, spinach. The other items store very well in the crisper drawer, but use within a week or two for best taste.

THIS WEEK'S BOX

OVERWINTERED PARSNIPS- Extremely sweet, as the starch has had time to convert to sugar over the winter. Roast with olive oil until nicely browned.

RED OR WHITE SUNCHOKES- Small, lumpy root veggie that does not need to be peeled. It can be eaten raw, or cook it as you would a potato.

RAMPS- See veggie feature on back.

SORREL- Crisp green leaves with a flavor of lemon. Try it lightly steamed or sautéed and serve with fish.

OVERWINTERED SPINACH- Wonderfully sweet, thick leaves. Use for a salad. A very different taste & texture from summer spinach

RHUBARB- Make a pie or a crisp. Rhubarb can be cut and frozen if you plan to use it later.

BURDOCK- Long, thin root; discolors quickly after cutting. There is no need to peel it, just give it a good scrub, cut, and cook promptly. Delicious fried in thin slices, or try it steamed.

CHIVES- Chop fresh chives and stir them into soup right before serving to maintain their bright green color and delicate flavor.

BLACK RADISH- Very firm; a storage radish. Traditionally marinated or grated on a salad. Use in the recipe on back.

DECORATIVE WILLOW OR DOGWOOD BUNCHES

be able to work with such a broad variety of high quality food, fresh at its source. I am also here because I want to learn more about farming, and about local food systems.

I have been interested in learning more about organic farming for many years now, and working as the summer farm chef at Harmony Valley has always been a fantasy of mine. It is the perfect opportunity to dovetail these two interests. I am excited to be in a place with so much good food, so much to learn, and so many great people to learn from.

One of my biggest duties here on the farm is preparing lunch for the crew each day. With a head count ranging from 35

to 40, it is a real juggling act to prepare something that everyone will like, in the right quantity, at the right time! In order to minimize my budget, I am to use as much food from the farm as possible. So, rest assured that your hard-working farm crew will be eating fresh, organic, wholesome food. This also serves as a crash course in seasonal cooking. So far this year, the crew has had lots of cabbage, turnips, carrots, radishes, beets, and potatoes.

Another of my duties as farm chef is preparing dinner for Terri, Richard, and Andrea, as well as any other farm residents or guests. For the household's dinners, I get one CSA box a week to incor-

porate into the meals. This gives me a chance to experiment with the veggies you will be getting in your box each week and test-run veggie recipes before passing them along to you.

That brings me to the best part of my job- being a contact person for CSA members. I am your resource for cooking advice and veggie troubleshooting. Although I may not be an expert on all of the vegetables that are grown at Harmony Valley, I am always ready to do a little investigative cooking and eating.

Luckily, I am no stranger to the CSA style of eating. During a brief hiatus from my restaurant career, I worked as a summer intern (read: weed-puller) on an organic vegetable farm in Naperville, Illinois. I have been on both the giving and receiving ends of a CSA box, so I know how it feels. I know the joy and excitement of waiting for your favorites to come into season, and then seeing them appear in the box for the first time. I also know how it feels to open the box and find more fennel in a single day than you've eaten in your entire life. Or basil. Or turnips. Whatever the vegetable may be, if you ever find yourself baffled by something in your weekly box, I'd like to lend my experience. Call before it's too late and you have six weeks' worth of turnips and guilt shoved into the back of your refrigerator. There's no shame in asking for help. It's why I am here. All of you seasoned CSA vets, I'd like to hear from you too! If you have tricks or tips for some of our more unusual produce, or recipes you'd like to pass along, I would greatly appreciate an email! This season will be a learning experience for me. There are plenty of foods that I have never seen before and have no idea how to prepare, but the best way to find out is experimentation.

Besides my moral support, in each week's newsletter I will be supplying you with recipes featuring the vegetables of your current box. These may be recipes that have been sent in by CSA members, recipes I have found in cookbooks and loved, or my own original concoctions.

I look forward to hearing from you, and to meeting many of you at some of the farm events this year!
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Ramps have earned their reputation as one of our customers' favorite springtime treats. They are the earliest allium to appear in the CSA box, and since they are in season for such a short time, it has become a tradition that our CSA members eagerly look forward to all year.

Ramps, or wild leeks, resemble scallions, except that instead of growing closely coiled like a scallion or leek, their white stalk is topped with an open, broad green leaf. Ramps grow wild throughout a large range of the United States. We harvest ours by hand from several hardwood slopes along the Bad Axe River. Although we often process over 3,000 pounds of ramps in a single year, we are careful to be selective in taking only the larger ones, leaving smaller ones in the ground to maintain the population. The fields of ramps seem to benefit from the being thinned out this way, and come back plentifully the following year. This beautiful springtime vegetable is only available for a few weeks of the year. Once the weather warms and we begin having days in the 80's, the leaves rapidly deteriorate, turning yellow and drooping off.

The flavor of ramps is usually described as a combination of onion and garlic. They can be eaten raw, although like most of the onion family, many people find their flavor to be more pleasant after cooking. To cook your ramps, first trim off the end of the bulb with the roots and rinse off any dirt. Cut the white stalk from the leaf; the white part needs a slightly longer cooking time than the green. The white part should be sautéed in oil or butter for 2-3 minutes at low heat; add the greens shortly before serving and cook just long enough for the leaves to wilt. You can use and consume all of the plant. Ramps are a delicious addition to soups, egg dishes, and all kinds of salads. Use them in any place you would normally use an onion or scallion.

Store ramps carefully, they are delicate. Wrap the whole plant in a slightly moist paper towel and place in a plastic bag in the crisper drawer of your fridge. Use within 5 days.



Spring Confetti Salad

Serves 4

This colorful, crunchy side dish gets its flavor from fresh ramps, one of our CSA members' favorite early spring vegetables.

½ cup quinoa
½ cup black radish, grated
½ cup carrot, finely diced
½ a bunch of fresh ramps
2 Tbsp olive oil
Salt to taste

1. Rinse the quinoa in several changes of fresh water. If you do not have a fine enough sieve or colander, you can strain it with the lid of a small saucepan.
2. Cover with fresh water and bring to a boil. Cook covered for about 15 minutes, or until tender. Strain off any excess water and chill quinoa.
3. Rinse the ramps and cut off the leaves from the white stalk. Reserve the white part for use in another recipe. They are great lightly sautéed, or use in any recipe as you would an onion.
4. Cut narrow ribbons of the leaves crosswise with a sharp knife.
5. Mix cooled quinoa, carrot, radish, ramps, and olive oil. A good, flavorful oil is best.