



# Harmony Valley Farm

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

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## The CSA Rookie's Guide to Enjoying New and Unfamiliar Vegetables by Briana Carrow

I think it was the summer between my junior and senior years of high school when my parents first showed up one day with a gigantic cardboard box full of vegetables, hefted it onto the kitchen counter, and declared that we had to eat everything in the box within a week because there would be a new box the next week. My teenaged response was something along the lines of, "What are you talking about?" I discovered that they had joined some sort of strange club that entailed meeting in a parking lot once a week to pick up a box of produce- a box, of all things, who does that?- and they had committed to do this every single week through the end of fall. This, of course, confirmed my suspicion that my parents were completely crazy.

I've gotten past the whole teenage thing and decided that my parents aren't really crazy. However, at the time, I had never heard of community supported agriculture and was only dimly aware of the existence of organically produced food. This started out as my father's interest, as he was always looking for ways to decrease the environmental impact of his lifestyle. He decided that a CSA subscription was the best way for our family to get organic, locally grown food.

Although prior to our first year of CSA we had thought of ourselves as pretty good veggie eaters, nearly every single week of our membership, we encountered strange new vegetables that we had never seen or eaten before. Things that our grocery store didn't carry. Well, we never were a family that condoned the wasting of food, so if it showed up in the box, we were determined to eat it. I remember the first time I ever saw kale and chard. I thought it was a joke. In my pre-CSA existence, we really had never eaten any cooking greens. My leafy repertoire included lettuce and spinach. And then here were these gigantic, gnarly, tough leaves that looked like something growing on the side of the road. I recall one my parents' earliest attempts to work the kale into our diet. Gallantly, they tried chopping it up and baking it into a loaf of bread. (Hey, it works with zucchini, right?) Well. Kale being what it is, and not even remotely zucchini-like, the long, tough fibers of the leaves did not magically melt into the loaf of bread. Instead, they snagged on the bread knife and tangled around as we tried slicing this bread, which

## Frost Report

This past Sunday morning's frost set back our asparagus crop by about 2-3 days, so we had to reduce the amount included in your box this week. Our neighbor Elmer Beechy, another certified organic grower, has been supplementing our asparagus supply, but his fields froze as well. (Thanks go out to another neighbor, David Troyer, for his organic rhubarb, also supplementing ours.) The asparagus should be back on track with this week's forecasted warmer weather. Thank you for your understanding & enjoy the tastes of spring!

Despite the 30 mph winds, we kept the strawberry field covered too, with only a few casualties from the frost. In the places where the cover was ripped, the fragile blossoms blackened and won't produce fruit but it looks like only a loss of 4-5 pints of berries! Big thanks to the Saturday crew who came out & battled the wind to protect the crops.

## THIS WEEK'S BOX

**ASPARAGUS-** Make a quick and delicious cream of asparagus soup by boiling asparagus until bright green and tender, pureeing in a blender along with its cooking water, and stirring in shredded Swiss cheese, cooked bacon crumbles, salt and pepper. Cook just until heated through and serve immediately.

**GREEN GARLIC-** See veggie feature on back.

**EGYPTIAN WALKING ONION-** Green garlic look-alike! The Egyptian onion has tubular leaves, whereas the green garlic's leaves are flat. Stronger onion flavor than scallions, more robust and slightly sweet. Use within 2-3 days, or store wrapped in damp paper towel to protect leaves from wilting. Try them on the grill the next time.

**PARSNIP-** Steam or boil until soft and add to mashed potatoes.

**SUNCHOKES-** Bake into a gratin.

**SPINACH-** Steam or sauté just until the leaves darken and begin to wilt. Add a dash of salt and a squeeze of lemon and serve with fish.

**SPRING RADISH-** Slice and add to your salad.

**SALAD MIX OR ARUGULA-** Add to sandwiches and wraps.

**RHUBARB-** Make rhubarb ice cream, Terri's favorite! Or, if you do not have an ice cream maker, how about a warm rhubarb compote ice cream topping?

**SAUTÉ MIX -** Prepare as a bed for steak or fish.

**RAMPS -** The last week for these delights of spring.

**GARDEN HERB PACKS -** One for each veggie share. Sharing households must also share one herb pack. See contents below.

turned out to be a chewy, crumbly train wreck. Kale bread failed.

The happy ending here is that, since that challenging summer nine years ago, we have found lots of delicious ways to prepare kale (and it didn't take us nine years- it really only took a few days). In fact, kale is one of our favorites now because of its versatility in so many dishes. My parents even dehydrate it to have some on hand during the winter months to add to soups and lasagna.

Recalling our bewilderment that first year, I've assembled a quick guidesheet to give you ideas on how to approach an unfamiliar vegetable for the first time. (see back page)

## Garden Herb Pack Identification Key

Rosemary	Thyme	Savory
Oregano	Sage	Giant of Italy Parsley
Basil	Basil	Krausa Parsley

Grow your own!  
Great for the garden or containers.

## How to Approach an Unfamiliar Vegetable for the First Time

**1. Try it raw.** Cut a piece off and taste it. Face your fear head-on and give it a try. Most veggies are at least edible raw, and many are quite tasty. (If any of our veggies are toxic in their raw state, we promise to warn you first.) This will give you an idea of what it tastes like, what its properties are, what flavors will complement it, and what you may want to use it for. You should try your veggies each week, since the flavor and texture will change based on the weather and the plant's maturity. The recipe that worked so well for green garlic in its first week might not work as well two weeks later, as the plant has had more time to grow and the leaves may be quite a bit tougher.

**2. Is this like any vegetable you are used to?** Most veggies can be sorted roughly into the following categories:

a)Garlicy or oniony b)Firm and crisp c)Firm and starchy d)Leafy and tender e)Leafy and firm/tough f)Veggies not otherwise specified

**3. Cook or prepare your new veggie the way you would prepare a similar veggie.** If you find a veggie that reminds you of a carrot in flavor and texture, how about using it in a dish in place of a carrot to see how it turns out?

**In general, here's some simple rules of preparation for our veggie categories:**

a)Many variations of onion and garlic and their relatives will show up in your box throughout the season, some with slightly different flavors. They can all be used in place of plain old garlic cloves or onions in your usual recipes; simply adjust the quantity to your liking. Strength or flavor will vary from one plant to the next, and from week to week, so be sure you are aware of the potency of your onion or garlic before using it in a recipe.

b)Firm, crisp and pleasant raw: think carrots, radishes, etc. Slice or grate and add to sandwiches or salads.

c)Firm and starchy: think potatoes, sunchokes, winter squash, etc. Moisture and slow cooking times are needed to break down starches. Try boiling, steaming, or slow roasting with plenty of oil.

d)Leafy and tender: salads! Some of the more strongly flavored greens you may wish to mix with milder ones. It depends on your taste.

e)Leafy and firm or tough: kales, chards, etc. Usually, remove the center rib if it is very tough, cut into bite-size pieces and steam or sauté. I also like many of the tougher greens raw, but they must be cut very small or you will spend a lot of your day chewing them.

f)Veggies not otherwise specified: okay, not everything fits neatly into five categories.

**4. Get adventurous.** Try a new recipe, or add your new veggie to an existing recipe. Toss it into your spaghetti sauce. Add it to your chili or chicken soup. Most times that I have used this approach, I have not been disappointed. Many times, I have been delighted.

**5. Use available resources.** Our website has a great archive of recipes for most of our produce, as well as previous years' newsletters and veggie info sheets that give cooking tips. You should also try to get your hands on at least one good cookbook geared towards seasonal eating. I find that when I search "conventional" recipe sources, I end up finding lots of recipes calling for foods that are not in season at the same time and I must make lots of substitutions and adjustments. (Substitutions and adjustments are okay!)

I think that willingness to try something unfamiliar and make substitutions to work with what you have are key to enjoying your CSA experience. My recipe for spring veggie fajitas, for example, skips the traditional and familiar bell peppers because these are not in season in Wisconsin right now. For decades now, we've been accustomed to being able to run to the grocery store and pick up any fruit or veggie we can dream up, and cookbooks have all been written for this paradigm. As you prepare your meals over the coming months, try to see if you can use the seasonal produce from your box instead of supplementing it with out-of-season produce trucked here from Mexico or California. Developing an appreciation for new kinds of vegetables will help you to eat a more varied diet, which is one of the greatest ways to protect your health.

I hope you have some fun as you experiment with preparing and eating new foods. Don't be discouraged if kale bread happens now and then. With a bit of luck, the strange and intimidating new veggie that you encounter today will be one of your favorites for years to come.

### Veggie Feature: Green Garlic

This week's box has two alliums that look very much alike; the Egyptian walking onion, and the green garlic stalk. Green garlic is the young garlic plant, as it first appears in the springtime. As the plant grows and matures throughout the year, the central stalk sends up a shoot that forms a blossom, and the bulb develops underground. By harvesting different parts of the plant at different points in its maturation, we are able to enjoy garlic year-round. This green garlic is the earliest form of garlic that is harvested. We plant extra garlic close together so that we have enough to take some during this green stage. In several weeks, when the blossom shoots, or scapes, begin to appear, these are clipped and also eaten. Preventing the plant from flowering too soon encourages it to channel more of its energy into developing a larger bulb. Finally, as the bulbs are ready to harvest, we use some immediately, as fresh garlic, and cure the rest of it to be used as storage garlic throughout the winter.

If you have storage garlic in your pantry that you have been using for recipes, put it away for a few weeks and enjoy this seasonal treat. The green garlic can be used in any recipe that calls for garlic; its flavor is less concentrated and therefore you can use more of it. The entire plant can be eaten- simply give it a good wash and trim the root end before using.

Green garlic can be used either raw or cooked; you may want to taste a small piece of it to get an idea of its potency before using it, especially if the heat of raw garlic bothers you. If you like it raw, try it in a pasta or potato salad. If you prefer it cooked, try simmering it into pasta sauce, adding to soup or a stir fry, or caramelized and served on a burger or steak. Green garlic should be stored in the refrigerator, and if it is not to be used immediately, should be wrapped with a damp cloth or paper towel.

### Spring Vegetable Fajitas

Serves 4

*Instead of out-of-season bell peppers, this recipe relies entirely on the spring veggies you have in your box. The seasonings are kept light to allow the delicate flavors of the vegetables to be the focus.*

1 lb. sirloin steak (substitute chicken or seitan, if you prefer)	
1 tsp cooking oil	2 tsp lemon juice
1 bunch asparagus	Salt and pepper
2 green garlic stalks	1 cup sour cream
2 Egyptian onions	4 fajita-size tortillas

-Wash and prepare veggies: remove any woody ends from asparagus and cut into 2" pieces. Split the thick bulbs of the garlic and onion in half lengthwise and cut both into 2" lengths, including leaves.

-Heat cooking oil in a heavy skillet. Sear steaks, turning once, and cook until medium, or your preference. Remove steaks from skillet to a cutting board and slice into ½" thick strips.

-In same skillet, sauté veggies about 5 minutes, or until asparagus is al dente and onions and garlic begin to brown. Remove from heat and toss with lemon juice, salt, and pepper.

-Steam or microwave tortillas until warm and pliable. Spread with sour cream and equally divide steak strips and cooked veggies among the 4 tortillas. Roll and serve warm.