



News  
from

# Harmony Valley Farm

An Update for Our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

**MADISON AND LOCAL EDITION**

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## TIPS FOR NEW MEMBERS

Seasonal eating is an adventure. As each new CSA box comes, you will be exposed to the new colors, flavors and aromas of foods you have never cooked with before, as well as old favorites. Transitioning to this new style of cooking can be challenging at first, so we have compiled some tips from the farmers and experienced members to help you through the adjustment period.

### Fresh Food Is About Nutrition!

Chantel Serack, our drop site coordinator at the Northwestern Health Sciences University in Bloomington, wants to remind members that while they are investing in a family farm, they are also investing in their health. Students at the university learn in their nutrition classes that the longer the vegetables sit on the shelf in the store, the less vitamins and enzymes are available when consumed. One of the advantages of joining a CSA is that the food is very fresh, harvested 24-48 hours before it is delivered. At the farm we take great care in proper post-harvest handling methods, to help preserve the nutrients in the vegetables. On harvest days, we take bulk tanks of water into the field to remove the 'field heat' from the crops. We then wash, ice as needed, and store the crops in our walk-in coolers set at the proper temperature and humidity conditions to preserve freshness. Help maintain the nutrition available in your vegetables once they get to your home by following these guidelines.

### Storage and Handling

**Refrigerate.** Get the vegetables out of the box and into a plastic bag in the crisper drawer of your refrigerator as quickly as possible. We often include storage tips in the newsletter, but space doesn't always allow it. The Asparagus to Zucchini cookbook has excellent storage tips for each vegetable in the

cookbook. Order one over the web at: [www.macsac.org](http://www.macsac.org).

**Eat the peel.** Washing is all that is necessary! The peel of most vegetables contains over half the nutrients. No need to peel our organic carrots, parsnips, turnips, potatoes, apples, eggplant, winter radishes, cucumbers, rutabagas, burdock or sunchokes.

**Yes, you should wash the vegetables.** We wash the vegetables at the farm to cool them and get rid of the grit. But we do reuse the CSA boxes that are in good shape. It is a good policy to give the veggies a quick rinse before you use them.

**Eat perishable items first.** You can check out the home page of our website for a preview of next week's box. (We try to be as accurate as possible, but weather sometimes fools us). Plan your meals to use the tender veggies first, and the hardier ones later in the week.

### Get Recipe Ideas

**First, Eat It Raw.** Trying a new vegetable in its raw state will help you decide whether you want to stir fry, use it in a soup, salad, or in pasta sauce. You may discover that you love raw burdock and rutabagas as much as we do!

**Experiment.** Chantel recommends trying unfamiliar vegetables in a stir-fry. Use recipes as guidelines, but give yourself the freedom to substitute and use what you have.

**The Web.** [www.epicurious.com](http://www.epicurious.com) is a great source of on-line recipes.

**Search Back Copies of our Newsletters.** All of our newsletters are archived. On the homepage of our website: [www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com](http://www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com), click on the header 'Recipes'. You will find a pull down list of all the vegetables available in your box. Click on the vegetable in question for a



## This Week's Box

### BROWN WEEK

**Asparagus** - The featured veggie.

**Chives** - Great on salad or in a creamy dip.

**Parsnips** - Overwintered and as sweet as can be. Roast them in the oven with olive oil, salt and pepper.

**Radishes** - Cabernet. Mildly spicy and great on salad.

**Ramps** - Wild-harvested, delicate white bulbs with a garlic zing. Use the greens too!

**Salad Mix** - Our first harvest!

**Bunched Spinach** - Sweet and savory.

**Sorrel or Nettles** - Find a recipe for French Sorrel Soup! A delicious tangy cooking green. Nettles are great in quiche!

**White Sunchokes** - Boil first and then roast in the oven with olive oil and the parsnips. Salt, pepper, herbs, yum!

**Watercress** - A wild-harvested spicy salad green.

**Choice:** Curly Willow. Limited availability. For The Every-Other-Week Brown Group Only.

list of all the recipes we have ever included in a newsletter for that vegetable.

**Keep your newsletters in a binder to refer back to.** All the newsletters are available on the web, but keeping your own hard copies will help you find that cherished recipe in a pinch.

**Join our CSA Email Group on Yahoo Groups.** Trade recipe ideas, cookbook suggestions, and cooking tips with all the other CSA members! To join, go to the following web address:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HarmonyValleyCSA/>. Click on 'Join This Group', and follow the instructions.

**Send an email to Chef Kyle:** [chef@harmonyvalleyfarm.com](mailto:chef@harmonyvalleyfarm.com).

Don't know what to do with sunchokes? Kyle does! Send him your questions via email. Kyle is available Monday-Friday to help you prepare unfamiliar items.

### **Favorite Cookbooks**

**From Asparagus to Zucchini.** Written by the Madison Area CSA Coalition, especially for the CSA member. This cookbook is organized by vegetable, and includes histories and storage tips. Order off the web at: [www.macsac.org](http://www.macsac.org).

**Local Flavors by Deborah Madison.** Written for the Farmer's Market shopper, this seasonal cookbook is great for the CSA member. (And it features a photo of the HVF market truck!)

**The Garden-Fresh Vegetable Cookbook by Andrea Chesman.** Recommended by members Mark and Robin Craig. This book is chock full of fresh vegetable recipes.

**Cooking with the Seasons by Monique Hooker.** Try this book full of wonderful seasonal recipes from our local chef and CSA member Monique Hooker.



*Watercress. Photographer Dan Rhudy will be treating you to wonderful photos of the farm all season long! Make sure to check out his work in color, in the on-line version of the newsletter at [www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com](http://www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com).*

#### **Watercress Salad**

Left fresh and raw the wild watercress that grows along the banks of the crystal clear stream at Harmony Valley Farm makes for a perfect spicy spring salad.

¼ lb Harmony Valley Farm watercress  
3 Tbls light olive oil or a neutral vegetable oil like canola  
1 Tbls quality sherry vinegar  
½ Tbls honey (substitute a generous pinch of sugar)  
Juice of half a lemon  
1 oz of shaved parmesan (substitute any domestic hard cheese)  
salt & pepper to taste

Method: In a colander gently rinse the watercress with cold water and allow to drain, pat dry with a paper or tea towel, and set aside. In a small mixing bowl combine oil, vinegar, honey, and lemon juice and whisk together to make a vinaigrette. Dress ¼ lb. watercress with all of the vinaigrette, season with salt and pepper to taste, and top with shaved parmesan cheese. (serves 2-3)

## **Asparagus-always worth the effort!**

*by Kyle Cross*

Twenty year old beds at the farm continue to produce a beautiful spring crop of large and juicy asparagus. The farm's green asparagus is just perfect with a little cold pressed olive oil and a few monitored minutes over the glowing coals of the backyard Weber. I spoke to Richard about the difficulties of growing this popular spring vegetable. Canadian thistle and quack grass are just a couple of weed varieties that come spring time, make their attempt to over-take the fertile fields. Richard fights back with a cover crop of rye grass to help minimize the weed pressure. Of course you could just till, right? Tilling is fine for an annual, but asparagus is a perennial, always there just under the soil with an interwoven network of roots lying dormant over the cold Wisconsin winter. Got weeds? The asparagus fields at the farm are weeded by hand, think about that the next time your frustration causes you to use all but your last oz. of Round Up on a handful of dandelions. Along with the nuisance weeds, asparagus is just craving for a spring thaw and copious amounts of Midwest sunshine. Asparagus is very sensitive to frost, and we may easily lose a week's crop if the temperatures drop low at any point during the spring harvest. A few weeks ago, the crew planted a new field of asparagus, 1.5 acres designated for future CSA boxes. It will be a full two years before these beds yield any quantity of the vegetable worth its weight to harvest.

For most crops we spread fertilizer in the fall, before we seed in the spring. But for asparagus, we spread compost and minerals on the field after it is harvested in the spring, to give energy to the ferns as they grow throughout the summer. These plants help produce underground root reserves that store energy for the following spring. The new crop then uses this back-up fuel instead of depending on photosynthesis to get an early jump on the season.

#### **Cream of Asparagus & Sorrel Soup**

The combination of Harmony Valley Farm's intensely flavored sorrel and earthy asparagus make a luxurious soup.

½ lb Harmony Valley Farm asparagus  
1 bunch Harmony Valley Farm sorrel  
2 C low sodium chicken or vegetable stock  
1 C heavy cream  
2 Tbls unsalted butter  
salt and pepper to taste

Method: In a large pot, blanch both the asparagus and sorrel in generously salted simmering water for twenty to thirty seconds, immediately transfer to ice water to cool. Drain the asparagus and sorrel in a colander, rough chop into half-inch pieces and set aside. In a medium size sauce pan on medium heat, bring the chicken stock and heavy cream to a simmer. Add the chopped asparagus and sorrel and continue to heat for two minutes, remove from heat and allow to cool. In a blender or a food processor puree the mixture until smooth and creamy. Reheat in a sauce pan and adjust with salt and pepper. (Chefs note: add ¾ of the liquid to puree the vegetables, finish with the last ¼ of the liquid to adjust consistency). (serves 2-3)