



Harmony Valley Farm

Producers of Fine Organic Produce & Beef

An Update for Our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

Madison & Local Edition

Fall Harvest Party & Farm Update

By Richard de Wilde and Terri Kromenaker

We had a great Harvest Party this weekend! We did things a little differently this year, by adding an optional workday opportunity for our CSA members on the Saturday before the Sunday party. We had about a dozen people come on Saturday to help clean up the campground or to camp for the weekend. They built a fire pit out of river rocks that were washed into the meadow, cleared wood, and rolled up and removed some barbed wire fencing. We had three or four tents and one car camper for Saturday night plus some friends who stayed in town.

Angel butchered the pig on Saturday and started a big pot of marinade to preserve until next week's staff pig roast. So much pig, so little time! On Sunday, he arrived early to get the roaster started so the meat would be cooked by the afternoon. Party guests started arriving around 11AM. We were still setting up the tables for the potluck and some of the activities, but they made themselves at home until we were ready to start the wagon tours of the farm. It was another bright, sunny and warm day – perfect for a gathering!

We chose the two four-wheel drive John Deere tractors for the tours to lessen the chance of getting stuck in the mud and having to call for help. 3-year-old Henrick and his father Geoff, who camped overnight, were on hand to help get the wagons ready. We turned our handy wood crates, soon to be used to hold the sweet potato harvest, upside down to make good seats on the harvest wagon. Later, they were stacked to become a playhouse and “pumpkin store” on the wagon during dinner. We had so many great kids visiting this weekend!

We started the tour with the worst flooded fields. Seeing what looked like



Richard gives one of the pigs a bath

good roma tomatoes started the discussion about the possibility of flood contamination and started people wondering why we didn't harvest those tomatoes and other crops that still looked good. I explained that between our own soil, water, and produce testing and the inspector's input, we decided it was safe to harvest some fields but not all of them. At the end of the tour, several people expressed a new understanding for the problems of floodwater and appreciation that we have made food safety a priority.

We crossed the river, which was running a little high due to 1.5 inches of new rain on Friday, and many dangling legs got wet, but the alligators and piranha fish all scattered so everybody made it through in one piece. Next stop was the pepper field. It is beautiful in its contrast of green plants and yellow, orange and red fruits. Many members picked salsa ingredients to take home and some daring souls even picked habañero peppers. We continued on to check out the new field of radishes and new salad mix field. We ended in the sweet potatoes, near the late tomatoes and summer squash, so there were more chances to pick a last zucchini of the year and a few roma tomatoes for that salsa. The sweet potatoes are covered with a huge heat-trapping blanket that we use to cover the field when frost threatens and to help the potatoes mature in the ground a bit longer. Several kids

This Week's Box

Brown Week

- ♥ **GOLD BEETS:** Make a beautiful cold salad with sliced red onion and a red wine vinaigrette
- ♥ **DELICATA, KABOCHA, OR FESTIVAL SQUASH:** Dice and roast with olive oil and dried herbs
- ♥ **RED BARON POTATOES:** Slice thin and wrap in foil with onions, butter, salt & pepper. Toss it on the grill at your next fall cookout
- ♥ **ASSORTED PEPPERS:** Top off a tossed salad. Last of the season.
- ♥ **RASPBERRIES:** Toss into a fruit salad
- ♥ **ROMAINE & LEAF LETTUCE:** Time to make a salad topped with the last tomatoes & peppers of the season
- ♥ **PINK PASSION CHARD:** Add to lentil soup
- ♥ **ASSORTED TOMATOES:** Make a cream of tomato soup & serve with grilled cheese sandwiches!
- ♥ **YELLOW & RED ONIONS**
- ♥ **GARLIC**
- ♥ **TOMATILLO SALSA PACK**

crawled under the cover and dug out sweet potatoes under cover of the white blanket. The row of pumpkins is next to the potato field so of course we also picked as many pumpkins as we could carry. Despite having one of our pumpkin crops washed away in the flood, there were still enough for everyone to take one home! About then Andrea called on the radio and said, “The pig roast is ready”, so we headed home.

Our guests supplied a variety of delicious sides, breads, and desserts to go along with the tasty pig Angel prepared. Andrea also arranged a sampling of the cheeses from Otter Creek Farm and Castle Rock Organic Farm, a preview of the Cheese Share we plan to offer our CSA members next year! After we ate, it was time to feed the pigs and goats. Richard took

some of the kids down to the pasture and helped them fill buckets with grain and put the feed in the trough for the goats and in the dishes for the pigs. The pigs made me understand the true meaning of “you eat like a pig” and feeding time was a big hit with all of us. The pigs were thirsty after they ate but when Richard filled their water trough, they decided to both drink from it and bathe in it.

Some visitors were up for a little friendly competition so we explained the rules to our Packing Shed Olympics Timed Box Trial. Teams have to assemble the waxed CSA boxes, stack them on a two-wheel cart, convey them across the concrete to a pallet, layer them on the pallet, use a pallet jack to get the boxes back to where you started, and flatten the boxes. Despite the fierce competition, everyone was a winner and everyone went home with a prize of some kind!

It was nice to take a break and enjoy the afternoon with our members. We are so thankful for the support you have offered us through the flood and our recovery efforts. We’ve received over \$40,000 in donations, bringing us closer to our overall goal of \$160,000. The Harvest Party means fall is really here and the season is almost over. It was the last official party of the year, but we’re planning more events including the Core Group meetings (October 7 in Minneapolis, October 13 in Madison, time & location TBA) and our Supporter Appreciation Dinner in the spring! We’re also preparing for 2008 sign ups; before you know it, winter will be here!

VEGETABLE FEATURE OF THE WEEK: SAVING SEEDS

This week’s veggie column is a little out of the ordinary, yet relevant nonetheless. This week I did more with veggies than just cook them. I was commissioned with the task of harvesting seed to save for next year’s pepper crop. Through this process, I’ve had the chance to sponge up some info on seeds from Richard and thought I’d share it with you!

Most of our seeds are ordered in late December or early January to ensure having what we need for the year; wait too long and you risk not being able to get seeds due to shortages. The majority of our seeds come from four major seed companies marketing to organic and specialty growers and offering a wide variety of vegetables from around the world. We try to purchase as many organic seeds as possible but some seeds are not available organically or are of very poor quality. In these cases, according to organic standards, we can use untreated conventional seeds. One of the concerns I had about using conventional seeds was the risk of introducing genetically engineered seeds onto the farm. What I learned is that the companies we purchase from have signed the “Safe Seed Pledge” supported by the Council for Responsible Genetics. This pledge states that these companies will not knowingly buy or sell genetically engineered seeds.

Running a seed production operation is a whole different ballgame than farming for vegetable production. As such, we focus on growing vegetables....most of the time. We save our own seeds to plant the following year for several crops. For instance, our Edamame crop this year was grown from our own seed that we grew and harvested last year. The variety of Edamame we grow is superior to any seed that is available in the United States. If we were to buy this variety of organic seed, we would have to pay about \$14 a pound and have it imported from Japan. This is pretty expensive compared to conventional or organic varieties available domestically. Our solution is to grow some Edamame every year for the sole purpose of saving for next year. While this is more labor intensive for us, it is still more cost effective.

This past week my task was to extract seeds from six different varieties of peppers. Seed, organic or conventional, is not readily available for these varieties or is not of the same quality we obtain by saving seed from our own crop. Richard selected peppers from plants that were strong and healthy, had good yields of fruit with desirable characteristics of shape and color, and were free of disease. After the peppers were stored in the green house for several days to allow them to mature fully, Margo, Adelaida and I extracted the seeds by hand, removing all the fibrous pith and tissue. Then I put them in a dehydrator overnight. Now they are all in labeled bags in the freezer waiting for spring’s arrival. While the work was tedious, I’ll be glad we did it next year when I take the first sweet bite of one of those cute, little pimiento peppers!

GRANDMA YODER'S SQUASH PIE

Makes 2 8-inch pies

2 Cups cooked squash (butternut, delicata or kabocha)	¼ tsp salt
3 eggs, separated. Mix yolks with squash. Save whites for later.	¼ tsp nutmeg
1 ¼ cup brown sugar	½ tsp ginger
2 heaping Tbsp flour	1/8 tsp allspice
3 cups milk (scalded)	1/8 tsp cloves
	¼ tsp cinnamon
	2-8" pie crusts, unbaked

-Preheat oven to 375°F. Puree squash in a food processor. Mix in egg yolks. Add sugar, flour, milk, salt, and spices. Mix well to combine.
 -Beat egg whites till frothy. Fold into squash mixture.
 -Pour into unbaked pie crust and bake at 375° F for 20 minutes. Turn the temperature down to 325°F. Bake til done (when knife comes out clean, but the top is slightly jiggly.) Serve with whipped cream and store leftovers in fridge.

NEW THIS FALL

Organic, Pastured Poultry

Read last week’s newsletter or pick up a brochure at your site to find out more about Tilth Farms Certified Organic Poultry, available for delivery in November and December. Turkeys \$45 each, Chickens \$48 for a box of 4.

Queen Bee Soaps, based here in Viroqua WI, has generously donated 250 bars of their handmade soaps for us to sell to aid our fundraising efforts!

They will be available for your purchase in sets of 5 for \$25. Check your email for details and order yours today! Thank you to www.queenbeesoaps.com

Madison Core Group Meeting

Saturday, October 13, 2-4pm, Location TBA

Some of our best ideas have come out of these meetings with our members. We’ll be planning for next year’s pricing and products so bring your ideas on how we can improve our CSA! Email invitation coming soon.

We have officially entered the Internet age. To get the absolute latest, up to the minute goings on at the farm, go to our Farmer’s Blog (or Flog) at www.harmonyvalleyfarm.blogspot.com