



Stone Soup

Stearns Farm CSA • Community Supported Agriculture
862 Edmands Road, Framingham, MA 01701 - www.stearnsfarmcsa.org
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TURNING THE CORNER

By Kathy Huckins

This is about the middle of the season for all our sharers, but for us, it is time to start preparing the beds for the winter season. We have eaten out several beds of carrots, beets, scallions, lettuce, greens, radishes, onions, spinach, garlic, strawberries, etc. Some of these beds are worked up and replanted with a second crop. Most of them are ready for the next stage. First we mow the crop down. Then we sprinkle minerals on all of them and spread unfinished compost on many of them. They will be spaded in and planted with a cover crop to cover and protect the soil for the winter. This will allow the microorganisms to incorporate the crop residue, compost, and minerals during the off season. Their job is to balance the soil so it will be ready for spring planting. It may look like they are resting, but it's only an illusion. Even the earthworms work hard in the winter, taking a break in the heat of the summer.

Seeing this shift from constant planting and tending to preparations for the next season is always a surprise. I thought we just planted those early carrots and now we are clearing the beds. We sure have eaten a lot of produce so far this season. Where has it gone?? We forget that every week hundreds of pounds of our precious crops are harvested, cleaned and put on the stand. No use getting attached to any one of them. They run their course and are gone. It happens so fast. It makes me want to chew more consciously, savor every bit of flavor and texture available and not take them for granted. Happy chewing. ☺

ON THE STAND THIS WEEK

(dependent on mother nature)

ON THE STAND: Eggplant, sweet peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers; summer squash and patty pans; red onions, carrots, red potatoes; watermelon and cantaloupe; celery.

PYO: Cherry tomatoes and Juliet plum tomatoes; hot peppers; tea and culinary herbs; a bouquet of flowers; braising greens of collards, chard and kale.

HOT PEPPERS ARE HERE!

We grow 6 types of hot peppers, and now you can pick your own. This week we will mark their bed for you, and you can pick the ones you want.

HUNGARIAN HOT WAX: a yellow hot pepper about 5" long, smooth and waxy, tapering to a point. Easy to stuff and to peel after roasting; thick fleshed for frying. Definitely, but not overly, hot.

CHERRY BOMB: Very hot, rounded to top-shaped fruit averaging 2 ½."

EARLY JALAPENO: Traditional 2 ½" sausage-shaped, blunt fruits. Changes from dark green to red. They are often roasted and chopped and used to season corn bread and cheese dishes. They add pizzazz to any Southwestern-style dish and make delicious stuffed appetizers, pickles and jams.

JOE'S LONG CAYENNE: The 8 to 10" long, thin-fleshed fruits taper to a skinny point. It turns bright red for homemade hot sauce and dries well for ristras and delicious, dried hot pepper flakes.

PAPRIKA SUPREME: Sweet and spicy, for fresh use, but especially good for drying and grinding into flavorful red paprika powder. Tapered, pointed fruits, average 6 to 8."

HABANERO: Super hot 2" wrinkled fruits ripen from dark green to salmon orange. Fresh or dried.

UPCOMING FARM EVENTS

Saturday, August 23th	Onion Harvest
Sunday, September 28th	Harvest Festival
Saturday, October 18th	Garlic Planting

GARDEN SHOWCASE: EGGPLANT

By Donna Savastio

Eggplants belong to the nightshade family of vegetables, which includes tomatoes, sweet peppers and potatoes. Historians believe that eggplant has its origins in India, but there are written accounts from the 5th century indicating its cultivation in China. Wherever it originated, it is now used throughout the world and is an important part of many cuisines. As eggplants migrated through Asia, round shapes and slender, elongated fruits were developed, along with a variety of colors. It arrived in Europe during the 8th century and was brought to North America in the 1500's by the Spanish and Portuguese explorers. It was used as an ornamental before it became commonly eaten, and it did not become popular to eat here until the late 1800's. It was one of President Andrew Johnson's favorite foods—he liked it stuffed with tomatoes, onions, celery and bread crumbs.

Eggplant comes in many varieties, colors and shapes. It contains important minerals and lots of dietary fiber, making it a very hearty and filling vegetable. It can be roasted and used in Indian curry dishes; European-style with the flesh scooped out of the skin and mashed with butter, salt and pepper; turned into a French ratatouille; stir-fried Asian style with herbs and spicy sauces; mixed with sesame tahini for Baba Ghanoush; dipped into Japanese tempura batter and fried; layered into a moussaka casserole; and pickled into a Spanish en escabeche. Truly an international vegetable!

To prepare, wash well. Once cut, eggplant will begin to turn brown, so cut shortly before cooking. Some people like to salt it before using it in recipes—to prevent too much oil absorption and to remove any bitterness it may have. This is a matter of personal preference, and with eggplant as fresh as ours is probably not required. Enjoy! 🍆

EGGPLANT ELEGANCE

By Kathy Huckins

I noticed today towards the end of the pickup that many folks had shied away from colorful varieties of eggplant and settled for the classic large Italian dark purple fruits. I invite you to try some of the others as well. Let me introduce them to you:



ROSA BIANCA: Round 4 to 5" fruit streaked with white and violet. Plump and variably ribbed. They have a mild, creamy taste. This is a traditional Italian heirloom.

CALLIOPE: Small variegated fruit. It is a beautiful, oval, white and purple-streaked Indian-style eggplant.

ORIENT EXPRESS: A slender, 8 to 10" glossy deep purple fruit. It is tender, delicately flavored and quick to cook.

Take a chance and try them out while they last. 🍆

PICK-YOUR-OWN

**I can't do my pick-your-own on the day of my pickup:
Can I come back another time?**

You can come back to the farm anytime that week to do your PYO, preferably before the next pickup. The amounts will be left up on the blackboard under the stand. However, they can change from pickup to pickup, depending on availability. That is why we ask you to do your PYO before the next pickup day. The farm is open, meaning that the electrical deer fence is off, from 9am to 5pm, Tuesday through Saturday.

However, those PYO crops outside the fence can be picked any day or time, dawn to dusk — this includes the tea herbs, culinary herbs, and also the flowers.



As always, it is helpful to us if you bring from home pint, half pint and quart containers so you can measure your share accurately. There are many sizes of containers out in the marketplace now, so this is your opportunity to understand what makes up a pint or quart. Back to grade school math! 🍆

This week, the Organic Consumers' Association recommends you check out *Good Food*, a recent documentary on the growing local, sustainable food movement. Click [here](#) to learn more and see the trailer.

GARDEN SHOWCASE: SWEET ONIONS

By Donna Savastio

The onion is a member of the pungent *Allium* genus of the lily family, which also includes garlic, leeks, shallots, scallions and chives. The word onion comes to us from the Latin *unio* (meaning large pearl), which in Middle English became *unyon*. In fact, the city of Chicago was named for a variety of onion the Native American Indians called *chicago* (*A. canadense*). The onion was considered as valuable as gold in the Middle Ages and has long been a symbol of eternity due to its structural composition of layers within layers which form a sphere. Sweet onion varieties have been traced back to a packet of seeds from the Canary Islands which were sent to Texas in 1898. Those Bermuda onion seeds were planted, and the sweet onion crop was an instant success.



Healers through the ages have had great respect for the curative powers of the onion, and recent studies have validated these old beliefs. Onions contain more than one hundred sulfur-containing compounds. It is the sulfur compounds that cause the eyes to tear up when cutting onions, but sweet onions do not contain these compounds. Onions are rich in flavonoids, which have been shown to deactivate several potent carcinogens and tumor promoters as well as interfere with the growth of estrogen-sensitive cells involved in breast cancer. An onion a day can also raise your HDL (good cholesterol) level, resulting in lower blood pressure and prevention of blood clots. One-half cup of raw onion has 30 calories, and onions contain generous amounts of vitamin B6, vitamin B1 and folic acid.

Choose onions that are tightly closed and are absolutely dry. The skin should be bright and shiny. If you notice dark, powdery patches under the skin, pass on the onion, as this is an indication of mold which will eventually spoil the flesh. Sprouting is an indication of age and poor storage. However, if the sweet onions have sprouted in your pantry, you can use the green sprouts as a substitute for scallions even if the flesh cannot be used. Sweet onions have a shorter shelf life than common varieties due to a higher water and sugar content so it is important to store them properly. Ideally, sweet onions should be stored in a cool, dark, dry location and spread out for optimum air circulation. Many growers suggest placing onions in a clean pair of pantyhose with knots tied in between each onion and then hung in a cool, dry place. Just snip off below each knot when you need one. Stored properly, sweet onions

should last in your pantry about ten days to two weeks. Although sweet onions are best eaten raw, they can be chopped and frozen for future cooking uses, with no blanching necessary. Frozen onions begin to lose their flavor after about twelve months in the freezer. Cooking converts the sometimes spicy all-purpose onion into sweet morsels, but cooked sweet onions are even sweeter yet—some say even sweet enough to use in a chocolate cake! ☺

CHICKENS AT STEARNS FARM?

By Eric Van Bean

Bawk Bawk baaagaw! Sorry about that, I sometimes slip into the new language I've been learning over the past few months...chicken. My name is Eric, and some of you may have seen me working on the chicken coop. I started building the chicken tractor around the middle of the 2007 season after Kathy put out the word about looking to bring chickens to the farm. A chicken tractor? Immediately my mind had Fog Horn Leghorn atop the red tractor plowing alongside Chris.

A chicken tractor, as I later learned, has nothing to do with any of the Loony Tunes characters but is a very ingenious way of keeping chickens. The idea is that the chicken coop is on wheels so that the entire coop, and the chickens in the coop, can be moved around the farm. In this way, the chickens would provide a source of fertilizer, eat a good number of bugs, and possibly provide a tasting of eggs. However, as Kathy and I problem-solved our way through the project (often dragging poor Brian, Chris and Sonia into the fray) we began to see that integrating chickens into our current farm ecosystem was not going to be possible due to two issues.

One, we learned that the chickens would do better with a small fenced-in area outside the coop, but without a farmer living on our farm, there would be no one to tuck the chickens back into bed each night. The second issue involves the winter and finding homes for the chickens when the farm is closed for the season. These two challenges, plus the rising cost of feed, has led us to end of the quest to bring chickens to Stearns Farm.

However, I'm not disheartened because through this process I realized how lucky we are to be part of a community that looks to new ideas on a regular basis. We are even more blessed because the Stearns farmers are constantly considering the effects of our actions on our farm system as well as the effects on the larger ecosystem. Chickens and their eggs would have been nice, but in the end I'm happier knowing that the decisions made on the farm are made by thoughtful people who care deeply about this place and not by a bunch of rascally Loony Tunes characters. ☺

SHARER RECIPE: GAZPACHO

By Bruce Langmuir



Last week, when I came to Stearns Farm CSA and saw all the tomatoes, cucumbers, green peppers, scallions and garlic, I said: this is THE time of summer for cold gazpacho soup. What makes this soup so good is the fresh taste of all the just-picked vegetables. Persons who have never tried this cold soup may be hesitant, but once they do may soon become fans of its fresh, intense flavors. Cold gazpacho soup is one of summer's pleasures!

Gazpacho originated in the southern Spanish region of Andalusia. It was poor people's food, eaten by the workers in the fields of vineyards, olive plantations, citrus groves and wheat. There are many regional and modern versions of its recipe, but it is usually based on ripe tomatoes, fresh bell peppers, fresh cucumbers and garlic. Their ratio in a recipe can vary considerably, you can substitute vegetables from the garden, and thus it can be based on what you have on hand. Use your imagination and have fun!

The recipe I used is based on Gazpacho Soup Recipes, from COOKS.COM RECIPE SEARCH, which lists 88 different gazpacho soup recipes. The recipe I used below is based on #10 on this list of recipes. Except for blanching the tomatoes, no cooking is involved.

6 large ripe tomatoes, blanched and peeled
3 large fresh cucumbers, peeled
2 large green peppers (can also be red)
6 garlic scapes (if not available, use a little more garlic)
4 cloves of garlic
2/3 cup olive oil
6 TB Worcestershire sauce
3 cups Spicy Hot V8 Juice

4 small white onions
1/2 cup vinegar
Pepper, ground, to taste
2 teaspoons of salt

Chop: tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, garlic, and onions. I placed all the vegetables in a blender turned to pulse/chop, but not too finely. As the blender can hold only 5 cups, I poured its blended contents into a larger container before adding the olive oil, vinegar and V8 vegetable juice, then stirred well. If you do not have a blender, chop vegetables finely. Chill overnight. Stir well and serve. Makes about 8 cups. ☺

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WHY STEARNS?

By Sara Sullivan

Pattypans. Purslane. Pea tendrils. Bok choy. Celeriac. Purple beans. Red carrots. Before joining Stearns Farm CSA, I have never tried any of these things. Many of the items we get at the farm every week are hard or impossible to find at the grocery store, too expensive, or just so unfamiliar we would never think to pick them up on our own. In addition to helping us eat those 5-9 servings of fruits and veggies every day that health experts are always recommending, being part of a CSA also expands your palate and tests your creativity. Because I never want my share to go to waste, I have to experiment in the kitchen, dig up and share new recipes, learn how to put things by, and simply eat things I have never tried before.

Some wonderful food discoveries have resulted: Learning that boiling a celeriac root with your potatoes turns mashed potatoes into something divine. Popping a bag of homemade spaghetti sauce out of the freezer in February to feel renewed and revitalized in the middle of an icy winter. Realizing how much I love a little snipped tarragon or dill on a crisp summer salad. Discovering that thin-sliced eggplant, broiled with a little olive oil, breadcrumbs and parmesan cheese, turns something I've always hated into one of my favorite snacks.

Receiving such an abundance of produce every week requires more work than settling for the usual grocery store fare—specific items purchased on my time-table and of my own, exact choosing. But having a share in a CSA has taught me that yielding a little choice to others can reap tremendous (colorful, exotic, and delicious) benefits. **Why Stearns? To try new things.** ☺

MISSION STATEMENT

To preserve the historic Stearns farm as a sustainable all-natural garden, providing locally grown food in partnership between the land, the farmer, and the community.

- by using the CSA model
- by providing fair compensation, adequate working conditions, and support to the farmer
- by practicing good stewardship
- by donating excess food to the needy
- by encouraging the community to actively participate in the farming process
- by providing learning opportunities
- by fostering relationships between the CSA and the wider community and
- by providing a beautiful place that is nourishing to body and soul

BASIL FACTS

Basil, a member of the highly aromatic mint family, comes in a rainbow of colors and many flavors, from warmly sweet to citric to spicy. Try Thai basil in spring rolls and curries, lemon basil in teas and rice dishes, Italian or Genoa basil in tomato sauces and vegetable soups. Growing conditions and even the age of the plant can also affect the taste. Flavors may even change along the length of a single leaf! Try nibbling the tip of a freshly picked basil leaf, then taste the base and see if you can detect the difference. *For a perfectly simple appetizer, sprinkle chopped fresh basil leaves over slices of creamy fresh mozzarella and ripe tomatoes.*

LATE SUMMER SOUP WITH BASIL. Adapted from *How to Cook Everything* by Mark Bittman. With corn, tomatoes, and zucchini, this fresh-tasting soup has all of summer's best.

4 cups chicken or vegetable stock or water	2 small or 1 medium zucchini, diced
4 ears fresh corn	1 Tbs minced fresh garlic
2 Tbs olive oil or butter	salt and pepper to taste
1 medium onion, minced	½ cup fresh basil leaves, minced
2 cups ripe tomatoes, cored and chopped	1 tsp balsamic or wine vinegar

Heat stock in a large, deep saucepan with a lid. Strip kernels from corn with a sharp knife, setting kernels aside. Add cobs to the pot, breaking them in half if necessary, then lower heat to a simmer and cover pot. In another large pot, warm butter or oil over medium heat. Add onion and cook, stirring, about 5 minutes until softened. Add remaining ingredients, except corn kernels, basil and vinegar, and cook, stirring occasionally, for about 10 minutes. Remove corncobs from stock and add stock to vegetables. Cook about 5 minutes more, until zucchini is tender, but not mushy. Stir in corn kernels and all but about 1 tablespoon of the basil. Add vinegar, taste, and adjust seasoning if necessary. Serve, garnished with reserved basil. 4–6 servings.

PESTO. A little of this rich, flavorful green sauce goes a long way on hot or cold pasta, stirred into salad dressing, swirled into soup, and spooned onto grilled vegetables, beans, boiled new potatoes, or roasted chicken.

2 cups fresh basil leaves, rinsed and drained	2 cloves garlic, or to taste
½ cup olive oil or more as needed for processing	½ cup parmesan cheese, freshly grated
¼ cup pine nuts, lightly toasted, or chopped walnuts	½ tsp salt, or to taste (optional)

Place basil, pine nuts, and garlic in the container of a food processor or blender and pulse briefly to chop. With processor running, gradually pour in oil and process until paste is bright green and only slightly chunky. Stir grated parmesan cheese into basil paste. Season to taste with salt. Makes about 1 cup and keeps for about 2 days refrigerated. Or omit the cheese and freeze pesto in ice cube trays for months of summer-sweet flavor.

BASIL CHEESECAKE FILLING. Adapted from *Farmer John's Cookbook* by Farmer John Peterson. A straightforward recipe with an unexpectedly elegant herbal twist.

2 lb cream cheese, softened	1 cup sour cream
Large pinch salt	2 Tbs cornstarch
2 large whole eggs, at room temperature, lightly beaten	2 Tbs freshly squeezed lemon juice
2 egg yolks, at room temperature, lightly beaten	1½ tsp vanilla extract
1 cup fresh basil, finely sliced	precooked 9" graham cracker crust
¾ cup sugar	small fresh basil leaves for garnish

Preheat oven to 450°F. Using a food processor, add half-pound sections of cream cheese, processing at a low speed after each addition until all the cream cheese has been broken up. [If you don't have a food processor, use an electric mixer in a large bowl.] Add salt and process briefly. Add remaining ingredients (except for crust and garnish) and process at low speed until combined. Fill prepared crust with batter* and bake until filling is set and puffed around edges, but still moist and a bit jiggly at the center—about 30–40 minutes. Cake will continue to set after you remove it from the oven. Place cake, still in the pan, on a rack for at least 1 hour until completely cool. Cover surface with plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least 4 hours. One hour before serving, remove from refrigerator. Cut with a sharp knife dipped in hot water and dried (you may need to dip several times). Garnish each serving with a fresh basil leaf.

**Depending on size of crust, you may have some filling left over which you can bake in a separate dish if desired.*

Storing basil: To keep the leaves fresh, treat a bunch of basil just like a bouquet of flowers: Place the stems upright in a vase of fresh water and change it daily. For longer storage, rinse and thoroughly dry the leaves (a salad spinner is great), pack loosely in freezer bags, gently press out the air, seal, and place in the freezer, where they will keep for several months. They will be fine and flavorful for cooking, though they won't have the crisp texture and bright green of just-picked basil. See pesto recipe, above, for another way to preserve basil by freezing.

If you have a favorite way of using Stearns Farm veggies, please share it. Send recipes, tips on storage or food preservation, or other suggestions to sarah@cornmuffin.com. Thanks.