



Stone Soup

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

October 13, 2008 Newsletter Vol. 9 No. 19



GOODBYES AND HELLOS

By Kathy Huckins

Friday. I was walking through the fields noticing the crops that are finished, the tomatoes and peppers that we took down this week. The summer crops are behind us, and the fall crops are busy producing and thriving in this cool, sunny weather. There are so many goodbyes as we travel through the farm season.

Was it true that we had so many cucumbers, that the strawberries were generous, that the melons were sweet and juicy? Did we really have fresh snap peas? It seems so long ago. As each crop dies back for the season, new ones come into their own and we move on to say hello to them. It is constant letting go and then including, a constant adjustment, a constant change to our taste buds. It is the experience of eating in the seasons that we hear so much about. We actually get to do this at Stearns, and it makes us appreciate each crop during its time on center stage.

With these thoughts in my head today, I learned of the passing on of Bob Schneider, our delightful and charming friend and farm neighbor. He owned Baypath Farm a half mile up the road from us. He had a career in

ON THE STAND THIS WEEK

ON THE STAND: Head lettuce, salad greens, spinach, bok choy, salad turnips, scallions, carrots, parsnips, potatoes, sweet potatoes, sweet and hot peppers, celeriac and butternut squash.

PYO: Braising greens of collards, kale and chard; culinary and tea herbs; a bouquet of fall flowers; tomatillos and pea tendrils.

advertising behind him when he bought the horse farm a few years, I'm guessing, before I landed at Stearns. When I started here I was looking for manure for our compost and Bob Schneider was looking to get rid of the manure from the horses that boarded at his farm. It was a perfect match and your vegetables have been enhanced and blessed with these gifts ever since.

Bob loved to be useful on his Kubota, and, being the opportunist, I found ways he could use this tractor to assist us in our many needs. Bob came by in the fall of 1999 and helped level out the area where our first greenhouse now sits, the one we built in 2000. He also helped us move brush and clean up an area at the back of our fields. Today, when his worker, Juan, came with another load of manure, he told us of Bob's passing this morning. Bob had suffered a stroke around Labor Day and had struggled since then to recover.

Ever since I started at Stearns, Bob has been my friend as well as neighbor, dropping by to chat, occasionally showing up at our Festivals, a welcome friendly face. He got into photography and snapped dozens of pictures of people at our farm during work days and events. Recently he had the opportunity to take pictures from a friend's single-engine Cessna. He came a few days later with an amazing aerial photo of our fields. I looked at it for hours, so impressed with the straight rows, the varieties of crops showcased, the orderliness, the overall beauty of our little farm. I finally GOT how truly amazing the farm is. I think it was because from that vantage point, NO weeds could be seen. I could just relax and take it in instead of noting where the next work was needed. What a gift he gave me. I will always be grateful. It was such a pleasure to have known him these past 10 years. The manure will continue to come to our farm, but I would much rather have had visits from Bob.



Photo by Lisa Mattei

GARDEN SHOWCASE: SAGE

By Donna Savastio

Sage is a wonderful herb. It has a soft yet sweet, savory flavor, and you would be wise to add it to your cooking recipes. Since ancient times, sage has been prized for its health-promoting qualities. In medicinal lore, sage has one of the longest histories of use of any medicinal herb. Its reputation as a panacea is even represented in its scientific name, *Salvia officinalis*, derived from the Latin word *salvere*, which means "to be saved."

The Romans actually believed that sage could impart immortality. To the ancients, sage stood for wisdom, skill, esteem, long life, good health, domestic virtue, mitigation of grief and psychic powers! In the Middle Ages, sage was used as a treatment for memory loss, fevers, eye problems, liver disease, epilepsy and infections, not to mention intestinal problems. Now that is one versatile herb!

Whenever possible, choose fresh sage over the dried form of the herb since it is superior in flavor. To store fresh sage leaves, carefully wrap them in a damp paper towel and place inside a loosely closed plastic bag. Store in the refrigerator, where it should keep fresh for several days. Since the flavor of sage is very delicate, it is best to add the herb near the end of the cooking process so that it will retain its maximal flavor. Mix sage with cooked navy beans, olive oil and garlic and serve on bruschetta or as a side dish with meats and fish, add it to your tomato sauce for great flavor, crisp it in a brown butter sauce and serve over ravioli or gnocchi, and be sure to include some chopped sage in omelets and other egg dishes. Sage is wonderful with rich meats and fish, and let's not forget Thanksgiving dinner and stuffing with lots of fresh sage and onions. 🍷

WHY STEARNS?

By Sara Sullivan

You may not be aware of it on pickup days, but our farm has an impact beyond even the 200 families who make up our sharers. Stearns is one of the oldest CSAs in the country and has long served as a model for sustainable agriculture in our community. There are now about 1,500 CSAs in the United States, but in the early 1990s there were fewer than 100, one of which was Stearns.

As you probably know, Stearns had a lengthy waiting list this year, reflecting the quality of our farm and the great demand in our area for CSA produce. Stearns' produce can only feed so many people, but we can help people who are interested in local eating in other ways.

As our society continues to recognize the importance of sustainable agriculture, the CSA model will further spread and multiply. These new CSAs need advice, encouragement, and the wisdom of others' experience. Our experienced farm can provide those things, helping to bring sustainable agriculture to many other people beyond our group of sharers. New CSAs also need farmers, and Stearns is helping in that respect as well. Our assistant farm managers benefit from their experience on the farm and an excellent apprenticeship with Kathy that prepares them well to run farms of their own in the future.

Local agriculture requires a commitment to developing small working farms in the places where we actually live, zones where we can use arable land to grow real food in our communities. A successful CSA like Stearns can encourage this process, helping to promote the farming system whose benefits we enjoy so much. **Why Stearns? To support and encourage the development of other CSAs.** 🍷





THANK YOU, SONYA CIAVOLA!

As the Stearns Farm 2008 Season draws to a close, we would like to take time to thank the farm staff who have made the season possible. You've seen them around for months, but you may not have had a chance to meet them properly. This week our thanks go out to Farm Assistant Sonya Ciavola!

When Sonya was 20, she learned about the concept of organic farming. Before that point, it had never crossed her mind that chemicals were involved in producing her food. That shock led to her interest in sustainable agriculture and her first job on a farm in Wisconsin.

Sonya says she has never experienced a farm as community-oriented as Stearns, or with so many varied features, such as the Children's Garden. Another major difference she appreciates in our farm is our permanent bed system, which retains more minerals and soil quality by not tilling as deeply.

Her favorite thing to grow at Stearns is sweet potatoes because their vines are gorgeous in the field, and they are so fun to dig. She also likes to dance to live music and enjoys canning—she is still looking for a great salsa recipe, so let her know if you have one!

Eventually, Sonya would like to have her own CSA farm and to be involved

with a farmers' market, since she really enjoys that. Her ultimate goal is to be able to grow all the food she needs for the year, to be totally self-sustaining.

She has really enjoyed being at Stearns the past two years, and she says the members make it all worthwhile. Sonya wants to thank everyone for being so nice and friendly, and for all the enthusiasm and hard work she sees out in the fields. We would like to thank Sonya for all of *her* enthusiasm and the hard work she puts in so cheerfully. Thank you Sonya!

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

UPCOMING FARM EVENTS

Tuesday, October 14	Last pickup for Alternate 1 Tuesday Sharers
Friday, October 17	Last pickup for Alternate 1 Friday Sharers
Saturday, October 18	Garlic Planting
Tuesday, October 21	Last pickup for Full and Alternate 2 Tuesday Sharers
Friday, October 24	Last pickup for Full and Alternate 2 Friday Sharers
Saturday, November 1	Last Day for Sharers to complete or pay for work hours
Friday, November 7	Last Day for Winter Sharers to complete or pay for work hours

FARM CONTACT INFORMATION

Contact	Position	Email/phone
Stearns Farm	Main phone	contact@stearnsfarmcsa.org 508-371-4310
Kathy Huckins	Farm Manager	huckins@charter.net 508-561-3950
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Stearns Farm CSA is open Tuesday through Saturday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

CELERIAC FACTS

Celeriac, or celery root, is grown for its root crown, which has a strong celery flavor, rather than its stalks. Because it is denser and starchier than celery stalks, it's ideal for livening up mashed potatoes and other vegetable purées without watering them down. Slice or grate celeriac to use raw in salads, or cook it with other root vegetables, such as potatoes or parsnips. Peel deeply enough to remove both the knobbly outer skin and the woody layer just beneath it. To prevent browning, dip peeled celeriac into acidulated water (1 tablespoon lemon juice or vinegar per cup of water). Loosely wrapped in the bottom of the refrigerator, celeriac should stay good for several weeks. Scrub well just before using. *You'll find a recipe for celeriac slaw in last week's Stearns Farm newsletter.*

CELERIAC-APPLE PURÉE. This flavorful mixture has a creamy secret: just a touch of rice. Adapted from *A New Way to Cook* by Sally Schneider.

1 lb celeriac, scrubbed, peeled, cut into 1" chunks	2½ Tbs white rice
3 cups low-fat milk	2 small, tart apples, such as McIntosh,
¾ tsp kosher salt	or 1 or 2 small pears, peeled, cored, quartered
Black pepper	2 tsp unsalted butter

Place celeriac in a medium saucepan over moderate heat. Add milk, ½ tsp salt, and a little pepper. Bring to a boil, add rice, stir, then lower heat, cover, and simmer slowly for 10 minutes. Add apples and simmer, covered for another 10 minutes or until the celeriac is very tender and rice is completely cooked. [Note: the milk may curdle during the cooking, but that won't affect the final result.] Drain the mixture through a colander set in a bowl and save the cooking liquid. Place the drained celeriac mixture in a food processor or blender and process, scraping down the sides, until very smooth, adding some of the cooking liquid, a tablespoon at a time, if needed. Add the butter and process until it disappears into the purée. Season to taste with additional salt and pepper. Purée can be made ahead and reheated. This recipe can be doubled, but there's no need to increase the amount of milk. Just be sure you have enough to cover the celery root by about 1½ inches. Any of the tasty cooking liquid that remains after you've finished making the purée can be frozen to use later in soup. Serves 4.

"DOUBLE CELERY" SOUP. There's plenty of celery flavor in this rich-tasting soup, but it isn't overwhelming. Serve in small bowls as a first course. Adapted from *Bon Appétit*.

¼ cup (½ stick) butter	1 large russet potato, peeled, cut into 1" pieces
1 cup chopped celery	5 cups low-salt chicken or vegetable broth
½ cup coarsely chopped shallots (about 3)	¼ cup whipping cream
2 lbs celeriac, peeled, cut in ½" cubes (about 5½ cups)	1½ tsp chopped fresh thyme, plus more for garnish

Melt butter in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add celery, lower heat, and cook, covered, until softened—about 3 minutes. Add shallots and sauté, uncovered, about 3 minutes. Stir in celeriac and potato, then add broth and 1½ teaspoons of thyme. Bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce to medium-low, cover, and simmer until vegetables are very tender—up to 40 minutes. Cool slightly. Working in batches, if necessary, transfer vegetables to a blender or food processor and process to a smooth purée. Soup can be prepared 2 days ahead up to this point and stored, covered, in the refrigerator. When ready to serve, stir cream into soup and bring slowly to a simmer. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Just before serving, sprinkle with additional thyme leaves. Serves 4–6.

SIMPLE CELERIAC SAUCE. Spoon this smooth preparation around poached or baked fish or chicken filets just before serving. Adapted from *splendidtable.com*.

1 large celeriac (about 1 lb)	2 Tbs crème fraîche or heavy cream
½ lemon	salt and pepper (preferably white pepper)
2 Tbs unsalted butter	Fresh chives for garnish, snipped (optional)

Trim the stalk end of the celeriac and peel it deeply to remove all knobs and crevices. Quarter the celeriac, then cut each quarter crosswise into 2-inch pieces. Fill a large pan with salted water and add lemon half and celeriac. Bring water just to a boil over medium-high heat, then reduce heat to medium, cover, and simmer very gently until celeriac is tender when pierced with a knife—about 30–45 minutes. Reduce heat if needed so that liquid never boils. Drain celeriac and set aside to cool. Place cooled celeriac pieces in the middle of a clean napkin or dishtowel, draw up the sides of the napkin to cover the pieces and twist and squeeze gently to remove as much extra liquid as possible. Combine butter and cream in a small pan over medium-high heat and bring to a simmer, then remove from heat. Place celeriac in a food processor, pulse briefly, then add butter-cream mixture and process to a smooth purée. Season to taste with salt and pepper and serve warm with a sprinkling of chives. Makes about 4 servings.

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.