



Stone Soup

Stearns Farm CSA • Community Supported Agriculture
862 Edmands Road, Framingham, MA 01701 - www.stearnsfarmcsa.org
Winter Share 2008 Newsletter—December Issue 2 of 3



SO WHAT'S THE TEMPERATURE? AN UPDATE

By Kathy Huckins, Farm Manager

The winter share has kept the farm humming despite the cold weather. Chris and Sonya have been harvesting the remaining crops of turnips, winter radishes and parsnips. The leeks were double-covered with reemay in the field because they don't store well in the root cellar. They like to go from the soil to your fridge.

The remaining cabbage at the Parkland that was covered with heavy reemay froze before we could harvest it. (Remember that unusual cold spell in November.) Our crops took a hit with the temperature drop. Our lettuce, bok choy, chard and outside salad greens were affected even though they were covered as well. The field spinach fared better, and we were able to harvest it in November. We will also have some for the December share. The cold has compromised the field kale.

All the crops that we had harvested and stored in the root cellar are loving it there. In October we were trying to keep it to 40 degrees by running the air conditioner. Now we are working to keep it from freezing. Brian Holland has installed a micro controller to help us maintain optimal storage conditions for our root crops. It includes two small fans outside and two temperature sensors, one inside and the other outside.

WINTER SHARE PRODUCE

The following items will appear at various times throughout the three months of our winter share:

Beets, cabbage, carrots, celeriac, onions, parsnips, rutabagas, red top turnips, potatoes, shallots, popcorn, garlic, chard, collards, kale, cilantro, dill, leaf lettuce, scallions, spinach, salad turnips, radishes, bok choy, a large variety of oriental greens, sweet potatoes, leeks.

They can hopefully talk to each other and regulate the temperature. We want it around 35 degrees. Humidity hasn't been a problem. We keep it in the 90's.

Field work continues as the last beds are covered with compost and/or leaves to keep them safe for the winter. The perennial plants in Penelope's herb garden, the children's garden and the culinary herb garden as well as the strawberries and the rhubarb have been covered with leaves. We have inventoried all our supplies, organic fertilizers and minerals, winterized the tractors, covered outside wood with wood preservative and started adding hardware wire to the bottoms of our greenhouse boxes to keep the rodents out of the new seedlings we will be nurturing in the Spring.

Daily the greenhouse is checked. The reemay that is covering each bed is removed if the sun is shining, from late morning to mid afternoon. The house is vented to keep the air fresh for growing. In the winter it is all about temperature.

We are taking lots of notes, checking temperatures in all of our houses and noticing the changes in growth as the sun slides lower in the sky. It is so different from growing in the summer that I feel like we are living in a faraway state. We are learning, and passing on to you the crops that we have mastered.

Thank you for your continued support of this winter project. At the November pickup, so many of you expressed appreciation for this new endeavor. It is what keeps us going as our fingers are freezing during harvesting of greens. But remember, we love hot coffee or tea or even soup. Since the water is off for the winter we could use any warm gifts you might want to drop by. See you soon.



A CHANGE OF SHOES

By Chris Kantlehner, Assistant Grower Stearns Farm

I hope all had a wonderful holiday and were able to enjoy a true New England harvest feast! As a farmer, Thanksgiving is a holiday of true celebration, a time to reap the benefits of the earth and stuff myself full of turkey and mashed potatoes. Now that the holiday is over, it's back to work on the farm—boots will not be hung up early this season. We have already had mother nature share with us some bitterly cold nights and equally cold days. The frost may have taken some of our crops in the field: cabbage, greens mix, and some varieties of radishes. But even during the coldest days, we received blue sky and sunshine which gave warmth and energy to the freshest crops of our winter share in the new greenhouse. I would like to share with you a snippet of a journal entry I wrote about the greenhouse:

“I open the handcrafted wooden door frame, and enter the bright greenhouse surrounded by vibrant greens...some ready to be washed and spun, and some just acclimating themselves to the new elements. Stearns Farm is a sweet microclimate which is not powered by oil from the Middle East. It's being powered by mother nature's warming light, the SUN!”

During the daytime hours, the greenhouse average temperature is around 70 degrees. So even when nighttime temps drop below freezing, by the time I arrive at the farm, many of the crops have thawed and started thriving due to the warm soil temperature provided by the covering. Thanks to the greenhouse we have been able to keep our winter share diverse and fresh.

It has been a delight to come to work at the farm this fall and be part of something new and exciting. I encourage all to pay a visit and see everything in action. I might be hanging up the work boots this year after all, and purchasing some new flip-flops for the winter harvest.

UPCOMING FARM EVENTS

Friday, December 5	Winter 1 Group pickup 12-4 pm
Friday, December 19	Winter 2 Group pickup 12-4 pm
Friday, January 9	Winter 1 Group pickup 12-4 pm
Friday, January 23	Winter 2 Group pickup 12-4 pm



WINTER SHARE GUIDE

Our second winter share pickup day is here! Remember the routine:

When: On pickup day, come to the farm that Friday between **12pm – 4 pm**. It is important to be on time, and due to winter conditions, alternate pickup times are *not* available. It will be cold, so pickup will be quick.

Where: In the stationary greenhouse at Stearns Farm.

What to bring: Large bags. All your produce will be picked for you; there will be no pick-your-own. **We also still need your bagged leaves—leave them on the sides of the greenhouse.**

MISSION STATEMENT

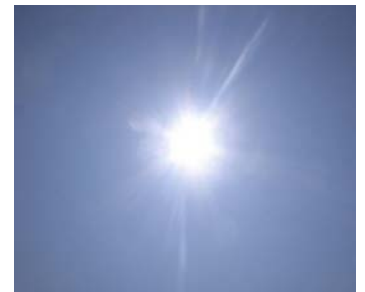
To preserve the historic Stearns farm as a sustainable all-natural garden, providing locally grown food in partnership between the land, the farmer, and the community.

- 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

What: A typical pickup will include 20+ pounds of roots such as parsnips, leeks, potatoes, carrots, beets, celeriac, turnips, sweet potatoes, scallions, onions, shallots, and garlic; 4 pounds of winter squash; and 4 pounds of greens including spinach, Asian greens, kale, lettuce, bok choy and herbs.

AN INVITATION

Chris is at the farm every Tuesday, Thursday & Friday from 10am to noon or later if you want to come by and volunteer. There is no better place than a greenhouse on a sunny day. It can transport you to Florida in a snap.



FARM CONTACT INFORMATION

Contact	Position	Email/phone
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Stearns Farm CSA is open Tuesday through Saturday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

DECEMBER—Getting Back to Our Roots

This Thanksgiving brought us something new to be grateful for—the fall and winter bounty from Stearns Farm! With shorter, chillier days and more time indoors, this is the perfect season to enjoy the wonderful variety of roots, hardy greens, and tender young leaves still coming in from the fields, the root cellar, and the greenhouse.

The savory-sweet flavors of winter vegetables naturally complement each other. You can build on whatever's available, using a few tried-and-true combinations. Parsnips add special sweetness; white and sweet potatoes lend thickness and substance; onions or leeks slowly browned in a little oil or butter offer depth and rich color. Here are few favorites to get you started, but the possibilities are as grand as your own imagination.

CELERIAC, LEEK & POTATO SOUP. A comforting version of an old favorite. Adapted from *The Victory Garden Cookbook* by Marian Morash.

3 leeks, well-washed and trimmed	4–5 cups chicken or vegetable broth
1 whole large celeriac, peeled, cut in 1-inch cubes	1 cup half-and-half (optional)
1 large potato, peeled, coarsely chopped	salt and freshly ground pepper to taste
2 Tbs butter	

Thinly slice white and tender green part of leeks. Melt butter in large saucepan and stir in leeks, cooking until wilted. Add celeriac and potato, then 4 cups of broth. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover, and simmer for 20–25 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender. Purée in food processor or blender, thinning with cream or additional broth as needed. Season with salt and pepper. Makes 6–8 servings.

“ROOTS” SOUP (or stew). It takes a little time to cook this hearty dish, but that just warms up the kitchen. And it's great with cornbread. Adapted from *Bon Appetit*.

2 Tbs olive oil	2 rutabagas or turnips, peeled and diced
6 oz sausage (meat or veggie), cut in half-inch slices	1 large carrot, scraped and diced
1 large onion, chopped	4 cups chicken, beef or vegetable broth
2–3 parsnips, peeled and diced	¼ cup half-and-half (optional)
salt and pepper to taste	½ tsp dried thyme, crumbled

Heat oil in a large pan over medium-high heat. Add sausage and cook, turning, until browned. Remove sausage and set aside. Add onions to same pan, reduce heat, and cook about 8 minutes until tender, stirring occasionally. Add parsnips, rutabagas, and carrot and cook, stirring, about 5 minutes. Add broth, bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer until vegetables are tender—about 30–40 minutes. Cool. Purée vegetables using a food processor or blender. Return purée to pan, and stir in half-and-half and thyme. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Add sausage. Heat through gently just before serving. **FOR STEW:** Before puréeing, set aside about half of the cooked vegetables. Leave out half-and-half and thin purée with extra broth if needed. Stir reserved vegetables into the purée along with the sausage just before reheating and serving. Serves 4–6.

WINTER ROAST. Root vegetables turn mellow together, with just a little “kick” to keep things interesting.

Olive oil or non-stick olive oil spray	3–4 Tbs olive oil
2½ lbs total potatoes and/or sweet potatoes, peeled	1 large onion, peeled and thinly sliced
1½ lbs total rutabagas, turnips, and/or beets, peeled	1 leek, white and light-green, cleaned, slivered
1 lbs total carrots and/or parsnips, trimmed, scraped	2 Tbs apple cider vinegar, or to taste
¼ tsp cayenne pepper (optional)	salt and pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 350 F. Brush or spray a large baking sheet with oil. Cut roots into half-inch slices or cubes. Combine in a large bowl with onion and leek and toss with oil and cayenne to coat. Spread in a single layer on the baking sheet and roast until tender and slightly browned, turning occasionally—about 1 hour. Just before serving, season with salt and pepper, sprinkle on vinegar, and toss to combine. **Variations:** Replace cayenne with sweet or smoked paprika or curry powder, or add chopped fresh or dried herbs such as sage or rosemary. Replace cider vinegar with balsamic or sherry vinegar. Serves 10.

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.