

FRESH PROSPECTS

Week 5 – July 17, 2008

This Week:

- Extra Extra
- No CSA is an Island
- Movies with a View
- Chinese Pickled Cucumbers
- News from Farmer Ted

The next Lewis Waite delivery is scheduled for 7/31. Place your orders by 7/26 at their new web site <http://www.csalewiswaitefarm.com>.

Extra Extra...

If you work the late shift, you'll notice there's plenty of produce left at the end of the night. Our farmers, Ted and Jan Blomgren, usually send more fruit, vegetables, and flowers than we are allotted each week. This makes it easier to ensure that everyone gets his share, but the surplus is also intentionally charitable: it's earmarked for free distribution to the needy.

This season, that distribution is handled by the Church of God Food Pantry on Classon Ave. The pantry isn't a soup kitchen that serves meals. Rather, it is a depot, not unlike our own, where people can pick up free foodstuffs. The food goes to the hungry, not to church members, who tend to live outside the community. Only the flowers go to the church itself, where, according to Rev. Urlin Grey, they last nicely through a full weekend of services.

Our contribution is fairly small potatoes for the pantry, which serves up to 300 people a day. But against the backdrop of generic staples they typically get from food banks, Grey says, "The fresh vegetables add some real flavor." Occasionally, that flavor is notably exotic: the garlic scapes, he said, were a mystery.

No CSA is an Island

Our neighbors to the northeast, the Bed-Stuy CSA, are hosting a workshop on how to get the most out of your CSA share. An encore of a workshop given at this year's CSA conference by Just Food (a nonprofit working for a just and sustainable food system in our region), this round is just for us Brooklyn members, and you are invited. Members representing Fort Greene, Clinton Hill, Prospect-Lefferts Gardens, and Bushwick CSAs will all be in the house. Aren't you curious? Details below:

Caring for Your CSA Share - Don't Let Those Veggies Rot!

Saturday, July 26, 2008, 12:00pm - 1:30pm

Von King Recreation Center Auditorium, Lafayette Avenue between Marcy & Tompkins (two blocks from the Bedford-Nostrand G stop and B43 and B38 bus lines)

Do you sometimes feel overwhelmed by your CSA share? Tired of seeing half your share go to the compost pile? Not sure what to do when you're approaching your third week of kale or beets? Just Food Community Chef and Columbus Circle CSA Member Martha Ma will offer tips and strategies on how to best enjoy your CSA bounty. You will learn which vegetables are best eaten immediately, vegetable storage techniques, and food preservation strategies (including freezing, pickling, fermentation and canning).

Movies with a View

Brooklyn Bridge Park's free outdoor film series has begun. If the world's most spectacular screening room isn't enough of a draw, there's free valet bike parking and pre-film ambiance provided Brooklyn Radio DJs. This Thursday's feature is the original 1956 *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, a masterpiece of paranoia and a sharp corrective if you thought vegetables were only capable of good. Look up showtimes here: <http://www.brooklynbridgepark.org/go/programs/-/events/movies-with-a-view>

Chinese Pickled Cucumbers

Those thick-skinned cucumbers can be tough to eat raw, but cooking cucumbers seems inimical to whole point of summer. Here's a solution.

2 cucumbers, cleaned & chopped (unpeeled)
1/4 cup rice wine vinegar
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon sugar
1/2 teaspoon dried chili flakes
2 tablespoons olive or canola oil

In a small plastic bag, combine the first four ingredients. Twist the bag closed and shake well. Set aside.

Heat the oil in a pan and fry the chili flakes for a minute. Toss all the ingredients together in a bowl and serve.

May be refrigerated covered for up four days. It hits every button: salty, sweet, sour, spicy, and crunchy.

News from Farmer Ted

"Late last summer a man named Hiliberto stopped by hoping to find work for his brother-in-law, Salvador, and his father, Ezequiel, whom he hadn't seen in five years. They live in the mountains a few hours outside of Mexico City, and Hiliberto lives near here. I agreed, needing a farm staff that started earlier in the spring and worked later in the fall than my crew of school kids and their moms. They have been living in an apartment in the upstairs of our barn since mid-April. Their apartment is rustic but does have heat and hot water, a flush toilet and a hot shower, a kitchen, a television, and a washer and dryer. At meal times the most delicious smells come wafting down the steps to our packing room. It's tortillas every day at lunchtime. On the weekends they get together with

Hiliberto and his family for recreation and shopping. They are friendly and hard-working, and patient with my poor language skills. I hope they come back next year.

The entire farm crew is learning Spanish. English-Spanish translations cover our barn walls. 'Mala hierbo' is weed. Mala hierbos grande are the kind of weeds we have here. Heidi calls them 'job security.' Heidi, who has been with us for three years, is our field manager. Hers is a new position here, intended to allow me the time to keep up with planting and cultivating. Heidi often provides a morning coffee cake or muffins. Her two kids—Jordan, who is home from college, and Mackenzie, who wears orange polka-dot boots—also work with us. They apprenticed on a small farm just north of here, and come well trained.

Victoria and her sister, Naomi, run the packing shed. They have worked with us for several years and know not only how we do things around here, but have ideas about how we ought to do them. They are constantly making improvements. This year, for instance, they've added a coffee maker and a microwave oven, informing me that 'happy workers are productive workers.' They also frequently provide chocolates in the afternoon, earning my lasting affection. Their job is to take the produce from the field, move it through the hydro-cooling process, then sort it, box it, and place it in the cooler. As we do every year, we've also hired a handful of teenagers. They require Heidi's constant attention. They all leave at the end of August, but by then they'll have our farm weed-free and given me time to finish a number of farm projects.

Today's share consists of two heads of lettuce, yellow and green zucchini squashes, scallions, cucumbers, sweet Italian frying peppers, red or orange beets, kale or bok choy, and broccoli. The hot, humid weather has pushed the broccoli along a little too fast, causing some to spoil, and forcing us to harvest it all a bit too quickly. More will be coming in another couple of weeks. Next week we'll probably send green cabbage, lettuce, arugula or a salad mix, more cukes and zukes, possibly more peppers, more scallions or green onions, and perhaps some green garlic. With continued good weather, our first tomatoes should be ready shortly. Incidentally, we've been leasing a refrigerated box truck for the last two weeks. I mention it because it's intended to keep your vegetables fresher, and I'm curious to know if it's working. We pack the truck in the evening the day before we head to the city, and we set the thermostat for 42 degrees.

A note regarding last week's letter: No, I didn't actually tie Bob the beagle to a stake in the lettuce field. Can you imagine leaving such a friendly little dog out there all alone? Besides, Jan wouldn't let me."

UNTIL NEXT WEEK, we wish you all happy veggie eating...