

Johnson's Backyard Garden
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New Addition to the Johnson Family

Big news! We are happy to announce that we are expecting a new addition to the Johnson Family in mid-August. We are excited about the new baby and plan to let it be a surprise whether it will be a boy or a girl. This is also the same month that Beth is scheduled to finish nursing school.



We should have some nice looking lettuce for the next few weeks.

Potluck Sunday April 1st

Please mark your calendars. We are planning to have a potluck at the farm on Sunday April 1 from 2 till 5pm or so. It is not only limited to CSA members and **all are welcome to attend... bring your friends**. Please remember to bring your chairs and we hope you can make it. For directions to the farm please look up 9515 Hergotz Lane, Austin, TX on your computer. The next newsletter should include directions to the farm.

Reminder CSA Payment Due 1st of Each Month

Boxes each week are \$28.50. Eggs are \$4.00 and coffee is \$10.50. Please e-mail if you have any questions.

Newsletter Switched to bi-weekly

Sorry but I do not have enough time to do the newsletter weekly. I like doing the newsletter but the planting and garden work also has to get done.

Irrigation and Tank Work

Recently we have been spending a lot of money and doing quite a bit of work on the irrigation and water system at the farm. Two weeks ago Steven, Grit's husband and I spent the better part of a day trying to hookup the new pump and water storage tank. It turned into a lot bigger job than anticipated and hopefully we can get it finished up soon. Once we finish installing the equipment we will have more water pressure and should also no longer have a sand problem....so we will not have to clean the filter on the drip irrigation as often.

Last Saturday we also expanded the irrigation system and installed 1000' of 4" pvc pipe.. We now have more than 10

acres or over half the farm irrigated. I used to think that 20 acres was not much land...and to most farmers in Texas it is not. But for me it looks huge! I guess I am still used to the 3000 foot backyard garden that I was gardening in last year this time at Holly Street. Expanding to the larger acreage at this farm has been a steep learning curve but I am enjoying it.



Remember to Wash Your Veggies

We got a question last week from a member about whether we wash the produce. Usually we do wash most items...but still wash again before using. Thanks!

Limited Number of Beef Shares Available

In a few weeks we plan to purchase a few beef cattle to graze the back pastures. Since we are running on a tight budget at the farm, we have decided to ask our CSA members to help us purchase the cows. We are taking deposits of \$250 on a first come first serve basis from CSA members who would like to reserve a quarter section of grass fed beef. The beef will consist of a mixture of various cuts such as T bones, rib eyes, round, hamburger, soup bones, chuck roast and brisket and will be packed and labeled in butcher paper. Please email us ASAP if you are interested and mail us a check for us to reserve your

share. When we slaughter the cows will depend on how well the grass grows and what size cattle we purchase.

After processing we anticipate each quarter section will provide around 80 lbs and 100 lbs of meat and will require between 2-3 cubic feet of freezer space. A split-half of beef is a quarter of beef (made-up of 1/2 of the front quarter and half of the hindquarter. Our beef will be sold \$4.00/lb based on hanging weight, and the \$250 deposit will be deducted from the cost of the quarter section of beef. All beef shares will be packaged and picked up at the farm by appointment.

Having cattle will help us to continue to keep our agricultural exemption on our property, keeping property taxes more affordable. The cows will also make good use of the grass on the farm that would otherwise not be utilized.



bathroom during the freezing cold weather. We had to get them to germinate. I am glad Beth put s up with me!

Movie Filming

Also last week there was some excitement near the farm. A film crew was shooting "Friday Night Lights" on the land just across from the farm. On Friday night I looked outside and their were goal posts.....and about 1000 people, truck tents, cranes, and American and Texas State flags flying...they even were using cranes to make it rain. The pasture was turned into a football field for the weekend.

Eating Real food

The January 28 New York Times Sunday Magazine ran an essay by the food writer entitled "Unhappy Meals". He starts this 12-pager with pithy advice, which is also his conclusion: "Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants."

"Medicine is learning how to keep alive the people whom the Western diet is making sick. It's gotten good at extending the lives of people with heart disease, and now it's working on

obesity and diabetes. Capitalism is itself marvelously adaptive, able to turn the problems it creates into lucrative business opportunities: diet pills, heart-bypass operations, insulin pumps, bariatric surgery. But while fast food may be good business for the health-care industry, surely the cost to society - estimated at more than \$200 billion a year in diet-related health-care costs - is unsustainable."

You can access the whole article here: Pollan, M. (2007, January 28). Unhappy Meals, New York Times Magazine. http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/28/magazine/28nutritionism.t.html?ex=1186290000&en=734349e39975c3a6&ei=5087&xcamp=mkt_at1

Agri / Culture

Betsy Levy one of the regular work share members volunteered to do a column on vegetable cultural history. This week she chose Kale to write about. Growing up in Southeastern Alabama the only kale that I remember was the stuff around the salad bars at the buffet. I like it now and it is fun to grow except when the aphids and harlequin bugs come out it the spring!



Kale: We've Been Eating This Stuff for Two Thousand Years!

Dutch: koolzaad
English: Siberian kale
Finnish: rapsi
French: chou à faucher
German: Schnittkohl
Russian: kol'za
Scottish: Kail

Kale is descended from a wild cabbage that originated in Asia Minor and was brought to Europe around 600 BC by Celtic travelers. The original cabbage was non-heading, with a prominent stalk or stem, and kale and collards are very much like it. The Ancient Greeks and Romans grew several kinds of kales, including some with large leaves and stalks; others with crisp leaves; some with small stalks and small, sharp-tasting leaves; a broad-leaved form like collards; and others with curled leaves, like today's scotch or Siberian kale.

Kale features in traditional dishes throughout Europe. In Scotland, kale has been a staple for so long that the word "Kail" in dialect Scots is synonymous with food. To be "off one's kail" is to feel too sick to eat. Kailkenny is chopped steamed kale stirred into mashed potatoes with plenty of cream and butter.

The Portugese prepare a traditional soup, caldo verde, with pureed potatoes, diced kale, olive oil, broth, and spicy sausage. In the Netherlands kale features in the winter dish stamppot and in Boerenkool, simmered with smoked sausage. The Swedes make långkål, a traditional Christmas dish, by

simmering curly kale in ham broth spiced with molasses and cloves, then mincing and creaming it.

A whole kale culture has developed in north-western Germany; social clubs have a "Grünkohlfahrt" ("kale tour") sometime in January, visiting country inns to wash down large amounts of kale and sausage with schnapps. Most communities in the area also have a yearly kale festival in which a "kale king" is crowned....Eat more kale!



Grit and Susanna picking brussels sprouts

Recipes by Grit

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Hey, my happy vegetable cooks and eaters! I just wanted to let you know that I tried the Roasted Vegetable Ragout recipe (see below) and it's a winner. Also, a big thank you to the Beet Green Gratin recipe contributor (see the last newsletter). I made the dish twice already and it's so good.

My husband Steven and I have discovered the joys of outdoor grilling and we have been sitting outside around our newly build fire pit every other night for the last few weeks. Steven enjoys setting up and maintaining the fire and I enjoy preparing and roasting the contents of our weekly vegetable box. What a perfect share of labor with such a satisfying outcome - wholesome and healthy food! Let's continue enjoying the veggies!

Roasted Root Vegetable Ragout (from Martha Stewart Quick and Easy - adapted)

Carrots
Potatoes
Sweet potatoes
Turnips
Cauliflower
Onion cut into wedges
(other vegetables can be used - Brussels sprouts and parsnips are good.)

2 c. swiss chard
1-2 cans of stewed tomatoes
2 c. veg broth (or water)
 $\frac{1}{2}$ c. white wine (red works, too)

Use oven/stove safe roasting pan. Cut first 5 veggies into ~2 in chunks, drizzle w/ olive oil. Roast at 475 for ~30 min. stirring/turning every 10 min.

Remove pan from oven. Add 2 c. veg. broth (or water), 1 can of tomatoes, $\frac{1}{2}$ c. red or white wine. Simmer on high for 15 min, or until veggies are tender and liquid has reduced. Add swiss chard, cook 2 more minutes.

Serve over soft polenta (or rice, or as a side dish).

Warm Marinated Vegetable Salad

(adapted from Vegetarian Times)

1 bunch beets
8 oz. frozen corn
8 oz. frozen green beans
1 large or 2 small sweet potatoes
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped walnuts
1 large clove garlic, crushed
1-2 tbl. fresh or dried herbs, to taste (rosemary, thyme, oregano, basil are all good)
2 tbl. balsamic vinegar
 $\frac{1}{2}$ -1 tsp. honey
 $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt or to taste
1 tsp. brown mustard
4 tbl. good olive oil
plenty of ground black pepper

Slice and steam the beets and sweet potatoes. 10 to 15 minutes into the cooking, add the frozen vegetables and steam everything until just cooked. Toast the walnuts in an iron skillet or in the oven at 300 degrees. Combine the remaining ingredients and adjust the seasonings as you like for the dressing. Toss the vegetables with the dressing and serve warm.

Cabbage Noodle Salad (by Debbie, now Michel's wife)

Ingredients:

1 cabbage
almonds, sunflower and/or sesame seeds
chicken breast
1 Asia Noodle Package

Dressing:

$\frac{1}{4}$ C sugar
 $\frac{3}{4}$ C oil
1 tsp salt
6 T vinegar

Heat the dressing up and pour it over the salad (Asia noodles will get soft then).