

Johnson's Backyard Garden, Fall Session Week #9  
December 3rd, 2007



Painting of produce in the heat of the summer...by neighbor John Cobb.

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- 1) In your box this week:

Beets  
Cabbage  
Broccoli Florets  
Cauliflower  
Chard  
Green Tomatoes and a few Sun Gold Cherries  
red poblanos (spicy)  
various sweet peppers  
Eggplant  
Butterhead lettuce  
Arugula  
Basil  
Kale – Red Russian or Siberian Dwarf  
Parsley

How to store this week's bounty: all - tomatoes go in the fridge as soon as you arrive home. Checkout our [storage tips](#) on our website.

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## 2) Sign-up for Winter CSA Session Now! Saturday is the Last Week for Fall Session

Remember, next weekend, Saturday December 8<sup>th</sup> is the last box for the Fall Session. It is hard to believe that 10 weeks have gone by so fast. We hope you have enjoyed the Fall veggies. For the winter we are looking forward to more broccoli, cauliflower, lettuces, radishes, Brussels sprouts, and plenty of healthy greens such as colorful chards and various kales. Additionally we will soon be enjoying delicious organic lemons, oranges and grapefruits from the Rio Grande Valley. Also the carrots we planted this fall are now starting to size up.

To sign-up for our 10 week Winter Session (December 12 through February 23<sup>rd</sup>) send in a new sign-up form and payment this week. To allow us time to process memberships before the start of the session, **please send in your [sign-up form](#) for the winter session by Saturday, December 8<sup>th</sup>.**

Remember membership in a prior session guarantees your membership slot in the next session as long as your sign-up form is received by the due date. For the winter session we will be limiting our membership and may have to start a waiting list.

Also checkout our [CSA Calendar](#). It may be helpful to post on the refrigerator to help remember when to pickup your box. Our Fall Session ends on December 8<sup>th</sup>, but we grow and sell vegetables year round through five separate 10 week CSA membership sessions. We take vacation for a week at Christmas and a week in August.

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## 3) USDA proposed rules on leafy greens –December 3<sup>rd</sup> Deadline for Comments!

The info below was provided by Jo Dwyer of Angel Valley Organic Farm.  
<http://www.angelvalleyfarms.com>

Please read about the proposed rules and post comment today if possible.

Hi Everybody --

I'm writing to let you know about an impending regulation that could potentially ruin the ability of small family farmers to grow and sell leafy greens to the public. The USDA, in response to the spinach scare a couple years ago, is proposing over-the-top rules for all growers of leafy greens -- corporate farms and small farms alike -- and for all leafy greens. Not just spinach. This could include bi-weekly lab tests and sterilization of fields.

While this might sound like a good safety measure on the surface, the truth is, small farms cannot possibly afford multiple lab tests. And sterilization of fields! An organic farm is a whole, live, sustainable being. Nutrition comes to the plants through the soil, of which we, the small farmers, are the stewards. Half the work we do goes into building the soil, so it nourishes the plants and thus nourishes all of us.

Corporate farms produce 95% of all salads and leafy greens. It was from those corporate farms that contaminated spinach was released to the marketplace. That the USDA is trying to impose guidelines against that kind of thing happening again is understandable. What is not understandable, is how they plan to lump in farmers like us and other small farms across the country, who cannot possibly abide by such rules and still stay in business.

We only found out about this proposal yesterday. There is a way to fight it, however. TODAY, December 3rd, is the deadline for posting comments to the USDA. Below is a link for you to use to make comments. I received a copy of an excellent letter from a customer this morning, the body of which I'll reprint here for you to use as a template if you wish:

Docket ID: AMS-FV-07-0090

Docket Title: Food Safety Regulations for Leafy Greens Under the Agricultural Marketing Agreement Act of 1937 (AMAA)

Document ID: AMS-FV-07-0090-0001

Document Title: Handling Regulations for Leafy Greens Under the Agricultural Marketing Agreement Act of 1937

To Whom It May Concern:

I urge you to refrain from passing any regulation or law which further inhibits the ability of America's small farms to participate and compete in today's agricultural markets.

I, and my family, are regular consumers of greens (and other vegetables) produced by small, family-owned farms in the Central Texas area such as [put our farm name here, and any other farm with whom you shop]. These independently-owned farms are growing and selling produce in a marketplace dominated by corporate growers.

I ensure my family's food safety by purchasing from growers with whom I have relationships and whose practices I know. Small, family farms are ill equipped to handle

the administrative burden required by regulations targeted at large, corporate concerns, and small growers represent just a tiny percentage of food safety concerns, despite their growing share of the marketplace.

Please protect small growers. They represent the future of agriculture.

In order to submit your letter, please follow these instructions:

- 1) Go to [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov).
- 2) Under "Search Documents" Step 1, choose "Documents with an Open Comment Period."
- 3) Under Step 2, choose "Department of Agriculture - All"
- 4) Under Step 3, choose "Proposed Rules."
- 5) Under Step 4, choose "Docket ID" and then type in "AMS-FV-07-0090" and then click "Submit."
- 6) On the next screen, click on the tiny yellow button on the left side of the page, under the column "Comments Add/Due By."
- 7) Follow the instructions on the next page, and remember to scroll down to the bottom of the page to fully submit your comments.

Here is a link with more information:

<http://cornucopia.org/index.php/protect-fresh-leafy-greens-and-family-farms/#more-362>

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4) Concrete in the Packing Shed Completed...next project Farm Office  
Last Wednesday and Thursday we poured concrete in the packing shed. We were lucky to have two truck loads of concrete donated by the local concrete company in exchange for a little fresh produce! The concrete will be a big plus in making it easier to haul heavy crates of produce around. Also we build in a big gutter so all of the water used in washing vegetables is drained away from the barn so we don't have to work in a mud pit.

If any CSA members can help out with our next project please let me know. We are building a small office for the barn. Our new intern Will, worked previously as a framer so the framing part we should be able to knock out pretty fast. We could use a little help with the wiring, insulation, and covering the interior walls with sheetrock. Let us know if you are interested. We will be working on this during the week as well as on Saturday and Sunday afternoons for the next couple of weeks or so...no work over Christmas week.



Beneath the loads of peppers is the new concrete....all of these boxes really are peppers. The kids love to ride their bikes on it. Checkout the custom gutter/ditch for water diversion on the left hand side!

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#### 5) New Wednesday Pick-up Locations

Starting on December 12<sup>th</sup> we will be adding a Wednesday CSA distribution to the following locations:

Farm Pickup - 9515 Hergotz Lane - ABIA Airport (Wed 2-7pm)

North Austin –Rutland and Metric Vicinity (Wed 2:30-7pm)

Cedar Park - Lakeline Blvd (Wed 3:00-7pm)

North West Austin - Far West and Mesa (Wed 3:30-7pm)

To start picking up at any of these locations, just mark it down on the sign-up sheet for the Winter Session. We want to make box pickup as convenient as possible. If you have a suggestion for a pickup location or if you are interested in hosting a site please e-mail us.

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#### 6) CSA Work-share Volunteers for Winter Session?

Our CSA is a little different than most in that veggies each week are harvested mostly by CSA members. If you are interested in having more involvement in the farm please email me. In exchange for working from 8-12:30 on Saturday mornings we provided a CSA share of veggies. Our CSA is growing rapidly and we always need plenty of friendly and energetic members to help with the harvest. We also accept volunteers on weekdays too, however most work-share members come on Saturdays.



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#### 7) We love art!

We would like have some new art to use for the new produce bags we are planning on making. Also art for farm t-shirts would be nice. Send us yours our your children's and we will see what we can do. We can return it if needed. We have access to a large format scanner.

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#### 8) Recipes

Recipes each week are provided by CSA member and cookbook author, Elaine DiRico.

It's hard for me to imagine frying green tomatoes in anything but bacon fat, as that is how my mother and grandmother did it. Growing older and looking for alternatives, I found smoked salt. Go ahead and fry them in oil, then a sprinkle of the salt, and it takes me back to my grandmother's kitchen!

#### **Fried Green Tomatoes**

2-3 large green tomatoes  
salt

pepper  
cornmeal  
oil for frying

Slice the tomatoes thickly, about 1/4"-1/2" . Sprinkle with salt and drain in a colander or on paper for thirty minutes to release some of the water. Rinse quickly, dredge in the cornmeal, and fry over medium high heat until golden brown.

Now what you ask? These make the best BLTs imaginable, and again, if you get a little smoked salt or a tiny sprinkle of chipotle powder, you can skip the bacon. I use them for a version of Eggs Benedict as well, letting them replace the English muffin. They are wonderful on a salad as well- I love the contrast of a cool green salad and a hot topping.

This sounds odd, but on a farm, at the end of the season, recipes to use the tomatoes quickly are necessary. Perhaps since we only ate this once a year, it is one of my favorites.

### **Green Tomato Tart**

pastry for one pie crust  
2-3 pounds green tomatoes, peeled\*  
2 Tablespoons butter  
3/4 cup sugar  
juice of one lemon  
pinch salt  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Slice enough tomatoes to cover the top of the tart. Chop the rest, and cook in the butter over medium heat until translucent. Add the vanilla extract, juice and sugar and cook another ten minutes, until thick. Line a tart pan or pie pan with the pastry, spoon in the tomato filling and top with the tomato slices. Bake for an hour at 350 degrees, or until the crust is crisp and brown.. Serve hot or room temperature.

\* To peel tomatoes easily, cut a shallow X opposite the stem end, and dip in boiling water for ten seconds. Peel the skin off from the X.

With Christmas coming, I like to make a lot of gifts. Pepper Jelly seems uniquely Texan, and while the usual cream cheese and cracker way of serving is easy, I like to include recipes that use it as a glaze on pork or chicken, and even in a vinaigrette dressing to spice it up a bit. I know it looks like a lot of sugar, but it is necessary for it to set up, and remember- this is a condiment... you probably won't eat a whole jar in one sitting!

### **Pepper Jelly**

2 cups chopped peppers- use bell peppers plus as much spice as you like. About 3 parts bell to one part jalapeno is usually about right  
3 cups cider vinegar

12 cups sugar  
8 oz. pectin\*  
food coloring if you like

Puree the peppers with the vinegar in a blender or food processor. Pour into a large saucepan, and bring to a rolling boil. Add the pectin and food coloring like, and pour into sterilized jars. Seal.

**Go to the USDA web site for safety instructions on canning.**

With the last of the ripe tomatoes and basil, a final Caprese salad is in order. Named for the island of Capri, this is the epitome of summer to me. Makes a pretty wonderful sandwich as well.

### **Caprese**

Sliced ripe tomatoes, a variety if possible  
Sliced fresh mozzarella\*  
Sliced basil\*\*

Best olive oil\*\*\*  
Balsamic vinegar  
Salt and pepper

Arrange the tomatoes on a plate, alternating with the slices of cheese. Sprinkle lightly w salt and pepper, a good quantity of olive oil and a tiny sprinkle of the vinegar. Top with the slivered basil. I like to serve this on a big white plate to show off the colors.

\* There is a lot of fresh mozzarella being made in town- most of it very good. This is a fresh cheese and much better if it has never been refrigerated. The same is true of tomatoes- Never Refrigerate! It kills the flavor and texture. Finally, basil often goes black on me if I refrigerate it, so I keep it on the counter in a glass of water. If you must refrigerate it, put it in a glass and pull a plastic bag over it.

\*\*To slice basil, or chiffonade, roll the leaves up like a cigar, and slice with a very sharp knife. A dull knife bruises it, turning it black.

\*\*\* Ahh olive oil! Sunshine in a bottle. I have a half dozen bottles, only one of which gets used in cooking. Any oil heated over 200 degrees will taste the same, so I generally use grapeseed or canola oil to give me a higher smoke point, then buy *really* good oil to use as a seasoning. Lucini is always wonderful- an Italian, it is estate grown and hand picked, meaning that the fruit was very fresh and in good shape when it got to the press, and you can taste the difference. If you want an organic California olive oil, McEvoy's is always good. There is a press in Wimberley, but what I have tasted hasn't been great. Still, I have hope- Texas is perfect for growing olives.

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9) Subscribe/Unsubscribe To Newsletter

If you would like to subscribe or unsubscribe to our email newsletter click [here](#).

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#### 10) Johnson's Backyard Garden Contact Information

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