

Johnson's Backyard Garden, April 22nd

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We'd like your input for the newsletter! Please send us brief personal stories about your CSA experience to include in a new 'Member Spotlight' column. Related news articles, book reviews, recipes, etc are also welcome. carolyn@johnsonsbaycardgarden.com

1) In Your Box this Week

Strawberries

Beets

Broccoli

Arugula

Garlic

Spring Onions

Tomatoes

And a mystery vegetable! One of the following:

Kohlrabi

Purple Cauliflower

Carrots

Chard

Kale

As the unexpected never fails to happen (see item 6, "Get 'em While They're Hot"), keep in mind that this list is subject to change depending on availability and quality of crops on harvest day. You'll find the most accurate packing list on our [website](#). The website list also features links to online recipes, pictures (for the more mysterious veggies) and other interesting tidbits.

2) Farm News

- We were featured this week in an article on local food in UT's *Daily Texan*: ["Going Local' for Groceries](#) – For the majority of shoppers, a trip to the nearest grocery store does not consist of

searching for organic produce from a nearby farm. They may not be worrying about how long it took the pineapples in the produce section at one of Austin's many H-E-B stores to travel 1600 miles from farms in Costa Rica to make it to the shelf. Most shoppers want convenience and cheap prices. But there is an alternative; it is called 'going local.'“ [more...](#)

- Our chickens have now spent about a week in their new home in the pecan orchard (having been moved from the coop where they were incubated). Lila is their constant companion and caretaker and under her care they are rapidly growing!



- This week we received a delivery of chicken manure (29 tons!!), which we've been tilling into the fields. Chicken manure is a very rich source of nitrogen, one of the three primary soil nutrients (phosphorous and potassium being the other two, all together these are the components of fertilizer). Nitrogen is necessary for plants to form amino acids, the basis for enzymes and cell membranes. With the addition of this manure, our fields are now a beautiful brown canvass, interrupted only by weaving tire marks left by Carolyn's first tries at driving the tractor.



- The farm is transitioning from winter crops to summer crops, this means a lot of field space is opening up as we harvest the last of the broccoli, beets and winter greens. In their place we've been transplanting more peppers and eggplants and in the greenhouse are cucumbers, melons, basil, and hot peppers which will go in the fields in a couple weeks.



3) CSA Gift Certificates

If you're looking for the perfect gift, what could be better than several weeks of fresh, local, organic produce? We are happy to now offer gift certificates for CSA membership – to purchase, give us a call or send an email: farm@johnsonsbackyardgarden.com

4) Spring Open House – Music Lineup

Our Spring Open House and Potluck is **Sunday May 4**. We have 2 bands booked so far: [Dear Henry](#) and [La Tampiquena](#). Music will start at 5pm with the potluck and go until dark. Should be lots of fun, we hope to see you there!

For those who are new to this list, here's more potluck info:

Potluck Dinner from **5 – 7pm**, feel free to come early to see the farm, or stay late just to hang out! Held in the pecan grove at the farm, this is a great chance to meet the faces behind your CSA box as well as other CSA members. Please bring a dish to share, as well as place settings for you and yours.

To RSVP, send us an email and we'll send you our Evite invitation.

5) Farm Wish List

- Laser printer
- Used PC or Laptop (and you thought farmers spent their day in the field)
- Bunk Beds (we have 4 more interns on the way...)
- Vacuum Cleaner (and they are dirty)
- Washing Machine (for salad greens!)
- Fans (to prevent interns from wilting!)

Have something you could donate or give us a good deal on?

Email farm@johnsonsbackyardgarden.com

6) Get 'em While They're Hot

Life on the farm is always exciting and unexpected, but we *really* didn't expect this. Last Wednesday afternoon after Will went off on the weekly delivery, Brenton and I had been clearing out plastic mulch to make room for more summer crops. As we walked back in from the fields we were welcomed by Will returning from the delivery with an odd smell wafting behind him – the smell of melting plastic, and smoldering vegetables. We looked in the back of the truck and sure enough, there in a mostly melted plastic harvest bin were the remains of some beets and chard which were well, charred. Spontaneous vegetable combustion – it had started as a small smolder in the front seat but when Will moved the vegetables to the bed of the truck, the wind whipped this little spark into a fully formed fire, flames and smoke pouring out as he sped down Ben White Boulevard. Brenton remains suspicious of cigarette ash, but the rest of us are hanging onto a belief in spontaneous vegetable combustion.

7) Tips for Washing and Drying Greens

Greens are most easily washed in a water bath – fill your sink or a large pot with water and give them a good soaking and a little agitation with your hands. For especially buggy or hard to clean curly greens (like kale) use warm water and a couple dashes of salt. Refresh the water and repeat soaking and agitation as many times as you feel is needed. Use the washed greens immediately or dry and re-bag to store in the refrigerator. Drying greens is easy with a salad spinner, another great method is to put the greens in a mesh bag (the kind used for delicates when doing laundry) and then go outside and spin the bag around and around to fling all the water out. This is a lot of fun and very effective.

8) Vegetable Storage Tips

We aim to grow and package our vegetables to maintain the highest taste and nutritional quality possible. However, once they've left the farm it's up to you to keep them fresh and nutritious. There's no refrigeration at the CSA drop points so it's good to pick up your box as early as possible, especially as the weather heats up. Here are some additional tips for storing this week's share:

- **Arugula** should be washed immediately then spin dried. Rebag and place in the refrigerator.

- **Broccoli** will last 4-7 days in plastic bags in the crisper.
- **Carrots and Beets** should be stored in plastic bags. They'll last two weeks in the fridge. Take tops off carrots before storing, but leave the greens on beets, with both roots and tops in the bag.
- **Cauliflower** wrap in plastic and use within a week.
- **Kale and Chard** have the same crisper life and should be kept in plastic bags. Any bunch greens can be freshened by cutting an inch of the bottom stalks and soaking the entire bunch in cold water for 10 minutes. Place in a plastic bag in the fridge for a few hours to revive.
- **Strawberries** are best covered in the fridge. Don't wash them until you use them - too much moisture in the package speeds spoilage.
- **Tomatoes** should be kept uncovered at room temp, but can be refrigerated if very ripe. All other fresh vegetables belong in the refrigerator.

Checkout our [storage tips](#) on our website for a more complete guide, and of course feel free to contact us with any questions.

9) Recipes - Greens and Reds (and Goldens and Striped)

We would love to share your recipes too! Please email your favorites to carolyn@johnsonsbackyardgarden.com

Depending on your mystery vegetable you may only have beet greens in your box this week. However, given the recent abundance of greens I've gotten a lot of excellent recipes for them from CSA members as well as from farm resident Grit Ramuschkat, so here they are.

Keep in mind that cooking greens do great frozen as well – wash and chop them, then boil them briefly (2 to 3 minutes). Cool under running water or in an ice bath and put in plastic freezer bags.

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These recipes from Grit feature swiss chard, but you can substitute this week's beet greens (a close botanical cousin, maybe even a sibling).

### **Swiss Chard Pizza**

adapted from *Farmer John's Cookbook - The Real Dirt on Vegetables*

#### Pizza dough:

The recipe for the dough is actually from my friend Aubrey who is currently in a phase of self-discovery. Having a fantastic handle on pastry is only one of her many talents.

Mix 2 1/4 tsp yeast, 1/2 tsp brown sugar, 1 tsp salt and 2 Tbsp olive oil

Add 1 1/2 C warm water and let sit until yeast bubbles up

Add 2 1/2 C flour (feel free to mix different flour types together) and knead dough, adding more flour until not sticky.

Place dough in an oiled bowl, cover with a slightly damp towel and let sit in a warm place for around an hour. If baking in a pan, shape the dough and let sit for another 15 to 20 minutes before putting the topping on. If baking on stone, put toppings on right away.

#### Topping:

#### Ingredients:

Olive Oil  
Onions, sliced  
Garlic, chopped  
3 bunches of Swiss Chard, rinsed and coarsely chopped  
1 handful of Raisins  
1 handful of Pine Nuts or Pecans, toasted  
1 Tbsp Lemon Juice, freshly squeezed  
Salt & Pepper  
Local Goat Cheese, crumbled  
Bruder Basil Cheese (German Smoked Basil Cheese, available at Wheatsville, Whole Foods or Central Market)

Preparation:

Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add onions and cook until golden, then stir in the garlic and saute for another minute. Add the chard in batches, adding more as each batch wilts. When all the chard is added and wilted, stir in the raisins and nuts. Season with salt and pepper. Remove extra liquid that would make the pizza dough too mushy.

Top the pizza with the chard mixture, squeeze some lemon juice over it and sprinkle with goat cheese crumbles and grated basil cheese. Bake at 425° F for 15 to 20 minutes.

**Capuns** - Swiss chard rolls filled with local beef in cream sauce  
adapted from *A Taste of Switzerland* by Sue Style

These things are truly divine and therefore worth-while making. Your efforts will be rewarded, believe me!

Ingredients:

1 1/3 C flour  
salt, pepper  
2 eggs  
3 1/2 fl oz milk  
plenty of chives, parsley and basil or other herbs available  
1 shallot or onion, chopped  
1/2 lb ground beef, available at the local farmer's market  
20 big chard leaves, whole  
2 Tbsp butter  
5 fl oz stock  
5 fl oz cream  
tomatoes  
parmesan cheese, grated

Preparation:

Whisk together to a smooth batter the flour, 1/2 tsp of salt, the eggs and milk. Rest the batter for about 30 minutes in the fridge.

In the meantime, blanch the whole chard leaves in boiling salted water until wilted. The chard wilts within minutes. Drain and lay the leaves carefully on a towel to dry off a little (be careful, you don't want to rip them). Cook the beef and onion in a pan. Just before the beef is completely done, stir in the herbs and finish cooking. Mix the beef mixture and the egg batter together.

Put 2 spoonful of the final batter on the middle of a chard leaf and roll leaf into a small package. Toss the

packages in hot butter in a large frying pan, turning several times. The packages hold up well, you'll be surprised. Mix the stock with the cream, season and pour mixture over the packages. Let everything simmer gently for about 10 minutes, stirring sauce occasionally.

To serve put a few packages with some of the sauce in a soup bowl and then add a few slices of tomato to it. Sprinkle parmesan cheese on top of each serving. Drink a good wine with it!

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More on the green front, CSA member Kari Michalek responded to last week's treatise on greens with some more good ideas:

"The fried egg salad doesn't cut it for me... but you're right. We're in great abundance with greens. Here's some other ideas.

For breakfast I chop up some greens and mix them into scrambled eggs cooked omelet style. Finely chopped I add them to meatloaf and spaghetti sauce. I make creamed greens (a typical spinach recipe) with all types of greens. For the less tender kind like kale and collards I just steam them first for 20-30 minutes before adding them to my cream sauce. A vegan version...

2 Tbs olive oil
mince clove of garlic
2 Tbs flour (potato starch is a good gluten free option)
3/4 cup vegetable stock
2 Tbs rice or soy milk

Heat olive oil, add garlic and sauté, add flour or potato starch to make a roux (I know I spelled this wrong but my brain is frozen and it won't filter through its abundance to find the right spelling [Carolyn's note: I have no idea, and my google search brought no light to the issue...anyone?]), slowly stir in vegetable stock, continue stirring until creamy, add rice or soy milk... stir in fresh spinach and cook until wilted (5 mins) or stir in steamed greens. My husband LOVES this dish.™

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Enough talk of greens, there are other colors in the box! Beets come in many colors – golden, deep red and striped – and have recently become one of my favorite things, the golden ones in particular. Here's a recipe that I'm really excited about:

### **Roasted Beets with Tart Pink Grapefruit Glaze**

From Mollie Katzen's *Vegetable Dishes I Can't Live Without*

Beets, all varieties  
1c pink grapefruit juice  
1T unseasoned rice vinegar  
2T plus 2t real maple syrup  
1T cornstarch

Roast the beets: 450 F for about 1 hour, until tender enough to be pierced with a fork. You can do this several ways – Mollie Katzen suggests putting whole in aluminum foil packets with 3 T water, then rubbing the skins off and slicing them after they cool. I slice them before cooking (leaving the skin on, that's where all the vitamins are!), then toss them with a little oil and roast on a cookie sheet. In case you hadn't noticed, it's really hot in Texas so turning on the oven for an hour at 450 is something I, for one, try to avoid. My solution: I start the

beets at 450 F in the morning while I'm eating breakfast, then when I leave to work 20 or 30 minutes later I turn the oven down to 200 (and turn on the fan and open all my doors and windows). When I come back for a water break an hour or so later the beets are perfect, the house is only reasonably sauna-like and dinner is halfway done.

Glaze: In a medium-size bowl, whisk together grapefruit juice, vinegar and maple syrup. Place cornstarch in a small saucepan and drizzle in this mixture, whisking until cornstarch is dissolved. Place in a pan over medium heat, and heat just to the boiling point, whisking frequently. Turn down heat and cook, stirring often, for 3 to 5 minutes or until thickened and glossy. Remove from heat and drizzle over the roasted beets, serve immediately.

Also, try serving over a bed of fresh arugula and adding a little cayenne to the glaze. Wow.

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10) Subscribe/Unsubscribe To Newsletter

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

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11) Johnson's Backyard Garden Contact Information

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