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We'd like your input for the newsletter! Please send related news articles, book reviews, recipes, etc to carolyn@johnsonsbayardgarden.com

We're on MySpace, [be our friend!](#)

1) In Your Box this Week

Early Girl Tomatoes
Cherry Tomatoes
Roma Tomatoes
Zucchini
Patty Pan Squash
Zephyr Squash
Yellow Straight Neck Squash
Cucumbers
Sweet Peppers
Hot Peppers – Jalapeno and Anaheim (best when roasted, see recipes below)
Ichiban, Rosa Bianca (purple and white Italian heirloom) and Black Beauty Eggplant
Basil
Okra
Garlic
Melon – Watermelon, Canteloupe, or Honeydew

As the unexpected never fails to happen, 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 the homepage of our [website](#). This list also features links to recipes, photos for the more unusual veggies, and other interesting tidbits.

2) Farm News

- First and foremost, our **Organic Certification** came through last week! We submitted our application to the Texas Department of Agriculture last fall, and after much bureaucracy we can finally say we are officially certified.



- Our call for lawyers a couple weeks ago got a great response (thank you!!), now we are in need of an **accountant**. We will provide the vegetables, you do the math.
- Remember the rain dance from last week's newsletter? Well, it worked. Wednesday afternoon, right after Will and Jeff took off for CSA deliveries it started pouring down rain! We got a good inch or so, then more rain on Thursday, and again on Monday.
- We have now donated over **6,000 pounds** of fresh produce to the Salvation Army in downtown Austin. Their coolers are so full that we are looking for other area food banks to donate to, particularly ones that would be able to come pickup produce from the farm. Let us know if you have a lead!
- Remember that there will be no CSA boxes from the **14th to 21st of August**. Subscriptions will resume the following Saturday, August 23. Brenton, Beth and the kids will be out of town; the interns will be running a stand at the Austin Farmer's Market on both Wednesday and Saturday of that week.
- We are continuing with fall planting – just today we set out 10 rows of peppers, hot and sweet, and 10 varieties of winter squash. We have several varieties of tomatoes and eggplants in the greenhouse which will be planted out in the field soon as well. In preparation for all these little guys we will soon be breaking new ground in the back field, and extending our irrigation system by 1,000 feet!

- Intern Natalie has become the official farm beautician – this past week fellow interns Will, Sarah and Carolyn all got much needed haircuts.



- Monday was a record harvest day, and as hard as it was to convince Brenton (threats of mutiny were considered), we're taking the afternoon off!! Now *that's* news.

3) Family, Food and Architecture (or, the Joyous Return of Steven and Grit!)



Family, Food & Architecture

Greetings CSA members!

Out here on the farm, growing, harvesting and enjoying good food is a way of life. My wife Grit and I were lucky enough to join Beth & Brent at Johnson's Backyard Garden soon after they purchased the property at the end of 2006. Since then we've been living in and keeping up the old original farmhouse which, too small for the Johnson family, is perfect for a couple gardeners and home improvers like ourselves.

This summer we were fortunate enough to travel to Europe, Grit's home continent, to visit her family, eat lots of great local food and visit buildings I've been learning about as a graduate student in architecture here at UT. For five weeks we crisscrossed Germany, Switzerland and France visiting family, historic and contemporary buildings and eating our way through dozens of farmers' markets, farm stands and forgotten fruit trees.

I documented our travels with a blog, each day describing our adventures with text and photographs. In the name of family, food and architecture, I invite you to share in our experiences!

[Europe 2008 Family, Food & Architecture Blog](#)

All the best,

Steven and Grit

4) A Note on Flowers

You have probably noticed that we have not been bringing flowers to the CSA drop points lately. This decision was made as a result of our delivery vehicle situation. We felt that by the time the flowers made it to the pickup site they were rather haggard from the ride, so we've decided to hold off on delivering flowers until we have a more appropriate delivery vehicle. In the future, we may also do a specific flower share, for those that are interested in receiving flowers on a regular basis.

Until then, we are happy to offer complimentary flowers to CSA members if you visit the farm; Saturdays from 9am to 1pm are the best time to visit.

5) Looking for a New Round Rock Pickup Site

Our Round Rock location has not worked out as planned and so we are looking for a new host in the Round Rock area. Ideally the host would be able to offer a location that is shady, preferably even air conditioned, easily accessible, and about 3' x 6' in size. Pickup would be from 2 – 7pm on Wednesdays. Empty boxes, empty egg cartons and a small cooler would need to be stored at the location each week as well. Contact us if you are interested in hosting!

farm@johnsonsbackyardgarden.com

6) 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. Here are some additional tips on how to store this week's share:

Fridge

- **Peppers** and **Cucumbers** should be stored in the crisper, and washed in cold water before use.
- **Zucchini** and other **Summer Squash** will last 4-7 days in plastic bags in the crisper.
- **Okra** will keep for only two or three days. Refrigerate unwashed, dry okra pods in the vegetable crisper, loosely wrapped in perforated plastic bags. Wet pods will quickly mold and become slimy. When the ridges and tips of the pod start to turn dark, use it or lose it. Once it starts to darken, okra will quickly deteriorate.

Counter

- **Basil** can be stored upright in a jar of water at room temperature, or in an open bag on the counter.
- **Eggplant** and **Garlic** are best kept moderately cool, no lower than 50 degrees. A cool, dry dark place is best- on the counter, in a cupboard or basket. Eggplant are delicate and do not store well, so try to use them within a few days.
- **Tomatoes** should be kept at room temperature, but can be refrigerated if very ripe. Leaving them in the paper bag will help them ripen quickly. Also, be sure to store your tomatoes away from your eggplants, or other sensitive produce such as bananas, as the tomatoes will make them ripen faster.
- **Melons** should be stored uncut in a cool dark place. Keep cut melons 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.

7) Recipes

Classic Pork Picadillo-Stuffed Chiles in Tomato Broth

Brent's favorite chile rellenos recipe from Rick Bayless of Frontera Grill in Chicago



3 tablespoons rich-tasting pork lard or vegetable oil
2 medium white onions, chopped into 1/4-inch pieces
3 pounds (about 6 medium-large round or 20 plum) ripe tomatoes, cored and cut into large pieces
1 teaspoon cinnamon, preferably freshly ground Mexican canela
1 teaspoon black pepper, preferably freshly ground
2 cups chicken or beef broth
1/2 cup slivered almonds
1 1/2 pounds coarsely ground pork shoulder (or use the ground beef from your beef share!)
1/2 cup raisins
1 tablespoon cider vinegar
Salt
Oil to a depth of 1 inch, for frying
8 medium (about 1 1/2 pounds total) fresh poblano or Anaheim chiles
8 6-inch wooden skewers or 16 toothpicks
6 large eggs, cold
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour, plus about 1 cup for dredging the chiles
Sprigs of fresh cilantro, watercress or flatleaf parsley, for garnish

The broth base and filling: In a medium-large (4-quart) saucepan, heat the lard or oil over medium. Add the onions and cook, stirring regularly, until they are very well browned, about 10 minutes. While the onions are cooking, puree the undrained canned tomatoes (if using fresh tomatoes, puree them with 2/3 cup water), using a blender or food processor and working in two batches if necessary for your equipment.

When the onions are well browned, raise the heat to medium-high and add the pureed tomatoes, cinnamon and black pepper. Stir regularly as the mixture boils briskly, reducing until it becomes the consistency of thick tomato sauce, about 25 minutes.

The tomato broth: Remove 2 cups of the tomato mixture and set aside. Stir the broth into the mixture that remains. Partially cover and simmer over low heat for 45 minutes or so, while you're preparing the filling and chiles.

The pork picadillo filling: Set a large (12-inch) skillet (preferably non-stick) over medium high heat. Add the almonds and stir around until they color to a deep golden, about 2 minutes. Remove. Crumble the pork into the skillet and fry, stirring often, until thoroughly cooked (some of the edges should be browned and crispy), 10 to 15 minutes. If the pork has rendered a lot of fat, drain it off. Mix in the reserved 2 cups of tomato mixture, raisins and vinegar. Cook over medium heat, stirring regularly, until the mixture is very thick and homogenous, about 20 minutes. Stir in the almonds, then taste and season with salt, usually about 1 teaspoon. Cool.

Preparing the chiles: While the picadillo is cooking, pour 1-inch of oil into a heavy deep skillet or pot-the pot should be 12 inches wide and 3 to 4 inches deep for easiest maneuvering of the chiles-and set over medium to medium high to heat to 350 degrees. (Using a thermometer is the most accurate way to assure the proper heat, but there are other reliable clues: The oil releases that “hot oil” aroma and its surface begins shimmering. When you think the oil is hot, test the edge of a chile-it should sizzle vigorously. Remember-smoking oil is dangerously overheated and will give the chiles a bad taste.) In two batches, fry the chiles, turning them continually for about 1 minute, until they are evenly blistered (they’ll look uniformly light green, having lightened as they blister). Drain on paper towels. Remove the oil from the heat.

When the chiles are cool enough to handle, rub off the blistered skins, then cut an incision in the side of each one, starting 1/2 inch below the stem end and continuing to within 1/2 inch of the tip. One by one, work your finger inside the chiles and dislodge all the seeds clustered just below the stem. Quickly rinse the seeds from inside the chiles, being careful not to rip or tear the opening any wider; rinse off any stray bits of skin. Drain on paper towels, cut-side down.

Stuffing the chiles: Stuff each well drained chile with about 1/2 cup of cool pork filling, then slightly overlap the two sides of the incision and pin them back together with a skewer or 2 toothpicks. For the greatest ease in battering and frying, flatten the chiles slightly, place on a parchment-lined baking sheet and freeze for about 1 hour to firm. (For notes on working with thoroughly frozen chiles, please read the note in Working Ahead below.)

Battering and frying the chiles: Reheat the oil to 350° and set up a tray lined with several layers of paper towels. Separate the eggs: whites into the bowl of an electric mixer, the yolks into another bowl. Add 1/2 teaspoon of salt to the whites and begin beating them on medium speed. When they are beginning to look dry and hold a stiff peak (but are not at all rigid), beat in the yolks two at a time until well incorporated. Lastly, beat in the 2 tablespoons of flour. Spread the 1 cup of flour on a plate.

One at a time, batter the first four chiles: roll in the flour, shake off the excess, pick up by the stem, dip into the batter, pull quickly straight up out of the batter, then lay into the hot oil. (If your kitchen is very warm, it’s best to hold the remaining batter for the second round in the refrigerator.) Once the first four are in the oil, begin gently, gently basting them with spoonfuls of hot oil (this will help set the uncooked batter on top). When they’re richly golden underneath, about 4 minutes, use one small metal spatula underneath and another one (or a spoon) on top to gently turn the chiles over. Fry until the other side is richly golden, another 3 to 4 minutes. Using the metal spatula, remove the chiles to drain on paper towels. Repeat with the second half of the chiles.

Serving the chiles

Heat the oven to 400°. Once all the fried chiles have cooled for at least 5 minutes, pick them up by carefully rolling each one onto one hand, then transferring to a baking sheet (lined with parchment, if you wish, for extra ease at the time of serving). Pull out the wooden skewer by twisting it gently. Bake for about 15 minutes to reheat, to render some of the absorbed oil and to crisp slightly.

Meanwhile, bring the tomato broth to a boil and check the consistency: it should be similar to a brothy tomato soup. If too thick, thin with a little water or broth; if too thin, boil rapidly until thickened slightly. Season it with salt, usually about 1/2 teaspoon. Ladle about 1/2 cup of the broth into each of 8 deep serving bowls (large soup bowls or pasta bowls are perfect here). Nestle in one of the chiles, garnish with the herb sprigs and get ready for a taste of real Mexico.

Working Ahead

The beauty of this dish is the way so many steps can be done in advance. The brothy sauce and filling (Steps 1 through 3) can be made several days in advance and stored in the refrigerator, covered. The chiles may be blistered, peeled and seeded (Step 4) a day in advance, though if I were that far ahead, I’d stuff (Step 5) and freeze them, too, just for ease in the frying. Battered and fried chiles will hold for an hour or two at room temperature before reheating them in the 400° oven (Step 7). (If you freeze the chiles until solid, be sure to complete the frying a full half hour in advance of oven-reheating

and serving.) While reheating the chiles, warm the broth and you're ready to serve.

To Make Cheese Chiles Rellenos

Coarsely shred 1 pound melting cheese, such as Mexican Chihuahua, Monterey jack, brick or mild cheddar. Divide the cheese into 8 portions and form each into a football shape. Stuff the cheese into the chiles, then batter, fry, reheat and serve with fresh salsa.

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### **Quick Ratatouille**

From CSA member Elaine DiRico

*Yesterday seemed about twice as long as usual, so I needed something quick for dinner. When my husband called, he requested Ratatouille, not exactly fast food. I came up with this:*

Set the oven to 450 degrees.

Cut up **eggplant**, **onions**, and **squash** in equal sized pieces- 3/4" dice is perfect. Toss with a little **olive oil**, **salt** and **pepper** and roast for 10 minutes. Stir well, and add in whole cloves of **garlic** (and as long as you have the oven hot, why not roast a few whole heads of garlic too? Make a cut across the top to expose the cloves, sprinkle with salt, pepper and olive oil, and perhaps a stem of thyme, wrap in foil, and roast until soft....) roast another ten minutes.

Transfer to a saucepan, and add diced **tomatoes**, either fresh or canned, and water if needed. **Oregano**, **basil**, **capers** and **red pepper flakes** are good at this point, and you can just get it warm, and serve with a little **Parmesan** and some fresh, torn **basil** on top.

The nice thing about this is the texture holds up in the vegetables and the flavors are more intense because they have been roasted. You can also make just a couple of servings easily, eliminating the horror of the same dinner four nights in a row. Another option is to add some vegetable stock, some chopped cooked potatoes, a can of cannellini beans and some cooked pasta (small, like ziti or elbow or small penne pastas), bring up to heat and you have minestrone.

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Hidden Zucchini Mac and Cheese

From intern Carolyn

Sometimes I have to hide vegetables from myself. Living on a farm there are so many to eat through that it can get a little overwhelming and repetitious, and on some nights I just don't want to eat any vegetables. So I have to tell the small child in me to go outside and play, while I surreptitiously puree zucchini. My little child self sneaks back in the kitchen to steal a chip as I sauté the zucchini but happily does not see it as I quickly add cheese and pasta. 'Why is this green?' I ask myself as I sit down to eat it, but it doesn't matter because it tastes too good...mmmm cheese.

1 zucchini, pureed
1 bell pepper, chopped
2 T butter
1 c yogurt
½ c cheese – I used a mix of cheddar, parmesan and goat cheese
Salt and Pepper to taste
Pasta
Optional additions: Tuna, Anaheim pepper

Sautee pureed zucchini and pepper in butter. Add cheese and yogurt, cook until cheese is thoroughly melted. Mix with pasta and enjoy!

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## Watermelon Salad

This recipe was demonstrated at the Austin Farmer's market two Saturdays ago by Chef Mark Spedale of Primizie and featured in AFM's newsletter last week.

### Ingredients

3 cups diced watermelon (1-inch; diced)  
1 cup cherry tomatoes halved  
1 cup diced peeled seeded cucumber (small dice)  
6 - 8 fresh basil leaves (torn or chiffonade)  
3 tablespoons freshly squeezed lime juice, plus more to taste  
2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil  
Coarse salt to taste  
Freshly ground black pepper to taste  
4 tablespoons of (Feta, ricotta salata or queso fresco) style cheese

### Method

Put the watermelon, tomatoes, cucumber, basil, lime juice and oil in a large bowl. Season with salt and pepper and toss together.

Top with a feta, ricotta salata or queso fresco style cheese - any of these would work great adding a nice salty counterpoint.

We would love to share your recipes too! Please email your favorites to [sarah@johnsonsbackyardgarden.com](mailto:sarah@johnsonsbackyardgarden.com)

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## 8) Upcoming Events

### July 19<sup>th</sup>, 9am: Third Annual Chicken Seminar

Led by Diana Claitor, Paula Middleton, and Carol Ann Sayle, this free seminar will take place next to the Hen House at [The Natural Gardener](#). Bring a lawn chair!

**July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2 – 4 pm: [Heirloom Melon Festival](#)** at Home Sweet Farm in Brenham, TX

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## 9) Subscribe/Unsubscribe To Newsletter

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## 10) Johnson's Backyard Garden Contact Information

Johnson's Backyard Garden

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Office phone: (512) 386-5273

Office Hours : M-F, 8am – 12pm

**Self-Serve Farmstand Hours: Saturdays, 9am – 1pm**

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website: [www.johnsonsbackyardgarden.com](http://www.johnsonsbackyardgarden.com)



*Carolyn peddles tomatoes at the Saturday Austin Farmer's Market. Photo courtesy of CSA member Joy Kohl.*