



WELL FED

Newsletter for Wellspring Farm CSA

www.wellspringcsa.com

July 17, 2006

Farmer's Message

Crops are continuing to work on catching up from the wet spring, even though we are now enjoying more seasonable warmth. We have had great harvests of greens, which were able to better withstand the wet weather. It is the heat-loving crops that are showing damage at this point in the season. Usually by now we are harvesting large quantities of summer squash and zucchini, and the cucumbers normally start to come in. This year I think we will be a week to 10 days behind schedule, so thanks for hanging in there with the greens! The flowers are in bloom, which adds great color to the pick-up experience. Come on out and cut a bouquet!

I especially appreciate the very kind words from members this week regarding my last newsletter column. Many reminded me, "We are in this together!" and I feel reassured that our membership truly cares about the survival of this farm, and recognizes that there will be bounteous times and thin times. As one member put it in an email, "I understand that part of the reason for the CSA is to share the risk of farming, so that we all can benefit from the presence of your farm in our community. We will all absorb the possible losses this season and it will be a much smaller burden for each of us than what you would have had to deal with by yourself." Another member told me that he doesn't expect the highs and lows to balance out within one month, or even within a season. Rather, it balances out over time with multiple seasons of CSA membership. I really appreciated this member's willingness to think long-term. For our farm to survive and thrive, we need members that will support us for the long haul. Thank you for making me feel that I am not alone in this journey!

One more special thank you to member Diana Batzel who is our ace pinch hitter. I came down with a bad cold last week so Chris and our wonderful working members came to the rescue to run the harvest without me so that I could rest. Still, we were in need of more hands, and Diana buzzed over to the farm and volunteered a full afternoon with Chris to get the veggies out on time. She even drove a forgotten tote of scallions to the Montpelier pick-up site in the nick of time. Thank you, Diana!!!

Bulb Fennel: A Few Quick Serving Ideas

- Sauté fennel and onions for a wonderful side dish.
- Oven roast fennel with potatoes, carrots, and beets.
- Combine sliced fennel with avocados, and oranges for a delightful salad.
- Add sliced fennel in addition to the traditional toppings of lettuce and tomato on your sandwiches.
- Top thinly sliced fennel with plain yogurt and mint leaves.



HARVESTING WILD EDIBLES: A Season Extension Technique

By Chris Siegriest, Wellspring CSA Apprentice

I wonder if any of you have the same yearnings as I. They creep up right around sugaring season, as pools of melted snow give way to pushy daffodils and oozing mud puddles. As I noticeably see winter give way to spring, I also noticeably feel the hunger for something green arise from the depths of me.

While winter veggies are both nourishing and delicious, after the duration of a Vermont winter, I tend to long for anything not white in flesh and tuberous in shape. As my supply of root crops turns rubbery and limp, the expectation of them holding out until the local CSA starts or my garden begins producing, dwindles. I've found, in order to respect my cravings, during a period of vegetable drought, I must think outside of the box; outside of the supermarket, outside of my CSA share, to the actual outside.

There are a myriad of ways to extend the spring food season, and all they involve are curiosity, a good reference manual and/or knowledgeable community member, and a healthy appetite.

Wild edibles are everywhere. They are the cattails rising up from the swampy area in your backyard. They are the fiddleheads found along riverbanks during a morning stroll. They are the pervasive burdock root, a common "weed", also a delicacy in Japan where it is known as gobo and served in sushi.

This spring as my potatoes grew eyes and turned a pale shade of green, I was unfazed. My stomach had moved onto the jaggedy dandelion greens that were just emerging in the grass. Did you know that not only can you steam the leafy greens of the dandelion plant; you can make dandelion popcorn as well? Merely pluck the tight flower buds at the base of the greens and fry them up in butter for a most divine treat. Another option is dandelion pancakes, utilizing the demi-opened flower petals in your batter to add an element of fun and brightness to your staid flapjacks. There is also the ubiquitous milkweed; the unopened, green flower buds delicious fried up in a batter, the tender, new shoots steamed as an alternative to asparagus. Eat steamed nettles, drink them as a tea. Weed purslane, amaranth, and lambs quarters from your garden and combine them to make a crispy, succulent salad.

Now I must pause from my wild edible exuberance a moment to give respect to these plants, their natural habitat, and our bodies. In harvesting wild edibles, it is important to honor the perpetuity of the plant by taking only what you need, and leaving enough for the plant to continue its life cycle. Be aware of where you tread and what you are picking. There are many endangered species that simply should not be touched. Be sure of your harvest. Take a good guidebook with you or a seasoned scavenger. Some poisonous plants look much like other wild edibles, and the ingestion of the wrong thing could squelch this newfound hobby. Poisons also come in the form of herbicides and pesticides, so know the environment in which you harvest.

You may have the lingering question, why not *buy* greens and other vegetables whenever you are so desirous of them? The answer is simply this. I want to support my local economy and buying greens shipped from 3,000 miles away does not do so. As fossil fuels are being depleted at an unprecedented rate, I choose to buy or find my food source close to home. And ultimately, I love eating in season. There is nothing like that first bite of a strawberry when you've waited for it, when you know it's fresh, when you've met the farmer whose sweat and love went into its bursting juiciness.

I encourage all of those who while away the weeks until the first CSA pick-up, or until your favorite veggie ripens, to join me in this scavenging extravaganza. It's free, it's easy, it's local and it's a wonderful way to commune with your natural surroundings on a full, satisfied stomach.