



## In Your Box

Carrots\*

Dutch Greenhouse Cucumber\*

Sungold Cherry Tomatoes\*

Red Tomatoes\*

Fresh Red Onions

Italian Parsley

Leeks

Celery

Salad Mix

\*included in Salad Shares

## Anniversary

Last Thursday, we celebrated the fifth anniversary of our arrival at what has become Rock Spring Farm.

In the spring of 1999, our entire family explored some forty farms in Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota for possible purchase. We were living with friends in Decorah when we saw the ad that led us to this farm—80 acres with a creek, 25 tillable acres, house unlivable, “a turkey hunter’s paradise”. When we drove down the driveway for the first time, we knew we had found the right place. Abandoned, building in various states of disrepair, and beautiful bottomland soil.

The weekend we moved onto the place was the hottest of the summer, and no rental trucks were available in Decorah. Our banker lent us his pickup truck and trailer; with that and our minivan, we made more than a dozen trips across the county; we would pull both vehicles into the drive-through top of the barn, throw

everything out of the van, truck, and trailer, pull out the other side and go back for another load. As soon as we had finished that process, we set to making the house livable, replacing broken pipes and faucets, installing a working hot water heater and a furnace, and eventually replacing the broken windows (which were most of them). Kim’s parents drove from Madison, and used a weed whip to mow a path through waist-high grass from the yard gate to the front steps.

The neighbor who was renting the land that year graciously chopped his corn for silage in early September, and we built two greenhouses that year in the west field with help from many friends; it snowed the day we put the plastic on the second greenhouse, but we still harvested our first crops from both houses in March. Chris accidentally moved from volunteer to key staff for the Upper Midwest Organic Farming Conference that winter.

That first year of production we squeezed every ounce of space for all it was worth in those greenhouses, mixing all of our potting soil and seeding all of our flats in the basement of the house rather than taking space in the greenhouse away from crop production. We intended to plant two acres of vegetables but ended up with five due to over-enthusiasm, built a walk-in cooler and poured a concrete slab for a packing shed but didn’t actually build one. We watered 2000 broccoli plants by hand with a tank of water and a measuring cup. We look back at that year with wonder at the number of late Friday nights spent washing carrots until midnight before leaving for farmers market at five the next morning. Who were those crazy people? Where was that farm with the collapsing sheds and grass-to-your elbows? Whatever became of them? It seems like another farm altogether.

People who have come to the farm on a regular basis over the last five years often comment at the regularity and the steadiness of the changes. Continuing to push forward and make changes towards our overall farm vision has been a key part of our farm’s success and our happiness, and our ability to consistently provide good food to people. Looking back over the last five years we are grateful to all of the friends, family, customers, and supporters who have helped to make it happen.

**Weather:** Who could complain? The mild weather and cool nights have been enjoyed by everybody except the zucchini.

**Activities on the Farm:** Although we moved ahead with all of the normal stuff—harvesting everything, handweeding the final carrot planting, mulching the winter squash, transplanting the final crop of broccoli—the big activity on the farm centered around concrete—and lots of it. A local construction crew put in a new slab in front of the transplant greenhouse, as well as a new floor in the upstairs portion of the barn that doesn’t have a basement; through the rest of the week, they will be installing ramps up to the barn and an extension of our packing shed floor. Although Zane and Oliver are under the definite impression that all this new concrete is for the benefit of their remote control cars—and Isabel has been riding her trike in endless circles—the concrete in the barn will make it possible to store much of our equipment out of the rain, and the slab in front of the greenhouse will greatly assist with moving potting soil in and out with our tractor (it comes in 1600 lb bags—we’ve come a long ways since carrying bags of peat and garden carts of compost uphill to our basement by hand in the snow!) during the spring mud season; both will provide an additional flat spot to work on tractors, set up cultivators, and calibrate seeders.

**Comings and Goings:** Kim’s mom came to visit on Friday, and made the trip to farmers market and back on Saturday morning before returning to Madison on Sunday.

**Worthy of Note:** While helping mulch the winter squash, Zane found the largest arrowhead (or spearhead) we have yet seen on the farm; made from a white rock, it measures about 2-1/2 inches long. We have found numerous chippings and apparent rejects up on the ridge with the squash this year; seeing the changes through the last five years, it is hard to imagine this landscape as it must have been 150 years ago; we wonder what appealed to Native Americans up on the ridge, now bare of trees and relatively surrounded by corn and soybeans.

**Next Week’s Box may include:** Zucchini, tarragon, cabbage (maybe), hot peppers (maybe), and more...

# The Farm Kitchen

**Celery** is a new crop for us, and we think we like it. The Greeks, Romans, and ancient Chinese used it as a medicinal plant, a practice that lasted until the eighteenth century in Europe; it is described as an herb used to purify the blood. In northern Europe, celery became an important storage crop for the root celery. Our celery has a fuller flavor than that normally grown in the grocery store; we are not certain of why, but this has been our experience with all of the celery we have tried that is grown in the Midwest; this first celery harvest is also smaller than what we normally see in the stores, since celery is such a long-season crop (we seed ours in early March in the greenhouse).

We always appreciate harvesting the first **leeks** of the season, because we know it must be our leeky day! An ancient and noble member of the onion tribe, leeks are too often relegated to a minor role, but we encourage you to feature them in your cooking this week. Like celery, leeks go all the way back to the ancient Romans. Although they seem sturdy, the leaves cook down to a silky smoothness.

## **Tomato—Leek Pasta**

1 lb pasta, cooked  
2 largish tomatoes  
2 large leeks, or 4 small, sliced into rounds  
Olive oil  
Salt and pepper  
1 garlic clove, minced  
2 Tbsp parsley, chopped  
1/2 cup fresh mozzarella, cubed (optional)  
Saute the leeks in olive oil until soft, about 15 minutes. Add tomatoes, garlic and parsley and cook 3 to 5 minutes more, until tomatoes are soft. Add salt and pepper to taste. Remove from heat and add more olive oil taste. Add cheese while sauce is still hot, and allow to melt slightly for 2-3 minutes before serving over pasta.

I always think of **parsley** as the universal herb—it is hard to go wrong throwing some parsley in. Tonight we are having lamb roasted in a covered baking dish with parsley draped over the top, and it is delicious. The following salad is wonderful in small portions—about a half cup per person. You can use a shy quarter cup of finely chopped onion

in place of the garlic.

## **Parsley Salad**

2 cups parsley leaves  
2 cloves garlic, minced or pressed  
2 Tbsp olive oil  
2 tsp lemon juice (fresh, if possible)  
Salt and pepper  
Remove parsley leaves from stems, then wash and dry well. Toss with the garlic, olive oil, lemon juice, and season generously with salt and pepper.

We hope to continue to offer full pints of **Sungold Cherry Tomatoes** this year rather than the smaller half pints of the last two weeks; we planted more per share this year than we have in years past because they are such a consistent favorite. If you have any left once you get your box home, try them in any recipe for tomatoes. **Round Red Tomatoes** are also coming on in ever-increasing numbers.

This carrot soup is light and fast—and it uses a lot of stuff from this week's box!

## **Carrot Soup**

3 cups sliced carrots  
1 small onion, chopped  
1 mid-sized leek, chopped  
2 stalks celery, sliced  
4 cups chicken broth  
1/3 cup rice, uncooked  
Salt and pepper  
3/4 cup cream (or milk)  
Chopped parsley  
Place the carrots, onion, leek, and celery in a large saucepan with chicken broth and the rice. Bring to a boil, cover the pan, and reduce the heat, cooking gently until the vegetables are tender, about 20 minutes. Puree and return to the saucepan and add water if the soup is thicker than you would like. Season to taste with salt and pepper, add the cream, and reheat to just under boiling. Garnish with parsley and serve.

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