

In Kim's Kitchen

To be honest, we used to turn our noses up at **Acorn Squash**, but in the last couple of years we've really come to appreciate its semi-dry flesh and the sweet, homey flavor that comes from a truly ripe acorn. I think that most people who claim not to like winter squash have simply never had a good one, because most growers will pick just about everything in their field that approaches ripe. We've always stuck our noses up in the air and insisted on harvesting only the truly ripe squash that have developed a full, luscious flavor and maximum nutrition.

To pick a ripe winter squash, you need to know that, here in the north, we grow three species of squash. You can tell the species apart by looking at their peduncles (that's the correct name for the "stem" that comes off the fruit).

- *Cucurbita pepo*, which includes jack-o-lantern pumpkins as well as acorn and delicate squashes, have stiff green peduncles. All squash have a "ground spot" where they rest on the ground. For this species of squash, look for that ground spot to have a golden orange hue, like the color of pumpkin pie filling when you stir in the spices – then you can't go wrong.

- *C. maxima*, like buttercups, have a fleshy peduncle that is usually dry by the time they get to you. The peduncle should have a corky appearance rather than smooth.

- And *C. moschata*, which is pretty much only the beige butternuts, have a five-sided peduncles that flairs at the base. Look for a color that Martha Stewart might feature in her fall collection; anything pale or washed out simply isn't ready.

All winter squash should be stored in a dry, cool place with good air circulation. We used to keep them on our bookshelves when we lived in the city.

Basic Baked Squash

Squash
Oil
Garlic

Preheat oven to 375. Remove hard stem from a winter squash and cut the squash in half. Oil the flesh, and invert over an unpeeled clove of garlic on a baking sheet. Bake until soft to the touch, about 40 minutes (more or less, depending on the squash).

Cider-baked Squash

2 lbs winter squash
1 tablespoon butter, melted
1 cup apple cider or juice
pepper to taste

Halve squash and remove seeds. Brush each half with melted butter. Place each half cut side up on a cookie sheet or in a baking dish. Pour equal amounts of cider into each half. Bake at 375 for 45 minutes, or until the squash is tender. Scoop out squash flesh and apple cider, and serve.

We had two crops of **Broccoli** come in at the same time

this week, so we are loving that, and eating lots of green. Don't overcook it!

So So Simple Broccoli

1 lb broccoli
1/4 cup olive oil
salt
1 Tablespoon lemon juice
1/3 cup grated parmesan cheese
Preheat oven to 450
Cut broccoli florets in pieces, they should still hold together. Peel the stem and slice. Place in a baking dish, toss with salt and olive oil. Roast until brown, approx. 15 minutes Transfer to a serving bowl, toss with lemon juice and top with the parmesan cheese.

Saturday morning's frost took the leaves on the **French Petite Green Beans**, but left the beans undamaged. This will probably be the last week for this crop.

Grilled Green Beans with Sweet Red Pepper

2 tablespoons olive oil
3/4 pound green beans cut into 1 inch lengths
1 or 2 sweet red peppers, slice thin
2 shallots, chopped or 1small onion chopped
2 tablespoons lemon juice
salt and pepper
Heat up your grill (I grill these in a vegetable grill pan, which has smaller holes so the vegetables don't slip through. You can also sauté this on the stove top.) Prep and toss all ingredients together in a bowl. Grill or sauté until fork tender.

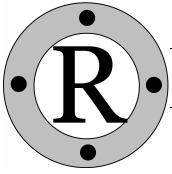
The same thing happened with the **Sweet Red Peppers** and the **Jalapeno Peppers**. We'll miss the sweet reds which have often made a great snack in the field and packing shed.

Celeriac is hard to miss is you put your nose to it, since it smells just like celery. And the leaves that we left on this week look just like celery. There's a good reason for that, too: genetically speaking, celeriac and celery are exactly the same species. Celery was selected for its swollen stems, celeriac for its swollen roots. Celeriac is the more ancient of the two, having been grown for centuries in Europe; celeriac still contributes almost all of the modern disease resistance to celery varieties. It can contribute a celery flavor to any dish you like, and can even be served raw, although we like it best in soups and stews. Around our house, celeriac has a ubiquitous role in the kitchen throughout fall, winter and spring.

We've got to be getting down to the last of the **Round Red Greenhouse Tomatoes**, but they just keep squeaking along and we get one or two to put in the boxes and a couple to take to market. Can't really complain about that.

Flat **Cipollini Onions** have great flavor and make a wonderful inclusion anywhere you want to feature the onion in a dish, rather than using it as a standby ingredient.

Rock Spring Farm · Chris and Kim Blanchard
563-735-5613 · www.rsfarm.com · realfood@rsfarm.com
3765 Highlandville Road, Decorah, IA 52101



Hurting

One of the hardest questions to answer these days is, "How are you?" We pride ourselves on not being whiny farmers, but it's been a hard year, and the floods of late August didn't make it any easier. And, frankly, we are hurting here at Rock Spring Farm.

It's hard to remember back now, but the spring actually started off extraordinarily wet. Every thirty percent chance of rain materialized into a significant rain event on the farm, and we struggled to get crops in and weeded. And one day in June the rain stopped, and didn't come back for almost two months. We dragged irrigation around the farm and sweated a lot.

The drought broke in the first week of August before things turned ugly with the southeast Minnesota flooding on August 18. While we didn't have the same level of devastation seen in Rushford or southwest Wisconsin, that weekend's rainfall came on top of already saturated soils, and did a fine job of making a mess of things. But it was the four inches of rain on Monday that truly ravaged our farm. Continuing wet weather caused many issues with, both of root crops in the soil and leaf and fruit crops above the soil.

We also lost our entire crop of transplanted late fall greens – lettuces, radicchio, and endives – because the transplants rotted and bolted in the greenhouse when we couldn't get into the field to transplant them out. The endive and escarole that we did have outside rotted entirely, and we lost more than half of our radicchio in the field to rot. Salad mix and fall turnips simply languished in the saturated soils.

Perhaps the most emotionally devastating crop loss for us was in the flooding of our fall storage carrots (we are estimating a 75 percent loss there) and the rot in our early fall carrots, which claimed about half of that crop.

Our driveway has mostly washed out, with much of it ending up in the greenhouse. The seasonal flow that ran for the better part of three weeks overflowed into another greenhouse, leaving a layer of mud throughout.

The house and packing shed, we are pleased to relate, are fine, although our landscaping efforts have been severely hampered.

We are estimating total losses and damage of approximately \$40,000. On a farm where the overall income from crops that we grow hovers around \$200,000, this is a significant loss, especially since it comes at a time of year when we are actually making our profit for the year – and as a sole proprietorship, that profit is our salary.

We have had several people ask how they can help. Our longest CSA member, Nancy Adams, has insisted for weeks that we need to quit acting like everything's okay, because she knows it's not. And Nancy would know.

Unfortunately, we don't have a lot of creative options for helping out. We need a bulldozer for driveway repairs and putting some pieces of the landscape back together. We need a few extra hours of daylight when the soil is dry enough to work so that we can make up for a month's worth of lost field work. And we need to make up for the lost income from the damage from the flood.

So, we have two ways that people can help out.

First, if you are able to help us out financially, please consider a cash donation to the farm. **This is perhaps our most pressing need** to be able to keep the farm moving forward in a responsible, growing manner.

Second, we will be having a **community work day** on Saturday, September 29, from 10 to 5, with a potluck lunch at 1. Planned activities at this time (depending on the weather) include carrot harvest, beet harvest, greenhouse cleanup, and herb plant maintenance. We are not planning a full-out farm tour as part of this event, but we will talk at everybody a lot and you will get a chance to see the farm. Please RSVP to csa@rsfarm.com.

*Our best estimates
for what's in
your...*

Summer Vegetable Share

Acorn Squash
Broccoli
French Petite Green
Beans
Celeriac with Leaves
Sweet Red Peppers
Jalapeno Peppers
Round Red
Greenhouse
Tomatoes
Cipollini Onions

Salad Shares

Acorn Squash
French Petite Green
Beans
Sweet Peppers
Cipollini Onions

We woke on Saturday morning to the hardest first frost we've seen in years. Temperatures down in the valley dipped below 28 degrees, and that was eight feet off the ground. Fortunately, few of our frost-tender crops live in the valley. Up on the ridge, the peppers and beans suffered plenty of damage to their leaves, but the fruits were undamaged and still harvestable. The winter squash, which was growing on a west-facing ridge, had frost on the fruits, but for the most part it wasn't so severe as to damage the crop. And frosting off the vine-y leaves made it much easier to harvest on Monday afternoon. Which is what we did. On Monday afternoon, Kim, Chris, and Lucas cut and piled the winter squash. We consider squash harvest to be a high-skill undertaking, and we take great pride in providing only the ripest winter squash (see In Kim's Kitchen for a description of how to pick a ripe squash). We finished three quarters of the picking on Monday afternoon, and pulled more than 300 bushels of squash out of the field on Tuesday morning using our large tractor with pallet forks on the loader and big, 20-bushel wooden bins. We'll finish the harvest next week.

On Wednesday morning, we harvested the celeriac crop, the first of our root crops for storage. We aren't going to have a great roots year this year, but the celeriac was great, with yields up by over a third from last year in the same amount of space. This is one crop that made the most of the late-August flooding, since it loves extra water when it's sizing up, and August's wet weather really made the most of it. Go celeriac!