

In Kim's Kitchen

The **Broccoli** crop continues to perform beyond all reasonable expectations, pumping out beautiful heads in a fantastic succession of crops. This doesn't happen easily or by accident, and it certainly has nothing to do with anything that has happened in the last month. Instead, way back in early July, Kim oversaw the seeding of these broccoli plants in the greenhouse, week after week during the heat of summer, July's spasm of weeding, planting, harvesting, chopping thistles, moving sheep, shuffling kids to camp and friends. With determination, foresight, and a fantastic marshalling of resources, broccoli seeds – no bigger than an individual broccoli bead – were dropped into little blocks of soil in the greenhouse in a small act of faith that this one-more-thing-on-summer's-plate would somehow, magically, turn into something to love in the fall.

Broccoli with Roasted Red Peppers

1 or 2 large red bell peppers
1 pound broccoli, stems trimmed, crowns cut into small florets (6 Cups)
3 T olive oil
3 large garlic cloves, thinly sliced
Char peppers directly over gas flame or in broiler until blackened on all sides. Enclose peppers in paper bag 10 minutes. Peel and seed peppers, then cut into 1/3-inch-wide strips. Cook broccoli in large pot of boiling salted water until just crisp-tender, about 3 minutes. Drain well. Heat olive oil in heavy large pot over medium-high heat. Add garlic; stir until golden, about 1 minute. Add broccoli and toss until coated with oil and heated through, about 5 minutes. Add bell pepper strips; toss to blend. Season with salt and pepper. Transfer to platter. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Leaves having been frosted off days ago, the **Sweet Pepper** plants have definitely slowed down their production of fruits, but we are still quite happily picking away at them. This week's **Red Onions** were plucked from the soil the Saturday morning that the flooding rains started. Just in the nick of time. Blue **Acorn Squash** and speckled **Heart of Gold Squash** make a great presentation pair, sharing a heart shape and great flavor. Next to Sugarloaf squash, Heart of Gold (know affectionately around the farm by its acronym, HOG) is a family favorite.

Squash Polenta

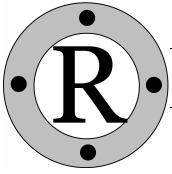
1 winter squash, halved lengthwise, seeded
3 Cloves Garlic, unpeeled
3 Tbsp. Olive oil
3 Tbsp. Parsley, chopped
2 ¾ Cups Chicken or vegetable stock
1 ¾ Cups Water
1 Tsp. Salt
1 ½ Cups Polenta (coarse ground cornmeal)
1 Tbsp. Fresh sage, minced
1 Cup Parmesan cheese, grated
Preheat oven to 375°F. Arrange squash, cut side up, in large roasting pan. Place garlic cloves in squash cavities. Drizzle olive oil over. Sprinkle with chopped parsley, salt and pepper. Cover with foil and bake until squash is tender, about 1 hour. Cool slightly. Peel squash and garlic. Transfer to processor and puree. Combine broth, 1 ¾ Cups water and 1 ½ Tsp. salt in heavy large saucepan. Bring to boil. Gradually whisk in polenta. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook until mixture is very thick and creamy, stirring often, about 20 minutes. Stir in fresh sage and 2 Cups squash puree (reserve any remaining puree for another use). Cook until heated through, about 2 minutes. Stir in cheese. Season with salt and pepper. (Can be made 1 day ahead. Cover and chill. Stir over medium-low heat until heated through.)

In the fall, **Italian Parsley** leaves thicken and sweeten with the cooler nights. Use it liberally and let your inner great chef shine.

Ahh, **Beets**, with their sweet earthiness tasting ever-so-slightly of freshly-tilled soil. I can't eat fall beets without thinking about the gathering in of the season. I imagine beets pulling in the sunshine, absorbing the earth, thickening, gathering in the rustle of leaves, the howls of coyotes, the calls of geese – then giving it all up in this sweet, rich flavor, bright red jeweled hues reflecting the outdoor color of falls. Could it be any better?

Beet Walnut Salad

2 garlic cloves, minced
3 Tbsp red wine vinegar
4 Tbsp olive oil
6 medium baked beets, cooled and peeled
1/4 cup chopped, toasted walnuts
Salt and pepper to taste
Toss all ingredients together in a bowl, and serve with wedges of blue cheese.



Finding Cover

Now that we have officially edged our way past the autumnal equinox, we can say that we are fully into the farm's "gathering in" mode. Our attention turns to filling the cooler and the packing shed with the food that will see our family and our farm through the winter. Last week, we harvested 40 bushels of celeriac and 300 bushels of winter squash; this week, 40 bushels of savoy cabbage and 50 additional bushels of squash. Shortly, our attention will turn to red cabbage, beets, and carrots; with a little luck we'll gather in a crop of winter radishes and turnips as well, although these crops are running a little behind this year due to August's weather challenges.

At the same time that we gather in, we work hard to finish our fall tillage and cover crop seeding. This time of year is the ideal moment for preparing the soil for next year's crops by planting the cover crops that will hold the soil in place through snow melt-offs, protect against wind that blows it around and robs its moisture, and gather sunlight for no other reason than to give back to the soil. Stray nutrients in the soil are gathered in by the leaves and roots, which do a better job of holding onto them than the soil itself. Incorporated into the soil in the spring or early summer, these nutrients release back into the soil and become available to the next generation of plants. The biomass turns into organic matter, which buffers against moisture fluctuations and holds tightly to soil nutrients.

Throughout the year, we farmers can be a little rough on the soil. We beat it up with rototillers, lift and drop it with our subsoil plow, run tractors over it, slice it up to kill the weeds, pluck the crops from it, and beat it up again to turn what's left of the crop back in. It's not that we are trying to do any harm, but we can't avoid it. Soil conditions are rarely perfect for tilling, planting, weeding, or harvest, and although we do everything with the best of intentions, we are still stirring and cutting, chopping, and compacting the soil. In a perfect world, we could run a market garden with only a spade and digging fork, timing and adjusting our technique and schedule to match perfectly the needs of the soil; or, maybe, the conditions would always perfectly match the needs of the farmer.

Alas, this is not the way of the world. In our relationship with the soil, damage just happens, not due to neglect or abuse, but just due to the way things work. So in the fall, we give back by planting our cover crops to replenish the soil. Sowing seeds of oats and rye, vetch and peas, we salve the wounds, laying a protective cover over naked earth and build the foundation for another year, another chance, another act of faith.

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

Summer Vegetable Share

Broccoli
Sweet Peppers
Red Onions
Round Red Tomato
Acorn Winter Squash
Heart of Gold Winter
Squash

Salad Shares

Broccoli
Sweet Peppers
Red Onions
Radicchio

I keep forgetting to mention that Chris shows up talking to some spearmint bunches in a commercial for Linden Hills Coop. It's airing on the Food Network and CNN in the Twin Cities, and you can also watch it on You Tube. Dodging light rain showers this week we managed to get a lot more cover crops seeded. Monday night, Chris worked way past dark under lightning in the west and a nearly-full moon in the east to get a big patch of ground worked up for seeding rye and hairy vetch. Working at night on the tractor feels a little bit like floating along in a bubble. The headlights don't reach very far in front, and the rear worklight points down onto the implement behind the tractor; together, they spoil any night vision that might reach beyond the small pool of light they create. With earplugs muffling the steady drone of the diesel engine, it's easy to imagine that there is no other life. As we noted last week, 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. In last week's newsletter, we had asked for help, but left out two additional options. We do have winter shares for sale, and while these will not be the best winter shares we have ever had to offer, they still promise plenty of good eating with excellent squash and cabbage crops along with a variety of other goodies. Purchasing a winter share is a valuable way to show your support for Rock Spring Farm, and will provide needed cash flow in this difficult fall.

In addition, 2008 CSA shares will go on sale with next Thursday. Your early sign ups will provide needed money to help set the stage for a successful 2008 season. In addition, early commitments reduce our expenditures for advertising and promotion.