



Stones Throw Farm

CSA Newsletter

Season 5 - Week 18

October 15th and 18th

www.stonethrowfarm.biz

Weekly News:

Welcome to Week Eighteen.

We have a few new items this week. Pie pumpkins are a new addition for 2011, and Megan and Reed made a great batch of pumpkin muffins and pumpkin bread this week. The recipe is included below. They were delicious, so in spite of a less than stellar harvest of these small sweet pumpkins, it's likely they'll find their way back into the field next season. One medium pie pumpkin (seeded and peeled) yielded about 6 cups of shredded pumpkin with the food processor, so you may have enough pumpkin to freeze or to experiment with other recipes. Pumpkin ravioli, risotto or cheesecake anyone?!

On the potato front we've shifted from Yukon Golds to Kennebecs. Kennebecs are a traditional russet potato that can be used in just about any form you like. Russets tend to have drier flesh with higher solids and lower sugar content, which makes them the primary potato you'd find in a bag of chips or basket of fries. Anyway you slice them though they are a good eating spud.

You know it's mid-October when the Daikon Radish is being dug. These are unbelievably huge roots that often weigh a few pounds. They are crisp and fairly mild flavored radishes that are great for raw eating or cooking.

Have a great week.

Thanks...

Brian, Megan and Reed

The Farmer's Drivel:

On the topic of lettuce from last week you may have noticed that your lettuce has been a bit dirtier than usual this season. This is for a number of reasons.

- 1) It has rained an awful lot. Rainfall means soil splash which means more soil on lettuce leaves.
- 2) We've quit washing head lettuce (for the time being anyway)
**the explanation follows and is part of a much bigger discussion.

So we decided fairly early on this season to quit washing head lettuce. Our reasoning was two fold and had to do with quality and safety. Additional handling from washing and drying tends to bruise and break more leaves. This combined with "wetter" lettuce from remaining rinse water will hasten the deterioration of your lettuce heads. Washing lettuce prior to use or in a small batch in your kitchen enables you to maintain better quality and integrity for the heads. We own a small salad spinner and the process by which we wash and prep lettuce in our kitchen is efficient, effective and enjoyable. I suppose in retrospect sharing this technique might have been a good discussion earlier in the season, but alas we'll save that for another day and assume that most folks have managed their lettuce prep just fine.

Another major reason that we stopped washing lettuce this season comes down to food safety. After attending a USDA GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) field day a few weeks ago and exploring the ways in which other small and diversified farms are addressing food safety on their farms, I was struck by the realization that I'm slightly neurotic and apparently have been for quite awhile. This is a good thing. Food safety is incredibly important to us personally and professionally and we've incorporated an array of best management practices into our farm operations that help maintain quality, integrity and safety. The implications of addressing food safety on our farm and farms across the country and world are of paramount importance and the manner in which these practices are implemented, regulated and adopted is extremely important for both the consumer and farmer. How these issues unfold both practically and politically in the coming years will have a major bearing on the face of the food system. These are extremely important issues as our food system, farming system and scientific understanding of food borne illnesses continues to evolve. As all these things unfold it's important to bear in mind that although major recalls from agri-business make headlines across the globe a majority of food borne illnesses originate in the home and/or at the final point of preparation. This has to do with the fact that we as human beings tend to be the primary vector for "contamination". Interestingly enough, but not surprisingly, I just read an article

This Week's Share:

- Fresh Herb
- Garlic Bulb
- Winter Squash
- Pie Pumpkins
- Kennebec Potatoes
- Yellow Onions
- Head Lettuce
- Fennel Bulb or Leeks
- Beets
- Swiss Chard
- Carrots
- Daikon Radish
- U-Pick Raspberries
- U-Pick Herbs

Pumpkin Bread (adapted from Alton Brown's *Good Eats*)

- 2 c. flour
- 2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1/4 tsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1 1/2 c. sugar
- 3/4 c. vegetable oil
- 3 large eggs
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 2-3 cups shredded fresh pumpkin
- 1 cup toasted pumpkin seeds

Preheat the oven to 325 degrees F.

Sift the flour, cinnamon, baking soda, baking powder, and salt together. In a separate bowl, mix the sugar, vegetable oil, eggs, and vanilla. Combine both mixtures and fold in the shredded pumpkin and pumpkin seeds. Once the ingredients are all incorporated pour into a non-stick 9 by 5 by 3-inch loaf pan. If your pan is not non-stick coat it with butter and flour.

Bake for 1 hour and 15 minutes. At this point a knife inserted into the middle of the loaf should come out clean. Cool for 15 minutes and turn out onto a cooling rack. Cool completely. For muffins temperature should also be 325 degrees F., but bake for 30 minutes.

that came from research in Great Britain that found 1 in 6 cell phones have fecal E. coli on them. The thing to bear in mind is that although e-coli and other potentially pathogenic organisms have received a great deal of attention in the past few years, the simple fact of the matter is that these organisms exist with great regularity in our environment. There is raging debate over what the cause of "super-strains" of these organisms is and how best to address them systemically, but that is a totally different discussion. For now I'll skirt the big picture issues and return to our unwashed lettuce.

In the past we "batch processed" washed lettuce. We sanitized our tools, bins and washbasin and filled the basin with potable water. Each lettuce head was dunked and shaken in the washbasin before being spun or shaken "dry" and then packed into the walk in cooler. This was and for all intents and purposes is a functional, effective and safe system that meets the expectations of most agricultural food safety specialists and surpasses the handling procedures of many farms. It's scary what happens or doesn't on some farms but again that's another issue. What we're talking about is what neurotic Brian (me) began to foresee as simply the possibility of cross contamination, if in fact you managed to introduce a "contaminant" to the washbasin (ie. E. coli). This in and of itself is unlikely and prevented by an array of measures, but that didn't necessarily ease my mind to my satisfaction. I began seeing the washbasin and a batch washing approach for leafy greens as potentially problematic without also having a system in place to monitor and maintain the sanitary nature of the very water into which you're dunking subsequent heads of lettuce. I began to envision a smaller multi-basin system that would allow me to maintain higher wash water quality by increasing the frequency at which you refill the basin and simultaneously by adding a sequence of dunks that would seem to ensure that the final rinse basin water quality would always remain unquestionably high. My inability to develop the system during the height of the season and my inability to further research the intended methods led me to the decision to leave lettuce unwashed. It was a quality and safety decision. The quality of the lettuce will be better if you wash it at home prior to use and the potential for cross contamination is eliminated.

So interestingly enough I got speaking with a GAP- and food safety specialist that works at Cornell University at this field day, and I asked what her primary concerns with respect to food safety on farm were. Her number one answer was "reducing risk associated with possible cross contamination from batch processing". I'm pretty sure I literally laughed out loud. Not necessarily a funny "ha, ha" laugh but rather one of those "I'll be darned, I'm not an idiot" laughs. We went on to discuss means to address this area of concern. As it turns out the recommendations are leading towards high turn over of wash water (smaller basins), multi staged rinse, (multiple basins) and furthermore the addition of sanitizing solutions to the rinse water itself. I'll be the first to admit that it's pretty validating when your intuition about something turns out to have been on point. And so I'm left with another task on the list for the upcoming "off season" and that is exploring the development of an updated washbasin system for batch processing leafy greens. We have a good contact to follow up with regarding the science of the "systems" and we'll be continuing to evaluate our agricultural practices and food handling practices with yours and our health and safety in mind.

If you would like to learn more about the GAP program search for "GAP USDA". Additionally if you're interested in how food safety regulations are evolving across the agricultural industry, I recommend reading about s510 the Food Safety Bill and specifically of interest may be the Tester Amendment. The Tester Amendment essentially created exemptions to some impending regulations for small and mid-sized farms. Although food safety is a major concern of farms small and large, these exemptions are a necessity in order to allow the regulatory procedure time to further evaluate the science of food safety and the ramifications of various adopted regulations on the agricultural industry. There are situations and issues that are unique to both small and large farms and though food safety is a concern at all levels it is imperative that future regulations are designed in such a fashion that small and mid-sized farms can meet these requirements in an effective and competitive fashion.