

Featherstone Fruits and Vegetables



Welcome to the 2009 CSA Season!

The week of June 1, 2009

**This Week -
In the Box**

**Asparagus
Green Leaf Lettuce
Baby Lettuce Salad Mix
Cut Spinach Leaves
Green Garlic & Sconions
(Mixed Bunch)**

**Next Week -
Likely In the Box**

**Asparagus
Red Leaf Lettuce
Baby Lettuce Salad Mix
Bunched Spinach
Radishes (maybe)
Cilantro (maybe)**

Please note: This list is only a guess. Weather and other conditions are very unpredictable.

From the farm:

Greetings shareholders, new and renewing-

June 1 is always a signal date at Featherstone Fruits and Vegetables. As we begin CSA deliveries and commercial lettuce shipments, no one at the farm can miss the fact that summer has arrived. Busy as we are, I find times like these useful reminders to take stock in the entire farm- its employees, facilities and crops- and to evaluate how far we've come in the preceding 12 months.

This year I'm pleased to let you know that Featherstone Fruits and Vegetables is healthier, stronger and more sustainable than ever. The improvements across the board are so remarkable that I would scarcely have imagined them possible a year ago, optimistic as I am!

The long dark road of flood recovery and farm relocation has seemingly come to an end, and my mantra throughout 2008 (one year of acute stress to alleviate all the chronic stresses of the old location) has seemingly paid off in every respect.

Details of the various aspects of this transition and the new home that it has produced will be subjects for many upcoming newsletter articles. For the time being, I'll simply report that we're now fully moved into the new warehouse (!), surrounded by 42 acres of the best vegetable ground in the entire area, with new systems in place (irrigation, vegetable packing and handling etc.) to make literally everything we do easier, more predictable and more productive.

The crops in the field look healthier and more promising than I can ever remember on a June 1. And we are fortunate to have the best crew of farm workers to tend them that we've had in 13 years of farming. Of course there are stresses and headaches here and there but, by and large, they are minor distractions from the sense of optimism that pervades Featherstone Farm this June 1.

I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the MANY people who helped make the transitions of the past 2 years possible. The time, energy, creativity and dedication that so many of you brought to Featherstone Farm and its relocation have allowed the place not only to survive (no mean feat!) but to flourish. I am humbled and grateful beyond words. THANK YOU!

Please mark your calendars for Saturday, June 27th and the FFV Strawberry Social; come visit the farm and see why, this June, life is sweet at Featherstone Fruits and Vegetables.

Gratefully,

Jack

Featherstone Farmer



Peggy Hanson is a food writer, local food advocate and aspiring food coach who lives in Lanesboro, Minnesota. This season she will be sharing columns which originally appeared in the Fillmore County Journal. Peggy welcomes your questions and comments. Contact her at mjhanson50@gmail.com.

This is my first “Real Food” column. “Real Food” will be about the pleasures of growing, preparing and sharing food. You will excuse me if sometimes I get wound up a little – these topics are dear to my heart.

We are fortunate to live in a region where we have relatively easy access to good food from farms, farmers markets, gardens, orchards, forests, rivers and streams. We also are blessed to have among us dedicated home cooks who carry on cherished food traditions and still prepare food “from scratch”. I fear that this special group of people may be an endangered species. This column will celebrate and honor the skills and the important work of those cooks.

The recipes you will find here will not generally be complicated or fancy or require exotic ingredients.

Of course, we may find that my definition of exotic is occasionally different from yours. When the Lanesboro Sons of Norway lodge serves its lovely annual spring lunch, they always include fabulous home made potato salad. They are careful to offer a no-onion version for those who find raw onions too dangerous or challenging. I confess I am a raw-onion-in-the-potato-salad kind of girl myself. I even throw in radishes sometimes! So much for a shared definition of exotic.

I also know there are many emerging cooks out there. I talk often with people of all ages who want to become more proficient in the kitchen but just don’t know where to start. They want to eat well with the limited time and money available to them. If you are in this group – stick with me. This is the work of a lifetime and is best done one small step at a time.

I am well aware of the day to day reality in most households, especially those with children. Although my children are now grown, I remember the days when I was juggling long hours of work along with community and family responsibilities. Because I have always loved to cook – and to eat! – I somehow found time for home cooking. There also were days where a pizza – frozen or takeout - was manna from heaven and forestalled a family emergency.

So readers, join me in celebrating the daily pleasures of good food in this spot on the planet that we call home. In honor of spring and new beginnings, I offer a recipe for hard boiled eggs. If this is not basic cooking, I don’t know what is. And if you are ever going to attempt to make your own fabulous home made potato salad – with or without onions - you will need to know how to cook a hard boiled egg.

HARD BOILED EGGS, STEEPED FASHION

A farm fresh egg is a beautiful thing. The flavor will be much more rich and complex than that of a conventional store egg. To hard boil in the “steeped fashion”. Use some hard boiled eggs in an egg salad sandwich with plenty of fresh leaf lettuce or chopped and added to a fresh spinach salad.

Place eggs in a pan in a single layer and cover with at least one inch of water. Bring to a full boil. As soon as water boils, remove pan from heat and cover. After 15 minutes, remove eggs and gently roll each on a hard surface. Place eggs in a quart of iced water and steep for 5 minutes. Peel, starting at the wide “air pocket” end.

Recipes

ASPARAGUS, Peas & Basil

Six servings and 30 minutes to prepare

Ingredients

- ¼ cup finely chopped shallots (2)
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2 lbs asparagus, trimmed & cut into 1 inch pieces
- ¾ pound of shelled fresh peas (2 ½ cups)
or 1 ten oz. package thawed frozen peas
- ½ teaspoon fine sea salt
- ¾ cup of torn basil leaves

Directions

Cook shallots in butter in a 12-inch heavy skillet over medium heat, stirring frequently, until just tender, about 4 minutes.

Stir in asparagus, peas, sea salt, and ¼ teaspoon pepper, then seal skillet with foil. Cook over medium heat until vegetables are tender but still slightly al dente, about 8 minutes. Stir in the basil and sea salt to taste.



ASPARAGUS with Morels & Tarragon

Six Servings and about an hour to prepare.

Ingredients

- 2 pounds of asparagus, trimmed, peeled and cut into 2 inch pieces
- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter (cut into one tbsp. pats)
- 2 large shallots, finely chopped
- ¼ pound fresh morels, halved. Substitute other mushrooms if necessary
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh tarragon
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

Instructions

Cook the asparagus in a 5-6 quart pot of boiling, salted water, uncovered until just tender, about three minutes

Transfer the asparagus with a slotted spoon to a colander and rinse under cold water to stop the cooking. Pat dry.

Heat 3 tablespoons butter in a 12-inch heavy skillet over moderately high heat until the foam subsides, then sauté the shallots until golden brown, about 2 minutes. Add morels and sauté, stirring frequently until tender, about 5 minutes. Add asparagus, tarragon, salt, pepper and remaining 3 tablespoons butter and sauté until heated through, about 3 minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in lemon juice. Serve immediately.

Garnish with chopped fresh tarragon.

Cooking Up Healthy Meals & Romantic Adventures in the Kitchen

By Lisa and Brent Severson

It all started about the time Brent and I first met in 2007. He had recently been diagnosed with high blood pressure and placed on medication. For someone like Brent, that just meant an opportunity to combat a challenge. Once he sets his mind to something, he becomes determined. In this case, he determined to battle his high blood pressure.

I had included eating healthier on my list of personal goals for years. I did fine, but really wanted to incorporate more whole, unprocessed foods. However, being single and living alone, it was challenging to put a great deal of energy into cooking and meal planning for me alone.

And then Brent and I, and our challenges, met.

Having both been single for so many years, we cautiously got to know one another and gradually discovered a growing list of things we had in common. We loved to read and discuss politics, philosophy, spiritual matters and more. We held a lot of similar values and beliefs and seemed to laugh at the same kinds of quirky things. After a number of walks around Lake Harriet, a few hikes in state parks, and many conversations over dinner, we began realizing we really enjoyed being together.

With Brent's desire to lower his blood pressure, we found ourselves trying out a variety of restaurants that catered to healthier eating. I even built a growing list of these restaurants and shared it with friends. In addition, Brent learned how whole, natural foods provided nutritionally valuable calories that were satisfying and fun. Eliminating processed foods from his diet did wonders to help shed his unwanted pounds. He began by trying a variety of daily salads for lunch and often times for dinner. But he wanted help to add more variety and interest to the menu. As our relationship grew more serious, I enjoyed a good salad, but knew I didn't want one everyday. I was motivated to research great tasting healthy recipes. Brent was amazed that I'd do that for him. I was thrilled that I found an interesting guy who loved to cook with me.

Before you knew it, we found ourselves spending more time in the kitchen, experimenting, creating and enjoying music and conversation while we cooked. Both of us had an artistic bent and were surprised to discover that cooking could be such a fun and creative outlet.



As we continued to eat healthier, we began hearing about Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). The concept sounded intriguing, but we weren't exactly sure what it was all about. Then I heard about a local CSA fair. We figured it was a great opportunity to learn more. At the fair, we got to meet a variety of Minnesota farmers who grew organic foods and invited others to purchase shares. Visions of fresh, organic vegetables and fruits delivered each week got us excited about the culinary and dietary possibilities. We walked away from the fair as brand new members of the Featherstone Farm CSA!

It always seems easier to stop for fast food or make a quick meal full of processed foods. Getting a delivery of fresh produce each week was a welcome way to gently force us away from those habits. We never knew what might arrive week to week which added to the creative spirit of meal planning and cooking. Before we knew it, we were cooking with vegetables we'd never heard of before. Featherstone's weekly newsletter was a helpful resource for recipes and we also discovered numerous websites specializing in planning healthy meals. It was like we were uncovering a whole new world.

Many of our friends and family members gave us a hard time for our new-found hobby, but they were also intrigued by some of the tasty dishes we were preparing. We were having so much fun with creativity in the kitchen that we began taking photos of each new meal we created. Many were full of beautiful colors and textures and we wanted to remember what the meal looked like for future reference.

Brent bought Mac Gourmet for my birthday. This software allows me to organize recipes with nutrition information, ratings, grocery lists and photos. I was so excited I jumped right in, immediately adding new recipes. However, that excitement was soon overshadowed by our engagement!

Joining the Featherstone CSA was a highlight during our dating months. What a wonderful way to spend time getting to know one another. Now that we've been married for a number of months, we're looking forward to our CSA boxes arriving once again each week. It should be even easier now that we're living in the same home and cooking for one another each night.

We still have a lot to discover about healthy eating, but we've learned a lot and Brent has lost nearly 50 pounds in the process. Even his blood pressure has made remarkable improvement! One thing we learned was not to expect this new way of eating to come all at once. It's a lifestyle change that takes time, but is well worth it. We've looked at it as an adventure and a fun activity to share. As we look ahead to this summer, we wonder what new discoveries and recipe treasures we'll find!

R e m i n d e r s :

The newsletter is especially brief this week due to my focus on sign-ups, distribution, dropsites, etc. I promise we will have many more recipes in the future.

I am very excited to have Peggy Hanson share a column with us every week!

And what a treat to have CSA shareholders Lisa & Brent share their adventures!!

I hope this will encourage all of you to share your CSA experiences ~ big or small.

Mary Benson
CSA Manager

This week you have a mixed bunch of alliums. The ones with a slight purple edge are onions and the more bulbous are green garlic. They are milder than when fully mature but you can use them in all the same ways. They are especially great in stir fries!

If you have boxes from last year please return them.

We would love to include your contributions to the CSA newsletter. Email your entries to Mary at info@featherstonefarm.com.

Remember to thank your dropsite host.

You are cordially invited !

strawberry social

Saturday

June 27, 2009

noon - 3 pm



Come join your farmers and fellow CSA shareholders ~ pick strawberries fresh from Featherstone's fields (no guarantees on amounts)!

Light refreshments provided ...if you call Strawberry Shortcake "light".

There will be farm tours too!

More details soon.



There are many campgrounds and bed and breakfasts in the area. Email us if you are interested in further information.