

# Featherstone Fruits and vegetables



The week of September 7, 2009

## September Crops

Broccoli  
Cauliflower  
Cabbage  
Napa Cabbage  
and Bok Choi  
Bunched Greens  
(kales, collards, mustards)  
Winter Squash (many varieties)  
Raspberries\*  
Arugula

\*New plantings available in 2010 and beyond.

## POSSIBLE Box Contents

Tomatoes  
Tomatillos  
Mixed Peppers  
Turnips or Bunched Beets  
Zucchini / Yellow Squash (last of season)  
Acorn Squash  
Napa Cabbage  
Sweet Onions  
Garlic (last of season)  
Dill or Cilantro  
Watermelon

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

## The First Tastes of Fall: Acorn Squash and Napa Cabbage

This week's boxes include some late summer holdovers (tomatillos and melons) and the first real tastes of fall... the acorn squash and **napa cabbage**. But before you jump in with a sharp knife and a cutting board, please consider these suggestions.

First: do not be daunted by the size of the napa cabbage! They keep for weeks and weeks, nay, months and months in your refrigerator without losing quality. The napa will make some of the most delicious cole slaw (or Asian sesame salad) that you've ever had, but you don't need to make 2 gallons of it at a time! Just cut the head lengthwise from the stem end, and remove whatever percentage you'll use in a recipe. Then wrap the remainder in plastic, put it in the drawer of the 'fridge, and enjoy it for additional meals in the future.

For those of you considering winter shares: at the end of October, after a number of frosts, the Napa becomes almost indescribably sweet in the field. We have a late planting that we will be harvesting at that time, storing in our own coolers, then distributing in December boxes. Of all "winter crops" here in the Midwest, I think that Napa is the most underrated.

The **acorn squash** is the first of a series of winter squashes that we will be putting in boxes over the next several weeks. Our goal here is to provide squashes that are so tasty they don't require heaps of butter and brown sugar to enjoy, but I have to advise you that early September squash seldom meets that standard.

Winter squashes of all kinds require a curing and ripening period to develop full flavor. This period can pass in the field, but the myriad risks of exposure (to frost, deer, mice, even prolonged moisture) make this unworkable. So we harvest all the squash this time of year and bring it into the shed in 800 lb bins. They will cure over time in these bins, but they do so slowly because of temperature and humidity fluctuations in the shed.

The ideal place to cure squash is on the top of your refrigerator (ie warm and dry, with relatively low light). This is why we begin distributing them in share boxes before we believe they are really ready to eat; their quality will improve in your hands more reliably and more quickly than they will in ours.

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Acorn squash are an “early” variety. They form fruits more quickly in the field than other varieties, and they are ready to harvest early as well. We baked one up in the shop the other day that I would say was good... perhaps a B- to B (still above average and worth eating). But acorns have the potential to be a fabulous combination of sweetness, richness and nuttiness, and that kind of flavor takes time to develop.

If you're as excited as I am to see the squash start up, go ahead and bake 'er up.\* But if you have patience and want to wait for the B+/ A- squash ~ the really good ones, or even the elusive solid A acorn~ I'd strongly advise you to leave those babies on your refrigerator top for a couple of weeks.

Enjoy your Napa salads and squash soups this fall!

And please join us for the **Featherstone Harvest Party on the 19th!**

Jack  
Featherstone Farmer

\* Just make sure to get the thing fully cooked; you won't get full flavor until the meat is soft enough to be spooned out like custard.

# Meet Featherstone's Workers

## Evan Meier



When asked what he sees himself doing 5 years from now, Evan replied unequivocally, "I'll be here, on the farm." Having just finished his B.S. in automotive engineering from Mankato State this past spring, Evan is glad to finally be able to devote his energy full-time to the farm after spending the past 4 years working at Featherstone while in school.

As the farm mechanic, Evan's job is to keep everything running. Aside from getting a good tan on the farm, he said he also wants to "gain a better understanding of the full circle of food production": growing it, what it takes to get food from field to table, and how to make the process more sustainable. Part of his vision for making the process more sustainable is converting the diesel tractors on the farm to electric, of which he has already completed one. Evan loves the variety of work on the farm, the day to day, minute to minute changes, and of course, being outside. His favorite veggie grown at Featherstone is asparagus, which he likes to cook on the grill, wrapped in tinfoil with olive oil, Parmesan cheese and breadcrumbs on top. Even better than the pizza buffet in Rushford! (which he unfailingly tries to rally staff to every Friday afternoon). Delicious!

## Tara Courtney



Tara's desire to get her hands dirty on an organic farm began while a student at the University of Idaho. While in school she volunteered with an organization called "Backyard Harvest" that gleaned veggies from backyard gardens; rerouting them to the local food shelf, nursing homes and schools.

This experience inspired her to continue exploring organic agriculture and seek out interesting, like-minded people who care about where their food comes from and the community of people who grow it. Coming to Featherstone Farm was also a way to return to her Midwestern roots which start in her hometown of Decorah, Iowa. In addition to being a field worker extraordinaire, Tara is also drawing upon her former work at Seed Savers in Decorah by doing research to get the farm started in saving tomato seed. When asked where she thinks she will be in 5 years she said, "I hope to be surprised and a little shocked by wherever I find myself!" She added that she'd like to be doing something with food and that working at Featherstone has also inspired her to work on her Spanish. Her favorite veggies grown on the farm are Featherstone's beets and carrots, roasted together with salt, garlic cloves and lots of pepper. When not hard at work Tara likes to cook, read, and go for long walks while observing the world around her.

*Peggy Hanson is a food writer, local food advocate and aspiring food coach who lives in Lanesboro, Minnesota. This column originally appeared in the Fillmore County Journal in the Fall 2008  
Peggy welcomes your questions and comments.  
Contact her at [mjhanson50@gmail.com](mailto:mjhanson50@gmail.com).*

## REAL FOOD

Tonight about 854 million of our neighbors on the planet will go to bed hungry. I know this is not a fun thing to think about. It certainly is not for me, whose biggest food problem is ingesting too many calories, not too few. As difficult as it is, the United Nations would like us all to be thinking about hunger as well as the basic human right to adequate food.\* This is one reason why the UN has declared 2008 the International Year of the Potato.

It is easy to be positive about potatoes. They taste great, are inexpensive and very easy to cook and to grow. They are packed with carbohydrates (who needs energy drinks when you have potatoes?), high quality protein, vitamin C and potassium. If you ate two medium sized fresh potatoes every day you would not need to drink orange juice.



The humble potato produces more nutritious food more quickly, on less land and in harsher climates than any other major crop. Potatoes are now the world's 4th most important food crop, with an annual production of about 347 million tons, about half in developing countries. This number is going nowhere but up. If you ate about 118 pounds of potatoes last year (probably mostly in the form of French fries, unfortunately) you are an average American. An average Asian now consumes only about 55 pounds a year – but because there are so many Asians they still account for half the world's current potato consumption. The Peruvians have been in the potato business for over 8,000 years (we have been at it since 1719) and still rightfully lead the world in efforts to preserve potato diversity. There are at least 1,200 varieties of Andean potatoes and we might need all of them if we are going to solve the hunger problem

By 2028 there will be two billion more Earthlings, 95% of whom will live in developing countries. Somebody is going to need to grow lots of spuds – especially in places where land is limited and labor is abundant. Somebody is also going to have to figure out how to grow a lot of food without trashing the world's land and water resources any more than is already the case. When I think about these numbers our garden looks more and more to me like a good 401K. Cash is nice but it isn't everything.

So in 2008 why not make it a point to always have ten pounds of fresh potatoes in the house? No excuses - you can even buy them at a Kwik Trip. And when you are hungry, be grateful that you can rustle up a nice steaming bowl of real mashed potatoes. Food of the future as well as the past. Food for thought.

**Mashed potatoes- eight medium servings. Make extra. Reheat the leftovers or turn them into soup.  
4 pounds potatoes (russet type work best), peeled and cut into equal sized chunks  
1/2 stick (4 T.) butter melted in 1/2 to 1 cup warm milk, 1 t. salt  
Cover potatoes with cold water, add salt and bring to a boil. Simmer about 20-30 minutes or until potatoes are very tender. Drain potatoes. (save the cooking water for soup stock or making yeast bread. Waste not want not.) Return potatoes to pan and stir and heat gently a few minutes so they are dry. Mash with potato masher. Add butter and milk and mash some more. Don't over mash or potatoes will get gluey. Salt and pepper to taste. Enjoy.**

\*Note: 157 countries of the world are parties to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which recognizes, among other things, that there is a "fundamental human right to be free from hunger". See the complete document at the U. of Minnesota Human Rights Library, <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/instree/b2esc.htm> President Jimmy Carter signed the covenant in 1976, but it has never been ratified by the required 2/3 vote of the U.S. Senate. Four other nations have also failed to ratify: South Africa, Belize, Sao Tome and Principe and Pakistan. Several of the ratifying countries did so subject to various qualifications. It is all on the U.N. website for the wonkish among us.

Last week Melinda had an article on Non-Stick Cookware. She presented her perspective as someone who is confronted with customers at the kitchenware store where she is employed. She shared some research she had done. Larisa had very strong reactions to that research and wrote to me with her perspective. I am very grateful to both of them for providing the opportunity to discuss these issues here. mb

Hi Mary,

I read with shock and disbelief the article on non-stick cookware that Melinda put in the farm's newsletter. This goes against the grain of the "precautionary principle". The temperature of outgassing that she refers to does not take into account a well-used pan that has micro abrasions on it. These temperatures can easily be achieved in a home kitchen which is why pet bird owners are told not to keep their pets in the kitchen, as they are particularly susceptible to the fumes - talk about the canary in the coal mine! Also, there is no accounting for any possible synergistic effects with all of the other chemicals typically found in the modern home environment.

Safe non-stick cookware has been available for centuries in the form of cast iron. A well-seasoned pan doesn't wear out and can be passed on to future generations (I have a pan that was my grandmother's and its got more life left in it than I do). I'd rather pass on cookware than toxins any day. If most people have this chemical in their bodies, why add more? It clearly doesn't excrete, but rather adds to the body's working load of toxins. Why is this (or DDT or PCBs, etc.) considered OK? Just because a cook likes the convenience of modern cookware does not make the problem disappear, no matter how much head-in-the-sand, wishful thinking one deludes oneself with.

A good place to start in understanding the problem of Teflon and estrogen disrupters is the book "Our Stolen Future". A link to their website, specifically on the Teflon subject is:

<http://www.ourstolenfuture.org/commentary/News/2003/2003-0520-USAT-stickyteflon.htm>

To provide members a glimpse of how complex the biology is, here's their link to recent research that has come out since publication of the book: <http://www.ourstolenfuture.org/new/recentimportant.htm> The research is more than one can keep up with. Bisphenol-A is getting a lot of press lately, but the research has been linking up some of these problems for over a decade. Meanwhile, consumers wanted the convenience of the light-weight water and baby bottles, and many poo-pooed reports of possible problems. Too many inconvenient truths for American consumers. In the end, however, biology will always win out.

By the way, the title "Our Stolen Future" refers to the effects of many of these chemicals affecting reproductive capabilities, and how we'll eventually remove future generations from the equation because they won't exist. This is already happening in some species besides humans. It's easier to spot this trend in species with shorter generational cycles.

The synergistic and chain effects can't be predicted in most research that looks at only one variable at a time. Recent research on Atrazine and frog deformities has shown that the link is indirect. Snails that were in research tanks with frogs exposed to Atrazine developed more parasitic worms than the control. The parasites infect the frogs and cause limb deformities. In addition, the atrazine lowered the immune response in the frogs, making them more vulnerable to the parasites. When the frogs were being researched with direct exposure to the Atrazine, the limb deformities were not happening like they were in the natural environment which also included the snails and the parasitic worms. The chemical companies claimed the Atrazine was not the problem because the frogs had parasites, but didn't look for why the parasites were there. You see where I'm going with this? People don't live in test tubes. Researchers for the chemical companies can make the research give them favorable results in labs if the real-world variables are excluded. You have to look at the money chain when considering any research results.

You can use any or all of this letter in the newsletter, if you want.

Larisa Walk  
Wholesale Coordinator & Farm Bookkeeper  
Featherstone Fruits & Vegetables

Eating the bounty of our region has been a passion of mine for over 30 years, and putting local food on the table all year-round has become an obsession. I've been teaching food drying and other food preservation techniques since 1978, and have written a small book "A Pantry Full of Sunshine" on the subject of energy-efficient ways of accomplishing this task. To see more of what I've been up to, check out [www.GeoPathfinder.com](http://www.GeoPathfinder.com) and go to the Food Preservation page.



## Sauerkraut

Don't limit yourself to cabbage for this fermented approach to food storage. Besides the traditional green cabbage, red cabbage makes beautiful sauerkraut. Our favorite doesn't use cabbage at all, but two cabbage family relatives – rutabaga and kohlrabi. Other roots, such as carrot or celeriac, can be added for variety. Herbs such as dill weed or caraway or ??? (be creative) may also be added to season the mix. And kimchi is the Asian take on sauerkraut made with Asian cabbage and hot peppers.

You don't need special equipment to do small batches. You can do ½ gallon or 1 gallon batches in glass jars or glass canisters (available at Target or use ½ gallon canning jars). You'll also need a sharp knife, a muslin towel, a string or a big rubber band, and a pint or quart jar with lid (filled with water to be your "weight") that will fit into the mouth of your fermentation jar.

Shred cabbage finely with a knife or use a coarse grater for root veggies. For every 5 pounds of veggies, you'll need to add 2-1/2T salt. Mix the salt into the shredded veggies and let sit about ½ hour until the veggies release their juice. Pack veggies firmly into your fermentation jar leaving about 1-2" of headspace. Press down until the juice rises and covers the kraut. Now take your water-filled jar weight and place on top of the kraut. Cover everything with the muslin towel and rubber band or tie in place to keep out dust and flies while letting the batch breathe. Put the jar in a cool, dark, out of the way spot and let it ferment.

Inspect every few days to make sure it hasn't bubbled over. If so, replace the cloth and skim off any moldy scum on top (this is normal), checking to make sure that the weight is sufficient to keep solids pressed under the liquid. When it has fermented for a couple of weeks or so (depending on ambient temperatures) it will smell like good kraut. Now it's ready to eat! You skim off any scum at the top to get to the good stuff. You can store the remainder to use over the next few weeks in your refrigerator or root cellar by putting a regular lid on the jar in place of the weight and cloth.

Sauerkraut is great added to Borscht and essential for Tempeh Rubeen sandwiches. It also pairs with peanut butter and your whole-grain bread or wrap of choice, topped with some fresh salad mix or lettuce. Enjoy!

Larisa  
Wholesale Coordinator & Farm Bookkeeper  
Featherstone Fruits and Vegetables

# Recipes

## BEETS

from Featherstone shareholder, Emily Spende

### Ingredients

4-6 beets, peeled and steamed  
2 peeled, halved and sliced oranges  
fresh basil, torn (about 12 leaves,  
or taste preference)  
1/2 onion, thinly sliced  
1 T olive oil  
1/4 cup balsamic vinegar  
1 t sugar  
freshly ground S&P to taste.

### Instructions

I always wing this, so the measurements are just suggestions. I like to let this sit for about 4 hours before eating, if not overnight. However, I have been rushed and eaten sooner and is still great.

## Braised NAPA CABBAGE with Bacon, Red Wine Vinegar, and Mint

from [foodnetwork.com](http://foodnetwork.com)

### Ingredients

8 ounces bacon, diced  
1 cup red wine vinegar  
2 tablespoons honey  
2 cups chicken stock  
2 pounds Napa cabbage, thinly sliced  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
2 tablespoons fresh mint leaves, thinly sliced

### Instructions

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Place medium-sized roasting pan on burner over medium-high heat, add the bacon and cook until crisp. Remove the bacon with a slotted spoon to a plate lined with paper towels.

Place cabbage in a roasting pan with rendered bacon fat, stir in the vinegar, honey and chicken stock and season with salt and pepper. Cover with foil and roast in the oven until wilted, about 30 minutes. Remove from the oven and stir in the mint. Transfer to a platter and sprinkle with the cooked bacon.

## Best-Ever Texas Caviar

from [allrecipes.com](http://allrecipes.com)

### Ingredients

2 (15 ounce) cans black beans, rinsed and drained  
2 (15 ounce) cans pinto beans, rinsed and drained  
2 (15 ounce) cans white corn, rinsed and drained  
1 (4 ounce) can chopped green chiles, undrained  
1 jalapeno chile pepper, seeded and finely chopped (optional)  
1 red bell pepper - cored, seeded and finely chopped  
1 green bell pepper - cored, seeded and finely chopped  
1 small red onion, finely chopped  
1 bunch cilantro leaves, finely chopped  
1/2 cup rice vinegar  
1/2 cup olive oil  
1/3 cup white sugar  
1/2 teaspoon garlic powder

### Instructions

Mix the black beans, pinto beans, white corn, green chiles, jalapeno pepper, red and green bell peppers, red onion, and cilantro together in a large bowl.

To make the dressing, stir the rice vinegar, olive oil, sugar, and garlic powder together in a pan. Bring to a boil, then remove from heat, and cool. Pour dressing over bean mixture, and toss to mix evenly.



Napa Cabbage

# Recipes



## TURNIP and Apple Salad

adapted from [abbys-kitchen.com](http://abbys-kitchen.com)

### Ingredients

2 turnips  
2 small tart red apples  
1/2 c. chopped raisins  
1/8 c. grated orange rind  
1 tsp. sugar  
1/2 tsp. salt  
3/4 c. alfalfa sprouts (optional)  
Parsley bits  
3/4 c. mayonnaise  
3 tbsp. fresh orange juice

### Instructions

Fresh pulled turnips add a delicious zesty flavor to this nutritious salad. Peel and grate turnips. Core and coarsely chop unpeeled apples. Combine mayonnaise, sugar and orange juice. Pour over turnips and apples. Add remaining ingredients and toss. Serve immediately or chill.

## Herbed TOMATILLO and Grape Salsa

from [mariquita.com](http://mariquita.com)

### Ingredients

3/4-1 pound tomatillos  
1 to 3 small green chiles, such as serrano or jalapeño,  
halved and seeded  
1 garlic clove  
1/4 teaspoon kosher salt  
1/3 cup tightly packed cilantro leaves  
1/4 cup lightly packed basil or mint leaves  
1/2 cup stemmed seedless green grapes  
about 1 tablespoon lime juice

## Southern TURNIP Supreme

adapted from [allrecipes.com](http://allrecipes.com)

### Ingredients

1 cup vegetable broth  
3 cups peeled, cubed turnips  
1/4 cup minced onion  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
salt and black pepper to taste  
1 1/2 tablespoons sour cream  
1/2 cup shredded sharp white Cheddar cheese  
chopped fresh parsley for garnish (optional)

### Instructions

Bring vegetable stock to a gentle boil. Stir in the turnips, onion, and garlic, return to a boil, and cook the mixture until the turnips are tender, about 10 minutes. Reduce the heat to a simmer, and cook until most of the liquid has been evaporated, 10 to 15 more minutes.

Lightly stir in the sour cream to coat the turnips. Sprinkle with salt and pepper, and top with shredded Cheddar cheese and parsley.



### Instructions

Barely cover husked tomatillos with cold water; cook very gently until tender, the time can range from 2 to 15 minutes, depending upon size and thickness. Check often to prevent bursting. Cool in liquid.

In food processor container, combine 1 chile (or more to taste), garlic, salt, and half each of the cilantro and basil (or mint). Whiz to mince.

Drain tomatillos if needed. Add to container, with grapes and 1 Tablespoon lime juice. Whirl to a chunky puree. Taste for heat and tartness, adding lime and minced chile to suit. Scoop into a bowl. Cover and chill at least 1 hour.

To serve, mince the remaining cilantro and basil (mint). Stir into the salsa. Salt to taste.

# Community of a Plate



Summer Interns from Renewing the Countryside worked on a project called Community of a Plate. They sought “to illuminate how local food and local eating forge connections between individuals and build community”. Featherstone played a part in two of the project’s exhibits.

One was the wedding of Margaret Marshall, longtime Featherstone CSA shareholder, current RTC employee, and soon-to-be Featherstone employee. Take a look at the story and photos of the Plate at Margaret’s wedding.

Another was at HealthPartners’ Headquarters in Bloomington ~ a Featherstone CSA dropsite. Take a look at The Local Food, Health Renewed Plate!