

Featherstone Fruits and Vegetables



The week of June 8, 2009

This Week - In the Box

**Asparagus
Red Oak Leaf Lettuce
Green Butter Lettuce (Grande only)
Baby Lettuce Leaf Salad Mix
w/ Spicy Asian Mix
Bunched Radishes
Cilantro**

Next Week - Likely In the Box

**Romaine Lettuce
Cut Spinach Leaves
Bunched Chiogga Beets
Sugar Snap Peas
Rhubarb (Grande only)
Strawberries**

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

From the farm:

Dear Shareholders,

The past two months are a blur. There has been such intense activity ~ really since February, but especially since April 1st. So many people, so many tasks. I so want you to know the people who have been raising your veggies. They are a talented, energetic, hard-working, and fun loving crew. Over the next several weeks, I will introduce them to you, personally.

The cover photo may seem out of season, but I include it to remind us all that without the investment in our new greenhouse, much of what we are enjoying this spring would have been impossible.

Last week, I meant to explain that the asparagus in your boxes is mostly from nearby Amish farmer friends in Wisconsin. Our original asparagus plantings at the "old" Zephyr farm have been in decline as we have been moving away to our "new" fields near Rushford. When I say decline, that refers only to the volume available for harvest ~ the quality and taste is superb. This year, in the Rushford fields, we planted many future generations of asparagus ~ and it will be at least two more years to maturity. Last winter we arranged with Rufus Hauke of Keewaydin Farm to obtain certified organic asparagus for your boxes. As you now know, it was a bright and delicious plan!

A note on this week's salad mix: In addition to the baby lettuces, we've added a bit of, what we call, Asian mix. This is a combination of baby Arugula (green lobed leaves with spicy flavor), Mizuna (pencil-thin stems with finely-toothed green leaves), and Tatsoi (spoon-shaped dark green leaves with white stalks have a mildly sweet flavor). You will notice a pattern of tiny holes ~ the work of flea beetles ~ on these delicate leaves. Don't worry, their wonderful taste is intact. (These same pests are enjoying your radish leaves as well. Their intensity is likely due to the stress induced by scarcity of rain during the early Spring.)

We wash all your greens ~ and yet, we still recommended that you thoroughly rinse your greens just before eating. In fact, it is best to give everything a good rinse before use.

Over the next two weeks, we'll have both Rhubarb and Strawberries. The rhubarb is from Lanesboro, contracted from the gardens of Frank Wright and Mary Bell. Lanesboro is famous for the Rhubarb Sisters ~ they performed at the Rhubarb Festival last weekend ~ our own Peggy Hanson is a sister! If anyone has recipes to share, please do!

Last week, our first CSA delivery week, the fields were still abuzz with cultivating (weeding), seeding (beans) and transplanting (fall brassicas). What an incredible feeling of satisfaction when the rain finally honored us with its presence on Saturday and continued to provide a real soaking throughout the weekend. Just what the "doctor" ordered!

Enjoy your delicate Spring box of goodies.

Mary Benson ~ CSA Manager

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 spring of 2007.

Peggy welcomes your questions and comments.

Contact her at mjhanson50@gmail.com.



I made a long term financial planning decision last week. I wanted a conservative tax free investment, guaranteed to provide me with high annual returns for at least 15 years. So I chose asparagus futures. I planted 35 asparagus crowns and am looking forward to cashing in big time in three years. Generally I disapprove of wretched excess. (Camel through the eye of a needle and all that) But I think asparagus wealth is okay.

Americans eat a little less than one pound of fresh asparagus a year per capita. This is three times more asparagus than they ate about 25 years ago, which is good. But the bad news is that we are getting more dependent on foreign asparagus. In 1980 about 23% of our asparagus was imported. Now we have “progressed” to importing 60% - almost all of which comes from Mexico or Peru. By relying on asparagus grown in Peru, Mexico, California and Washington we can have fresh asparagus practically all year long. If we ate only locally grown asparagus our season would last about 6 to 7 weeks – but we would really appreciate it while we had it.

Personally, I like the idea of eating fresh asparagus only 7 weeks out of 52. Here in Fillmore County the local asparagus scene is improving. Paul and Karen Schmidt, Preston area farmers, have planted about 1,000 crowns which should be ready to harvest in 2008. And Frank now has about 200 crowns on line for 2009. Meanwhile, do not despair. Our local grocers are looking out for our asparagus needs. I know that Village Foods in Lanesboro as well as Hometown Foods in Preston, Rushford and Harmony will have asparagus on special this week. Buy extra. It stores well in your refrigerator if you keep it upright in a few inches of water.

There is one more thing we need to cover before we get to recipes. This is delicate, but friends can discuss sensitive subjects. If you had a piece of spinach on your teeth I would tell you. So I also need to tell you that if you eat asparagus your urine might develop a strange odor. I am not kidding. Asparagus contains a sulfur compound called mercaptan. Some people have the gene for an enzyme that breaks down mercaptan and creates a distinctive smell. But not everyone can smell it. So your urine could smell just fine to you but not to the guy standing next to you at the urinal. (I am talking to the men here.) But who cares? It just means that he will know that you recently ate asparagus. He might even be jealous.

So now I won't worry about some novice asparagus eaters panicking and calling up their doctors because their urine smells funny. Actually, your doctor would be happy to learn that you were eating asparagus because it is a nutritional powerhouse. Lots of fiber and more folic acid than any other vegetable, for starters. You pregnant women out there should be loading up on it right now. And while you are at it, plant some asparagus crowns for that new baby. A gift that will keep on giving practically until he or she graduates from high school.

ASPARAGUS TWO WAYS

Look for asparagus that is bright green and not shriveled. Wash well. Snap the bottom off each stalk– there is a natural snapping place different for each stalk. Usually peeling the stalk is not necessary.

Steamed: Bring 1/2 cup of salted (1/2 t.) water to a boil in a pan large enough to hold stalks either upright (bundle with string or fancy new silicon rubber band for cooking) or lying down. Cook asparagus covered for 4-5 minutes or until just tender. Do not overcook. Serve with a little melted butter and lemon juice or a sprinkle of balsamic vinegar. You can also steam just 1 or 2 minutes and serve at room temperature with dip or a nice olive oil vinaigrette.

Roasted: Preheat oven to 425 degrees. Put one T. olive oil on a heavy baking sheet. Roll about one pound washed and snapped stalks in the oil until coated. Bake about 10 –12 minutes, depending on thickness of stalk.

Optional tip: Mix 1/2 t. crushed anise seed with the oil before baking. Asparagus and anise seed make a lovely combination.

Recipes

Sauteed RADISHES with Radish Greens or Arugula

(From *Farmer John's Cookbook*
The Real Dirt on Vegetables)

Radish greens and arugula both have a peppery bitterness that mellows slightly when they are cooked. The succulence of sauteed whole radishes will make you wonder why we don't cook these feisty little roots more often. You can use either radish greens or arugula, or both, for this recipe. Or if you don't have either, substitute any cooking green, and perhaps stir in a little prepared mustard or horseradish or a dash of cayenne to compensate for the missing "bite". (Or use some of the Asian greens mixed in with your salad mix this week.)

Ingredients

1/4 cup butter
1/2 pound radishes, quartered
2 cups radish greens or arugula
1 tablespoon squeezed lemon juice
(about 1 small lemon)
salt
freshly ground pepper

Instructions

Melt butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add radishes; cook, stirring constantly, until tender but still crisp, about 5 minutes depending on the size. Transfer to a bowl to cool. Return skillet to stove.

Put the greens or arugula in the skillet with the wash water still clinging to the leaves. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly, just until wilting, 2 to 3 minutes.

Turn off the heat. Add lemons juice and radishes to the skillet; stir until well combined. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve immediately.

Serves 2.



Delightful ASPARAGUS Salad

(Last week Featherstone held a vision meeting with some staff and core members. Marie Botcher, a CSA shareholder and Rushford B&B proprietress, prepared this wonderful salad for our lunch. Spectacular!)

Ingredients

2 bunches of fresh asparagus
2 tsp. kosher salt

In a large skillet add water to about 1" depth and bring to a boil. Add the salt. Add asparagus and simmer until crisp-tender (about 3-4 minutes). Immediately remove asparagus from boiling water and place in ice bath to chill. Remove and pat dry with paper towels. Asparagus can either be kept at room temperature for up to 3 hours or chilled for up to a day.

Salad Ingredients

10-12 cups mixed salad greens (and spinach if desired)
1 bunch radishes
2 bunches green onions
1 sliced cucumber
1/2 cup sprouts if desired
1/4 pound of Jarslberg or Swiss cheese
Fresh thyme sprigs

Layer a large platter with greens, place asparagus on top of greens. Garnish the sides of the salad with radishes, onions and cucumber. Pour Dressing over salad or serve on the side. Top with the cheese and sprouts; garnish with thyme sprigs. (You may have extra dressing for another time.)
Serve immediately.

Dressing Ingredients

6 Tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
4 teaspoons white wine vinegar
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1-2 teaspoons kosher salt (to taste)
Chopped fresh thyme

Whisk together all ingredients except for the thyme. Stir chopped thyme (to taste) into the dressing. This is best chilled for up to one day.

Serves 8-10 people

Recipes

Greek SALAD

(From *Tastes from Valley to Bluff*
The Featherstone Farm Cookbook)

Ingredients

- 1 large or 2 small heads of fresh lettuce
- 4 tomatoes, each cut into 8 wedges
- 1/2 red onion, thinly sliced (or scionions)
- 32 Greek olives, preferably kalamata
- 1 pound Greek feta cheese, crumbled
- 1 cucumber, peeled and cut into 32 slices
- 16 pepperoncini (pickled peppers)
- Greek Salad Dressing (recipe below)
- 8 pinches of dried oregano (or minced fresh)

Instructions

Assemble the ingredients as describes above or create your own pattern. Like most other salads, this can be mixed as one large salad, then tossed, but my preference is to arrange it on individual plates. Drizzle the dressing over the top and sprinkle oregano over all.

Greek Salad Dressing

Ingredients

- 1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/3 cup red wine vinegar
- 1/3 cup lemon juice
- 1/4 cup Greek kalamata olive brine
- 14 pitted kalamata olives
- 3 large cloves fresh garlic
- 3/4 cup crumbles feta cheese
- 1/4 medium-sized onion
- 1/4 teaspoon whole peppercorns
- 1/4 teaspoon dried oregano

Instructions

Puree all of the ingredients, except the oregano, in a blender or food processor until smooth. Stir in the oregano. Store unused dressing, covered, in the refrigerator. It will keep for up to 2 weeks.

Serves 8



Poached Eggs with Pancetta and Tossed MESCLUN

(From *Tastes from Valley to Bluff*
The Featherstone Farm Cookbook)

(Mesclun originated in southern France and refers to a mix of assorted juvenile greens ~ salad mix w/ Asian greens.)

Ingredients

- 8 large eggs
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 ounces thickly sliced pancetta, cut into 1/4 inch dice
- 1 large shallot, minced (use our green garlic)
- 2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons chopped tarragon
- 2 scallions, thinly sliced (use our scionions)
- 10 cups mesclun (about 6 ounces)
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- Toast points or steamed, slices new potatoes, for serving

Instructions

Bring a large, deep skillet filled with 2 inches of water to a simmer. Crack each egg into a cup and gently slide it into the water. Cook until the whites are solid but the yolks are still soft, 5 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the eggs to a paper towel-lined plate to dry.

Meanwhile, in a large skillet, heat the olive oil until shimmering. Add the pancetta and cook over moderately high heat until crisp, about 3 minutes. Remove from the heat and add the vinegar, tarragon, and scallions.

In a bowl, toss the mesclun with the dressing; season with salt and pepper. Transfer salads to plates, top with eggs, and serve with toast points.

Serves 4

CILANTRO Spread ~ Two Versions

Both versions of this terrific spread are easy and fantastically flavorful. Try one with a platter of grilled vegetables or thickly sliced ripe tomatoes. Both are great on rice noodles or rice, and you might like to try the peanut version with grilled eggplant. Remember to keep your hands away from your face when you are handling hot chile peppers. *Angelic Organic Kitchen*

Ingredients

2 packed cups very finely chopped cilantro
2 cloves garlic minced (about 1 teaspoon)
finely grated zest of 1 lime

Spicy Cilantro-Peanut Version

freshly squeezed juice of 2 limes
(3 to 4 tablespoons)
1 to 2 chile peppers stems and
seeds removed, coarsely chopped
1 tablespoon peanuts
salt
freshly ground pepper

Cilantro-Ginger Version

1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lime
juice
1 teaspoon finely chopped or grated
fresh ginger

Put the cilantro, garlic, and lime zest in a bowl. Add the next three ingredients for the version you are making (either lime juice, peppers and peanuts; or oil, lime juice, and ginger). Mix well with a fork or whisk until well combined. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve immediately or store in refrigerator for up to 2 days. Makes 1 cup.



A New Season

By Melinda Feucht

If you were a CSA member with Featherstone last year, you will remember me as the summer intern that was involved with the newsletter- taking photos and writing articles. As an attempt to keep you all informed of the goings-on at Featherstone and sustainable agriculture in general, this year I am excited to still be a part of the team. But without being an intern and without being in Minnesota. (More on that later.)

If you don't know me, my name is Melinda Feucht and I was a summer intern at Featherstone last summer, the final summer before my senior year of college. As a journalism student at the University of Minnesota, I became deeply interested in food and those who produce it. I thought if there was any sure way to secure a body of knowledge about food at it's most basic level, it'd be at a farm. Through a web of connections I finally arrived at Featherstone. Not only would I intern there, but I'd lived there. I can still remember the first visit to the farm, eating a spinach leaf straight from the ground (dirt and all) with Jack and Mary, asking myself what in the world I signed myself up for.

Needless to say, it was the best, craziest decision I've ever made. Throughout the summer I kept a blog '[Sprout](#)' (where I still write), and documented the highlights and heartaches of my summer experience. I've never experienced or witnessed such a range of emotions as I did during the summer at the farm. Many things have happened in my life since the farm: a kitchen internship at Lenny Russo's Heartland restaurant, an editorial internship at Minnesota Monthly, a copywriting gig with Toast productions, and now doing web site / logo / business design on my own.

The farm is how I got to where I've finally arrived: Seattle, WA. As many of you know, Featherstone Farm [has a cookbook](#), whose author

lives in Seattle and who I visited in January. I fell in love with the city. People are food-crazy here. That, coupled with the dire economy (=no job prospects), and the virtual nature of my work (web site design, writing, design), I decided trying out a new city for a few years.

There are a lot of similarities between the decision to move to Seattle and the decision to live at the farm. Before both decisions, I was in a completely comfortable place knowing full well I'd be surrounded by individuals I'd met only a handful of times.

And there remained a similar trade-off too: the assurance of good food. And a powerful assurance that is! But with the farm, and as I'm finding with Seattle, it was the people that were most nourishing. People like Jack, Mary, Larisa, Sarah, unknowingly challenged my outlook, abilities, and attitude to create an experience [I'll never forget](#).

I will continue to write an article for the farm each week, centering on a food or agriculture – related issue. If you have any suggestions or would like a more in-depth look at a certain topic, feel free to email me at feucht22@gmail.com. Thanks and I look forward to sharing the farm with you through this CSA season.

Warmly,
Melinda Feucht

You can view my Web site by clicking the image below.



“Useful tips for Dropsite Hosts” or “How I learned to stop worrying and love the shareholders.”

Greetings to all dropsite hosts. First I want to thank you for lending us your garage or driveway or storeroom or alley or porch or cooler. Dropsite hosting is a noble calling and woefully misunderstood by almost everyone. You are the frontline troops. You are the face of Featherstone. You are the final, crucial link between a beautiful field in Southeastern Minnesota and your neighbors' kitchen table.

I have a few notions to share with you. I hope you find them useful. I come by this knowledge honestly having hosted a dropsite in Chicago for ten years. During those years we encountered just about every situation that a host might face. I'd like to say we handled them all with aplomb and efficiency. I'd like to say that but I can't. Let's just say that in those ten years no one was seriously injured. Now, on to the tips.

Note; the tip will appear in **bold** type and special insights will be *italicized*.

Make sure your shareholders know what hours you will be available to them. Tell them when the site is opening and when you will lock up. Give them the hours specifically. *That way when they call you for the umpteenth time to ask you when they can come to collect their box you can feel smugly justified in sighing and shaking your head when you hang up.*

Give the shareholders accurate contact information for yourself and appropriate times during which they can call you. *That way when you get a call at two in the morning from a shareholder who forgot it was pick-up day you can give them a royal earful, deleting not a single expletive.*

Make sure your site is dry when it rains. Know which way the downpour will flow and what you will do to keep the veggies dry. Palettes are very useful. *I remember being mortally embarrassed once to see several fully packed boxes sitting in two inches of water from a faulty gutter. The shareholders did not believe me when I said that I was actually doing them a favor by washing their produce.*

You will have at least one shareholder who doesn't seem to ever get it straight as to dates and hours. Or you will have one that chronically forgets and needs to make alternate arrangements. Be courteous and try to accommodate him/her. They paid good money. *Later, in the privacy of your home, you can stick pins in that little shareholder doll you'll keep on hand for just such occasions. In a pinch, I'll lend you mine.*

You will occasionally have left over boxes. Find a soup kitchen or other worthy recipient to whom you can donate the veggies. This is extra work but it will really make a difference to someone who needs it most. Let your shareholders know that all leftovers will be donated. *Make sure that you deliver the extra boxes in a timely fashion. No one wants limp produce several days past its prime that has been stored in your 108 degree garage.*

Keep the dropsite clean and free of trash. Make sure you check on it a couple of times during your hours of operation. You represent Featherstone. *It will amaze you how messy folks can be when they pick up their veggies. In my tenure as a host I walked in to find paper and plastic bags, gum wrappers, water bottles, peanut shells, sun glasses, a scarf, one shoe and three gloves.*

If the delivery truck is going to be late give your shareholders the best estimate you can for a new pick up time. You may end up personally delivering a box or two. If folks show up on time and the veggies aren't there it's your job to fix it. *Back in Chicago I would tell people that there was a terrible wreck and that the driver was lucky to be alive. Then I would say that the veggies were being Fedexed from the wreck site at enormous expense to the Farm.*

Remember to have fun. You're doing a great thing and people love what you do. *Thank you, a thousand times. Really.*

Ed Holahan, former dropsite host, current Featherstone CSA vegetable beneficiary.

“Just wanted to send a big thank you for all the hard work you are doing at Featherstone to bring us yummy produce to eat! The green leaf lettuce in the first week’s box was AMAZING! I have never seen such a huge head of lettuce! It was so big I just had to take a picture of my three boys holding it! And.. to top it off, it tasted even better than it looked... a wonderful way to start out the new season! “

many blessings,
Tonya & Dean, Eliot, Lucas and Ian Sanner



R e m i n d e r s :

About the Boxes...

The waxed boxes we use to deliver your CSA shares are very valuable. The rotation we use means we have to have tons on hand. We want to save on expenses and reuse whenever possible. As a result we ask you to bring back the empty box the following week when you return for your next box. We’ve used the term “break down” the boxes. What we mean by that is to VERY gently disassemble them so they lie flat and are manageable for our dropsite hosts. What we don’t mean is for the boxes to get torn and damaged. What that requires is to very carefully bend the flaps both on the top and on the bottom to “unhook” them. We really appreciate you help with this.

Mary Benson ~ CSA Manager

Featherstone CSA Strawberry Social
Saturday June 27th Noon until 3pm
Come, visit the farm and pick extra berries!!



Later this week you will receive an E-vite with more details about the event. Please reply at that time and let us know whether or not you are planning on attending. Your reply will help us plan for the event.

You will also be able to request information about other nearby attractions as well as accommodations in the area. Please click here if you would like directions to the farm: <http://tinyurl.com/krp2tl>