

Fernbrook Farm CSA

Volume 11 Issue 2

June 2017

“Ours Go To Eleven”



Hello and greetings from the rain blessed fields of Fernbrook Farm. A gentle ‘farmers rain’ falls outside on our newly planted flowers and cherry tomatoes and all of our other crops. Nice thing about rain - it irrigates ALL of your fields at the same time. And after the heat and drought of 2016 it is hard to be anything but thankful at the sound of raindrops. Not to mention the fact that it gives us some much needed admin time. Because we can’t officially open if the June newsletter isn’t written and printed.

WELCOME! And welcome back to the CSA. We are very excited to be kicking off season number eleven here at Fernbrook Farm. And if you have been with us since 2007, well we salute and THANK you. And if you are brand new, we welcome you and hope that the CSA provides you with a lot of value and a whole lot of great food. We just participated in the Bordentown City Street Fair and it was energizing seeing some of our loyal shareholders and signing up families new to the CSA model. We had some sample produce - kale, lettuce, radishes, garlic etc that got some people visibly excited. And this week at our house the fresh food tasted delicious after a winter with minimal farm fresh produce.

This time of year I am reminded about one of the things I like so much about farming. It is a strange blend of the familiar and the different. On one level, every farm season is much like every other season.

This year we planted cherry tomatoes on May 18th. Last year it was the 15th. The year before that May 20th. And most of the varieties and row spacing and planting methods are the same. And that is kind of comforting. But the people, fields, weather...all different. Some years the plants are tall, leggy and dying to get planted. Other times the plants are barely mature enough to go in the field. Some years disease and insect pressure arrive early and cause consternation and much added work. And some years the plants are pretty low mainte-

nance and the bounty is strong.

I think of 2008 which was as epic a tomato year as we could possibly have. Yet one year later a

our crop and the entire Northeast and the yields were paltry. The known and the unknown. Lord knows we try to make every crop a winner every year but as we stand on the precipice of the harvest season (that lasts until mid December), we just don’t know what is going to happen. Such are many things in life but it’s a phenomenon we face annually here on the farm. It’s also why I hate to even postulate when folks ask me how the “S-berry” crop is doing for instance. We know that there are no guarantees out here...Knock on wood, cross your fingers and say a prayer. And this comes back to you. Farming is and has always been a

risky endeavor. But the CSA model helps us mitigate and navigate the risk as we share it with you - our beloved shareholders. The CSA model has helped farms around the country thrive and they have provided hundreds of thousands of families with fresh, healthy food. Let’s hope this trend continues!



2017 Farm Crew—Nick, Jess, Dan, Lindsey, Erik and Friend Abby!



New Bees Arrive!

Fernbrook Farm CSA Hours

Saturday
8:00 am to 1:30 pm

- Or -

Tuesday
10:00 am— 7:00 pm

- Or -

Thursday
2:00PM - 7:00PM

2016 was our big ten year season. It was marked with various celebrations including an epic Fernbrook Farmer reunion in November where many of our former Apprentices came back for the weekend from places like Maine, Colorado, Illinois and Virginia. We also were fortunate to have a great farm crew in Sindhu, Ray, Dan, Jess and Nick. Ray, Dan and Sindhu all moved to Philly. Ray is continuing her environmental work and landscaping in the city. Sindhu returned to her former urban farm in Wilmington,

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Delaware where she is busy as can be and growing lots of food! Dan is continuing his graduate work at U.Penn and will be interning in Philly this summer helping to get permanent protection for green spaces and gardens. AND Dan and Sindhu got married! Huzzah! Huzzah! We got to watch it live from India which was very cool. We look forward to seeing Ray, Sindhu and Dan this year. Now we start our second decade. And we do so with a great farm crew. We are really lucky to have not one but two veterans back. Nick DelMar is back for his third season as our Farm Assistant and Jess Brandeisky is back for her fourth as the Assistant Manager. Nick and Jess were here through the winter (of course they both got away for a good chunk of time as well). And their hard work and experience have made this season productive, efficient and fun so far. They have both taken on extra responsibility in the areas of record keeping, equipment repair and maintenance, outreach, field work, volunteer management, farm planning and crop production which has made my life a lot easier! And we are pleased to welcome 3 great young farmers to the 2017 crew. Lindsey Wilson joins us from Michigan via Philly. She has some good farm experience under her belt most recently at Pennypack CSA across the river in PA. Lindsey's family has a farm in Michigan and she is looking to build on her agricultural foundation to perhaps



someday return to her family's land to make it productive and sustainable. Dan Mickey is our first Tarheel at Fernbrook. Dan moved up to NJ from Boone, North Carolina where he was enrolled at Appalachian State. He worked on the school's farm and other farms in NC before coming to Fernbrook. Dan brings with him a good farming background, some serious basketball skills and the ability to mimic a running turkey better than anyone I have ever known. We are very glad he and his girlfriend Aubry decided to move to the Garden State. Erik Dalton joins us from a little hamlet called Bordentown. Yes, Erik is a VERY local boy - like within jogging distance of Fernbrook. Erik is new to farming but he got introduced to horticulture and greenhouse production at MCCC and he was eager to join the crew at Fernbrook. He has also gotten into cycling in the past few years and has been known to go for a ride AFTER a day of farming (I may have to work him harder...) Lindsey, Dan and Erik have brought with them a strong work ethic, positive attitude and sense of having fun while enduring the many challenges we face at the farm. With our 'fab five farmers' and our bevy of excellent workshares and part-timers, I think our 2017 farm crew is a strong

one. ***“What’s new?”*** is the question we get a lot this time of year. Our friend and former Apprentice Lo Pagan has installed 3 new bee hives on the farm (One is located in field ‘C3’) and their invaluable pollination has begun! Jess and her Garden Club (they have room for you...Thursday nights) has moved our perennial area from the bramble field to field ‘A’ where it should prosper and provide us with more herbs like mint, lavender, sorrel, rosemary, chamomile and more! Our new barn is coming along (poured floor, electric, windows and some siding) But it is in progress and we hope to finish it soon. Our heritage breed pigs are back in 2 new pastures. You’ll find 6 amongst the row of dogwood trees not far from the farmshop. They are beautiful pigs and have been doing great. And we have a new trailhead entrance to the Fernbrook woodland trail. It is located just behind the farmshop. And yes - some new foods in the mix but we’ll get to those later! And so - here we go. Thank you Thank you for joining the CSA and taking this voyage with us. Your support and participation are always valued and never taken for granted. We look forward to sharing this farming season and its bounty with you! Now let’s eat.

Your Farmer,

Jeff Tober

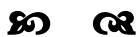


What to expect in June at the Farm

“Wouldn’t be much of a farm without some food” a wise farmer friend once told me. True enough. So every month, the newsletter will give you a snapshot of the veggies you can expect to see in the coming weeks. Please keep in mind it is our best guess – some crops will come in early and some late, but we’ll try to give you an accurate forecast. We’ll give you a brief description of the food, how to prepare it and we’ll include recipes as well. And don’t be afraid to experiment a little!

Please note that we recommend washing all of the produce before you eat it.

We soak most of the veggies to remove the field heat and give them a basic wash, but we don’t ‘clean’ the food. Please treat these veggies as you would if they were purchased from the store.



June’s Bounty



Beets – We’ll start the season bunching the beets with the greens. In fact we grow a variety ***known for its delicious*** greens “Early Wonder Tall Top”. Try chopping up the whole kit-and-caboodle and adding to a stir-fry. Sautee baby beets with some garlic, lemon and olive oil. Steaming works or grate them and enjoy raw! Also trying some NEW varieties this Spring! Stay tuned. We’ll have them most of the spring starting week 2 or 3.

Bok Choy - aka Pac Choi - We grow 3 or 4 varieties of this crisp, succulent and mildly spicy Asian green. It is a stir-fry hero. They are flavorful and very healthy. They go great with soy, sesame, lemon, tamari, garlic, green onions...just about any flavor you like to use to sautee. Mix with snow peas, carrots, green onions, kale and spinach. Crop looks promising!! Available week 1.

Broccoli - We used to grow broccoli in the Spring but it was always very high maintenance and the yields were too unpredictable so we got away from it. (Basically it would melt away in June's heat). After many requests and tinkering with our varieties and growing methods we are giving it a go again this year. We are growing some head broccoli and a new 'broccolini' which produces tender shoots of broccoli great for steaming, stir-frys etc. 2017 will either be the last time we try Spring broccoli or the start of a new trend... Stay tuned.

Broccoli Raab - This has become a very popular green in spring and fall. It is a non-heading broccoli wherein the leaves, tops and flower shoots are eaten. Tender and tasty and a tad bitter. My farmer friend Paul who is Italian suggests the following—chop it up, sautee it with lots of garlic, olive oil, sweet sausage and sun-dried tomatoes and mix with cavatelli. Coming week 2 or 3

Collard Greens - Savory & Healthy! I always consider these a fall crop but we've been growing them in the spring with success. Yet another green from the cabbage family, its great at soaking up the flavors it is cooked with. In the south, they commonly use ham hocks and black-eyed peas with collards in a stew. GOOD! Can also be steamed and stir-fried. It is a tender, tasty and SUPER HEALTHY vegetable that needs to get the buzz kale has enjoyed! Available starting week 1

Cucumbers - Ah the cucumber—so simple and yet kind of complicated to grow...This is a crop that seems to be threatened by more diseases and pests each year. One of the biggest threats (to all melons, cukes and squash) is bacterial wilt which is spread by the cucumber beetle. We grow picklers and slicers and we'll do our very best to bring in a great crop for you! Available mid to late June.

Garlic Scapes - This is the curly seed head that the garlic plant sends up in June. We pinch them off to get a bigger bulb. But the scapes provide you with a great garlic taste in the spring. Chop them up; great sautéed, stir-fried, or even use them to make pesto - like a garlicky scallion. Many shareholders have thrown them in the freezer to extend the garlicky season. Available around week 3.

Herbs - Basil, Dill, Parsley and Cilantro will be available about the middle of June. We grow sweet, lemon, cinnamon and purple basil to give you interesting tastes and colors. We also have a perennial bed near the farmshop. You'll find things like oregano, catnip, mint, lavender, sorrel and more (we'll let you know when specific herbs are open)! We usually tell you to "take what you need" by pinching off the outer leaves and letting the plant continue to grow. Check the U-Pick board for availability.

Kale - We grow some pretty nice spring kale if I do say so and we grow 4 or 5 different kinds. A versatile green enjoyed raw or cooked. Or try your hand at kale chips! Not that difficult to do in the oven. Spring kale went in early this year. It is gorgeous and you'll see it right off the bat for week 1!



Kohlrabi - Once again, a member of the cabbage family shows up. This time the edible part is a round, swollen stem that is crisp and tasty - kind of a broccoli / radish taste in my opinion. Can be eaten raw or cooked. Usually peeled first. We are growing purple and white varieties this spring. Available in mid June.

Leeks - a traditional crop in the fall but we have been growing a bunching leek in the spring with much success. A tasty, tangy member of the onion family. Use the like scallions / green onions in raw and cooked dishes. Due to a new onion family pest (the alium leaf miner) we have had to delay our leek and scallion plantings so you may see them a little later this year than normal. Likely middle of June.

Lettuce - Spring grows the best lettuce of the year. We'll offer a mix of greenleaf, redleaf, romaine & butterhead. We plant a lot of lettuce to try to keep it coming fresh every week. You know what to do with this stuff! Interestingly enough, a member of the sunflower family (*Compositae*). Time for salads! Available starting week 1.

Peas - We grow snap peas and snow peas (edible pod) as well as the shelling peas which you have to shell but they are really worth it. The snow and snap peas are a great fresh snack and a superb stir-fry and salad ingredient. These are a U-Pick crop. Snow peas are in the 'A' field. Shellers are in 'D1' but we currently have an issue with them...stay tuned. Available early to mid-June.

Radish - Excellent salad ingredient with some zest!!. I like them raw as a healthy, tasty snack. Available in a variety of colors like pink, red and purple. And we have the delicious "French Breakfast" Radish! . Available week 1

Scallions - We grow them in bunches and they give us lovely green tops. Top potatoes, use in salads or any place you'd use onion. Nice coleslaw ingredient. Available starting about week 3. Due to a new onion family pest (the alium leaf miner) we have had to delay our leek and scallion plantings so you may see them a little later this year than normal.

Spinach - Ah spring spinach. A wonderful green raw or cooked. My wife loves it. Depending on the year, it can be a finicky crop. Looking OK this spring Don't overcook or it will lose its color and texture. You can freeze it. Blanche for 2 minutes, drain, cool, bag and freeze. Probably available starting week 1! (Available spring and fall—hard to grow in the summer heat)

Summer Squash - We grow both green and yellow zucchini, yellow squash, the UFO shaped Patty Pan and a really great Italian heirloom called costanta romanesco which is ribbed, and really tasty. Like the cukes, these face a growing list of challenges but so far so good. Available starting around week 3 or 4.

Sweet Red Fruits Whose Name I Cannot Mention - Fields B2 and C2. Ah the 'S-berries' (I refrain from saying their true name out of farmer superstition). This is one crop that can sway quickly from good to bad or vice versa depending on water, temperature etc. As of this writing they are ripening and looking pretty good. We will let you know when they are open and how much you get!

Swiss Chard - One of the prettiest, tastiest and healthiest greens we grow. Some call it summer spinach and it's actually healthier! Makes a great partner to potatoes and is excellent steamed. Use leaves and stems (if they aren't too big). Available around week 2.

Turnips - ('Hakurei Turnips') I'm a real fan of these mild, even sweet turnips. They come in pink and white. Use raw or cooked and try the greens in stir-frys. Please try washing it and biting right in. Many a member have told me they prefer them to radishes. Available starting week 2 or 3.

Water Water...Everywhere?

2016 was dry. Hot AND dry. Our shallowly rooted produce can't live well for very long without moist soils so we spent a lot of time irrigating last year—starting the first week of April! We know water is a precious resource needed by all people and all ecosystems. So we take seriously our responsibility as farmers to be good water stewards. We do this in a number of ways - **PIGS** - 90% of the water our pigs get for mud and drinking water is recycled - spent veggie water and



rainwater from the roof. (Water use is a major reason livestock production can be deleterious to the environment.) **SOIL HEALTH**—Soils rich in organic matter can hold water longer (like a sponge). So by adding composts, cover cropping and fallowing land (taking it out of production for a season or more), we try to build up our soil organic matter requiring less irrigation. Last year our pepper crop was in a field fallowed for 20 months and spread with rich compost and we didn't irrigate them once and grew

a terrific crop!! **MULCH** - We sometimes use mulches like straw, woodchips and leaves which have the double advantage of keeping weeds at bay (when done correctly) and preventing the soils from drying out! (Note to gardeners - for some crops mulches will keep the soil TOO cool so look into it first). **PLANNING** - Weather forecasts have proven frustrating over the years but they are generally pretty good and they can help us conserve water. If we know when it will likely rain, we can prepare fields and plant when they are wet or about to be wet thus preventing the need to water-in a new crop) **EDUCATION** - We are glad to once again offer a rain barrel making workshop to shareholders this year. We are finalizing a date (likely late July) with the NJDEP. Each rain barrel can help conserve hundreds of gallons each year easing pressure on our water systems and aquifers. Stay tuned for details and consider how you can use good planning and rainwater to make your yard a conservation yard!



Fernbrook Farm CSA Events!

Throughout the year, we will have various events at the farm in which you are welcome to participate. Events are free of charge unless otherwise noted. Below are a list of upcoming events.

Friday, June 16th Summer Solstice Potluck 6:00pm – 8:00pm

Bring a dish with farm-fresh food and celebrate the arrival of summer! Wagon Ride to follow. Please bring a dish to serve 6-8 people—main course, salad, side, or dessert. And please bring your own plate, cup and silverware! B.Y.O.B. We try to make these “No Trash Events”! Held at the farmshop. See you there!



Saturday, June 17th Edible & Medicinal Plant Walk 9:30AM—10:45AM

Join Shareholder Joanne McKinley as she leads her annual guided walk around the fields and woods to shed light on wild plants and their culinary and medicinal uses. Tons of great information on the amazing pasture and woodland plants around Fernbrook and their many uses! Walk limited to 15 people. Please RSVP to info@fernbrookfarmcsa.com

Saturday, June 24th Lacto-fermentation Workshop 10:00 AM

Join teacher, shareholder, author and lacto-fermentation Queen Natalie Winch as she will demonstrate the age old practice of preserving foods with salt brine (i.e.kim chee, sauerkraut and so much more!) The class is TRULY AMAZING and free of charge to CSA members! Meet at the farmshop at 10:00AM

