

THE ALLEGED FARM NEWS – 15 June 2006

User's Guide for the 2006 CSA Share

First, find your bag of vegetables (it has a label with your name). Then find the newsletter tucked between the plastic and paper bags. Unfold the newsletter, find the side titled "Alleged Farm News" and look for the "User's Guide for the 2006 CSA Share." There you will find information on how to use your 2006 CSA share.

Once you have finished reading the first paragraph of the user's guide, proceed to the second paragraph, which begins "Once you have finished reading the first paragraph..." If you are confused at this point, return to step one and begin again. Otherwise proceed directly to the next step, which is to proceed to the next step.

Congratulation. You have successfully completed two paragraphs of the user's guide for the 2006 CSA share.

I mean three.

Make that four.

No, five.

Oh, what the hell. Just sauté some garlic in olive oil and add the contents of your share.

But what if there's something in your share that you don't want to eat? Do you have to eat it? If you throw it away will you be letting me down or wasting your money or decreasing the moral and culinary value of participating in a CSA? I surprising number of people admit to feeling guilty about not eating everything in the bag. But there's absolutely no reason you have to. That sense of guilt does neither me nor you any good. It turns a bag of tasty vegetables into a burden when it ought to create pleasure and interest and occasionally amusement. I have no objection to people appreciating the effort we go to, and I hope you appreciate the quality of the produce. I like to hear from members who have discovered and enjoyed new vegetables or varieties, and I think people should recognize the advantages of buying locally grown food and having some sort of relationship with the people who grow it. But I do not expect anyone to like everything we grow (I do not) or always have time to cook and eat it. Unless you are throwing away a significant portion of each bag you are getting a good deal on good produce and the occasional jettisoned turnip or cucumber in no way diminishes your support of our farm. So please feel free to toss the things you don't like. Or give them to somebody who does like them. Such as a pig, who will almost certainly be happy to eat what you don't.

If you get a pig and do not know how to care for it, other than by feeding it the produce you don't get to, let us know and we will send you absolutely free a copy of our exciting User's Guide for the 2006 CSA Pig. If you cannot find a pig you like (there are good pigs and bad pigs) you can bring unwanted food to ours. Not only will this please our pigs, but it will also mean that you have come to the farm, and visiting the farm should be part of belonging to the CSA. True, it is not a requirement (just as eating the produce is not), but doing so enhances the value of membership (just as eating the produce does).

As for what you do once you get to the farm, other than feeding the pigs, that depends on what you want to do. Those so inclined can do farm work, especially those so inclined who come to one of our work days (dates to be announced). Those so inclined can sit and listen to the birds (we had a pair of Great Horned owls by the barn last night).

Coming attractions: scallions, white turnips, basil, pessimism
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This week's share: Arugula, Beets, Bok choy, Green garlic, Lettuce, Rhubarb, Shallot, Spinach, Garlic chives, Lemon balm

User's Guide continued

Of course, even if you never come near the farm you can get plenty of value out of your share simply by eating it, especially if you make tasty things. I cannot be held responsible for your cooking skills (though I would be willing to show you how to cook some of the crops if you come out to the farm). But I can tell you what is in your bag and give you some idea of what to do with it, especially the more unusual things. Green garlic, for instance, from which you want to trim the roots and leaves before you sauté it in, that's right, some olive oil over medium heat until it starts to brown, at which point you will pour some water (or stock) into the pan, cover it and turn the heat down, continuing to cook the garlic until it is soft, at which point you will take the lid off and cook off any liquid and then you will eat it. It has the texture of leeks and a mild garlic flavor. Or lemon balm, which makes a nice tea or addition to ice tea and infused in simple syrup and mixed with good bourbon and lots of ice makes a very good cocktail.

Sometimes you will find something in your bag that I have not put on the list. It could be that some of our vegetables are choosing to escape from the farm in this manner, but more likely we did not have enough of that crop that week to give it to everyone. And if you don't find anything extra in your bag, you probably will some other time.

Sometimes you may not find your bag. Occasionally (actually, I can only think of one time) a bag goes to the wrong site. Slightly more frequently, particularly at the beginning of the season, someone picks up the wrong bag (see step one above). Should this happen (this meaning either that you cannot find your bag or that you find you have a bag with someone else's name on it), call us and we will sort it out.

Sometime you may wish you could find your bag somewhere else. By which I mean not that you will want the vegetables to go away but that you will want to pick them up at a different site. In which case, let us know and we will send them to a site of your choosing. Preferably you will let us know this before we have actually put your bag on the truck.

Sometimes you may wish you could get your bag but you are unable to get to any of our sites (I am imagining something more like vacation than a sudden and total loss of a sense of direction) and cannot find anyone else who wants your share that week. Should that occur, do not panic. Human beings can go for several weeks without fresh local produce (though I would not recommend it). Simply let us know when you will be away (or hopelessly lost) and we will not send your bag off to go to waste.

Sometimes you may wish you had enough tomatoes to make sauce. We could, I suppose, given a big enough tomato patch, hand out as some late summer share a bushel of paste tomatoes. It makes more sense to us to plant a small patch of paste tomatoes and let members who want to make sauce come and pick them (after feeding the pigs).

Perhaps you know of a group of people who would like to visit the farm to feed the pigs or do some farm work or just see a farm and hear about what we do, such as feeding the pigs. We usually have time in the fall to host tours.

If a sudden desire to provide a farmer with a fresh fruit pie overcomes you, please keep in mind that we are always willing to accept baked goods, particularly around 10:30 in the morning. A little coffee would go nicely with that pie too.

To get in touch with me call me at 692-9065 or send an e-mail to Thomas@theallegedfarm.com. Keep in mind, however, that I spend most of the day nowhere near a telephone or computer and that when I do come back into the house I have two boys to contend with so I may not respond right away. If you really need to get in touch with me, I suggest you drive out to the farm and track me down in the field. Or check the website (theallegedfarm.com) on the off chance that I have updated it to include the information you need (theoretically you should be able to get a copy of the newsletter, work day dates, and recipes from the site).

Congratulations. You have now finished reading the User's Guide for the 2006 CSA Share (except for the part you are now reading). You are now ready to take the produce out of the bag and eat it. Or feed it to a pig.

Fruit share: *Fruit is a little slow to ripen this year, but I hope to be able to get strawberries from the Hand farm next week.*