

The WSU Organic Standard

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WSU Organic Farm
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Finally the first week of the CSA has arrived. I'm sure everyone is excited and curious to see what we will have. This spring has been a challenge for us and all growers in our area. The cold wet weather really made getting in the ground early difficult. BUT, we do have a little to get things started. Remember that the amount of produce you are getting now will not stay the same for the rest of the season. Your boxes will grow!

We make great efforts to provide consistent quantities of veggies by planting crops every week through the summer. So we actually started our field planting back in March and even earlier in the greenhouse. I actually got new asparagus starts seeded the end of January. So what about the asparagus? Unfortunately we will not be seeing any in the boxes this year. The crowns we planted last spring are producing but in order for the root system to grow strong we will not pick any this year. This will insure better production in the many years to come. However, the rhubarb is growing well.

I have planted other perennials this year that won't be producing any time soon. We planted 30 Italian Plums on the southeast edge of the farm and two 150 foot beds of raspberries. The raspberries should produce by next year but the plums won't have much for at least 3 more years. These are all long term investments into the farm and the future CSA's.

And our latest farm improvement is the construction of a second plastic hoophouse. This new structure will house the tomato crop this year and should ensure a much bigger crop than last year. The other hoophouse has 3 beds of carrots growing well and then we will have a full bed of sweet peppers for the summer. Hopefully the carrots will come sooner than we would get them from the field.

So enjoy your first spring greens and remember it will only get better. - Brad Jaeckel, manager

Volunteers and Visitors

Volunteers start this week. Full shares work 7 hours/week, and half shares work 4 hours/week. Please come to the farm at your scheduled time, and before you leave, enter your hours into the volunteer logbook. This is important for us to keep track of for the University, and if you ever need to know how many hours you've worked, we'll have a record.

Visitors are welcome at the farm. Friday afternoons are the best time since we'll be distributing boxes then. However, we are flexible and will welcome you for visits on other days. If you visit, please check in with a manager first.



How does the CSA work??!

Every week you will pick up your share at the scheduled pick-up location. We will have a list of the members so we can check you off after you've picked up. Some members are splitting boxes with other people, but there will only be one name on the list. It is up to you to actually split the share.

There will be two box sizes: full and half. The full shares have more quantity and variety. The half shares are not exactly half as much as the fulls. We were able to purchase reusable plastic boxes this year. There are two sizes so that should help in identifying the fulls and halves. ALL members are required to repack their share into another container of your choice. Many people were doing this last year with cloth bags or their own boxes. Then we will keep the plastic box and reuse it for the next harvest. If you forget your own bags we will have bags available.

If you are not able to pick up your box for any week you are welcome to have a neighbor or friend pick up in your place. All they need to know is your name so we can check you off on our list. Boxes will not be held past the set pick-up times, and any unclaimed boxes will be donated to the food bank partners.

Rhubarb Is Technically A Vegetable...

according to my reliable source, *Chez Panisse Fruit*. It was originally cultivated for its root, used in Chinese medicine, and not grown for food until the 19th century. It needs a cold dormant season and cool growing weather in order to produce, so it thrives in the northern U.S. Settlers brought it with them as they moved west and sometimes called it "pie plant."

Fruit or vegetable, it is one of the first fresh things we can enjoy out of the garden in the spring, coming just in time for fruit crisp and pie baking, before strawberries or cherries are ready. Alice Waters writes that rhubarb's tart acidity complements rich meats like pork, and goes well with fish. Citrus is an excellent addition to rhubarb, and of course, strawberry-rhubarb pie is hard to beat. Because of its acidity you should always cook rhubarb in stainless steel, ceramic, or Pyrex cookware, never aluminum.

Both of these recipes come from *Chez Panisse Fruit*. The compote can be a dessert served with cream, or a side dish to accompany pork.

Baked Rhubarb Compote

2 pounds rhubarb
1 medium Valencia orange or other juice orange
1 cup sugar

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F. Rinse the rhubarb quickly under cold water and wipe dry with a clean towel. Trim and discard every bit of leaf and the tough inch or so at the bottom end of each stalk. Cut lengthwise into 1/3-inch-thick strips and then crosswise into 2-inch pieces. You should have about 6 cups.

Grate the zest of the orange and squeeze its juice into a 9- or 10-inch nonreactive baking dish. Add the rhubarb and sugar and toss everything together until the rhubarb is coated with sugar and juice.

Cover and bake for 30 minutes. Remove the cover and continue baking for another 5 to 10 minutes, or until a knife slides easily into the rhubarb. Serve warm or at room temperature. Serves 6.

Rhubarb Grapefruit Preserves

2 pounds rhubarb
2 grapefruit
4 cups sugar

Wash and dry the rhubarb and cut it into 1/2-inch dice. Peel the zest off the grapefruit and chop it very fine. Put the rhubarb, chopped zest, and sugar in a large heavy-bottomed stainless steel pot. Juice the grapefruits into the pot. Let the mixture stand for 30 minutes (or overnight) to allow the sugar to dissolve and the rhubarb to release its juice.

Prepare five 8-ounce canning jars and self-sealing lids in boiling water, following the manufacturer's instructions. Put a small plate in the freezer to be used later to test the consistency of the jam.

Bring the pot of fruit to a boil over high heat, stirring occasionally to make sure it is not sticking to the bottom. The mixture will bubble high up the sides of the pot. Skim off any light-colored foam collecting on the edges. Soon the jam will subside, still bubbling thickly. Stir frequently and start testing for consistency by putting small spoonfuls of jam on the cold plate. This cools the samples quickly so you can tell what the finished texture will be. When the jam has cooked to the thickness you want, turn off the heat and carefully ladle the jam into the prepared canning jars, allowing at least 1/4 inch of headroom. Seal with the lids according to the manufacturer's instructions. The preserves will keep for 1 year. Makes 5 cups.