



# The Weekly Weeder

A weekly publication for CSA members

DECEMBER 3, 2008—WINTER BOX #2

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## Box Contents & Tips

**Beets** keep in a plastic bag in the crisper drawer or they'll quickly dehydrate and get soft. We harvest beets by hand, clipping away the top part off the leaves, but leaving behind an inch of stem and the entire root. We do this because when cooking, it prevents the color of the beet (and loss of good nutrients) from "bleeding out" during the cooking process.

**Black Spanish Radish** The round black roots with rough skin. As a winter radish, the outer skin is tough and needs to be peeled away. Use the white interior, a spicy radish/turnip flavor. Store in a plastic bag in the crisper drawer for longer storage so root doesn't become soft.

**Cabbage** keep in crisper drawer until used. As it ages, outer leaves may yellow, but those are easy enough to peel away prior to use.

**Carrots** store best in a plastic bag in the crisper drawer. These are soooo sweet!

**Celeriac** The bumpy, hairy outside peels quickly to reveal a beautiful white inside. We grate it raw into salads, add to our coleslaws, or put into soups and stews. Use cup for cup when replacing regular celery in a recipe.

**Cipollini Onion** store outside refrigerator 45-55 degrees 65 percent humidity. A specialty onion used by many gourmet cooks for roasting and caramelizing. Not a mild onion, but it's natural sugars come out when slowly cooked.

**Turnips** Fall harvested turnips are milder in flavor than those in the early spring. Sweetened from frost, you'll be surprised by their wonderful flavor when eaten raw. Great addition to any vegetable tray at holiday parties. No need to peel, simply scrub with a stiff vegetable brush. Add turnip eating to your cold remedy kits as they're a wonderful source of vitamin C, particularly when eaten raw.

**Acorn Squash** store on countertop or cool room. With the cool, wet spring, squash planting was delayed by a month this past year, meaning fewer blossoms and therefore fruits per plant. Next week we'll have a different kind of squash!

**Russet Potatoes** From our friends and neighbors at Driftless Organics, a certified organic farm.

## News from the Farm

Our bellies and hearts are full from the festivities of the Thanksgiving Holiday, surrounded by wonderful food and the joy of seeing relatives and friends from near and far. We feel rejuvenated after a day away from the farm, and things have changed. Winter has arrived and the once green fields are now beautifully covered in white snow! The transformation of the landscape, from the browns of November to the bright and beauty of December is wonderfully uplifting. While the winds howled outside on Monday, we were warm and toasty inside the packing shed, surrounded by the fresh and earthy smells of carrots, turnips, celeriac and beets; dirt clung to them as though they'd just been dug from the ground. We put whole crates (50-60 pounds of roots) into our stainless steel wash tank to soak in cold water, then use our pressure washer to gently spray the remaining dirt off the roots. It's a wet job, involving full rain gear and neoprene gloves to prevent one from getting cold, but I love the hum of the machine, the rhythm of the work, the constant movement of ones hands in rolling around the roots so each has it's turn under the spray of water. With the earthy mist of water upon my face, I smile at the beauty of colors before my eyes—brilliant orange carrots, ruby red beets, sparkling white and purple turnips, and creamy colored celeriac. The memory of which field each grew in is imprinted upon me. Perhaps it's best to say that winter washing is a time of wonderful reflection and meditation, a mellowing of the mind and body after the buzz of constant craziness during the growing season.

As we continue to wash vegetables, we're also rubbing our hands in delight as we start the seed ordering process for 2009. We're like children in a toy store, reading about the new varieties of this and that. But seed ordering is an involved process that includes organizing and inventory of any remaining seed, accessing the previous year's actual planting plan to see what more or less is needed, reviewing the survey results from CSA members for ideas on next season, and then drafting our field plan to fit. Then, determining the seed amounts for each variety (for example we have 4 different varieties of broccoli we order, each best suited for temperature, local field conditions, disease prevention, taste/color/size of the head). I'd say seed ordering is a complicated algebra problem that may serve as a better problem solving question for students than the usual train and baseball questions (such as: If it takes 20,000 seeds per ounce to seed 1 acre, how many seeds do we need to order for 5 plantings of 2 beds each? One bed is 300 feet long, and each planting uses a 3 row seeder. We determined we'd need 5 plantings since we'll need 200 bunches per week for 3 weeks, plus roots for bulk storage. What's the answer?)

While we had wanted leeks to reach boxes this week, the ground is now hardened, holding their roots like cement into the soil. We're watching the weather closely hoping for a warm up so we  
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# Recipes! Recipes! Recipes!

## Russian Beetroot And Cabbage Soup (Borscht)

[www.cookitsimply.com](http://www.cookitsimply.com)

1 pound raw beets (beetroot)  
1 small cabbage or half large cabbage  
1 carrot  
1 leek  
1 medium-sized potato  
1 cup celeriac  
1 1/2 oz (40 g) butter  
12 oz (350 g) boiling beef (e.g. top rump or leg)  
1 thick slice smoked streaky bacon  
1/4 lb fresh or drained tinned tomatoes  
1 bay leaf  
2 tbsp chopped fresh dill  
7 fl oz (200 ml) soured cream or smetana  
1 tbsp red wine vinegar  
salt and black peppercorns

1. Trim, wash and dry all the vegetables. Peel the beetroot, reserving 4 oz (100 g) in weight and cut all the rest, and the cabbage, carrot, leek and celery into strips. Dice the peeled potatoes.
2. Heat the butter in a stockpot or a very large, deep, enamelled cast iron casserole dish and fry the vegetables in it gently for about 15 minutes, stirring frequently. Add 2 pints (1.2 litres) water, the chopped, seeded tomatoes and the beef.
3. Add the bay leaf, bacon, a few black peppercorns and 3/4 tsp coarse sea salt. Bring to the boil, skimming off any scum that rises to the surface, then turn down the heat to very low and simmer very gently for 3 hours, or until the beef is extremely tender.
4. Cut the reserved raw beetroot into small pieces and grate finely, place in a piece of muslin and twist tightly to force out all the juice, collecting this in a small bowl.
5. Stir in a pinch of salt and the vinegar. Take the beef and bacon out of the soup, spearing them with a carving fork and cut into strips.
6. Return these to the soup. Add a little salt if necessary and freshly ground black pepper to taste. Draw aside from the heat, stir in the raw beetroot juice and vinegar mixture and immediately ladle into individual soup bowls.
7. Place 1 - 1 1/2 tbsp chilled soured cream in the centre of each serving

**Smoky Turnip Soup**—From MACSAC's [From Asparagus to Zucchini: A guide to farm-fresh seasonal produce.](#) Serves 6.

2 pounds turnips, peeled and quartered  
1 medium onion, chopped  
1 medium carrot, peeled and quartered  
3 Tbsp butter or margarine  
9 cups vegetable stock  
2 Tbsp fresh parsley, chopped  
1 cup brown rice  
2 Tbsp liquid-smoke seasoning  
Salt & pepper to taste  
1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Place turnips, onion and carrot in a large soup pot and saute in butter. Add stock and parsley, simmer for 15 minutes. Add rice and liquid smoke, cook another 20 minutes or until turnips and rice are cooked and tender. Add salt & pepper. Top servings with parmesan cheese.

## Crispy Fried Cabbage—[www.cookitsimply.com](http://www.cookitsimply.com)

1 small, firm green or white cabbage  
1 medium onion, peeled  
2 tsp oil  
2 oz butter  
1 tbsp caraway seeds  
sea salt and freshly ground pepper

1. Trim the cabbage, removing the outer leaves and core. Quarter and shred it. Wash in icy water, then drain.
2. Slice the onion.
3. Heat the oil and butter in a heavy saute pan, large frying pan, or wok.
4. When very hot, stir in the cabbage, onion and caraway seeds.
5. Stir-fry for 5 to 10 minutes until crisp and brown.
6. Add salt and pepper to taste.
7. Turn out into a warmed serving dish and serve immediately.

## Rutabaga Waldorf Salad

The Ontario Rutabaga Producers' Marketing Board

1 Tbsp lemon juice  
1/4 cup mayonnaise  
1/2 cup coarsely grated raw rutabaga  
1 cup shredded cabbage  
1 cup diced red apples (unpeeled)  
1/4 cup raisins  
1/4 cup peanuts

Combine lemon juice and mayonnaise. Just before serving, toss all ingredients. Serves 4.

## News from the Farm...continued

can all enjoy the sweet onion flavor of leeks once more before winter truly wraps her arms around us. So with the leek vacancy in the box, we contacted our friends and neighbors at Driftless Organics for the potatoes. We haven't grown potatoes since 2005, a very dry summer, when we hand dug spuds. We hung up the bent forks after that harvest season and vowed that we'd need more efficient harvest equipment before we'd grow them again for the CSA. We're glad to have neighbors that DO have the capability to harvest these tasty potatoes. Enjoy!

While shopping lists, baking, holiday parties and home decorations seem to dominate people's December days, may you find time this week to reflect or meditate for a moment at something beautiful, that inspires you, that stirs your heart or makes you ponder on the wonders of life. May it be the beauty of a turnip, the smell of something cooking, or the brilliant night sky....Happy December, Cate

## Bulletin Board

**Last week was the first of your four winter share boxes. Delivery continues now each Wednesday. The last box delivery is Wednesday, December 17.**