In the Share

- Butternut Squash, 1 piece
- Broccoli, 1 bunch/large head
- Carrots, 1 bag
- Sweet Potatoes, 1 bag
- Spinach or Salad Mix, 1 bag
- Leeks, 1 bunch
- Popcorn, 1 bundle
- Lettuce, 1 head
- Choice of Herb, 1 bunch
- Shallots, 3 pieces
- Garlic, 2 small bulbs
- Ristra, 1 string
- 1 Jack-o-lantern OR 4 gourds

Claire’s Comments

Winter Work

Many members wonder what we do in the winter. Clearly we cannot be growing food with snow on the ground! One of the things I really like about farming is that my work changes so much from season to season. Though I do get tired of particular tasks, it is never long before whatever it is I’m sick of is done for another year and I’m on to something new. It could be as simple as the transition from picking peas to picking beans, or as dramatic as moving inside to the computer after eight months of being outside with the soil. There is always something new to do, some new challenge to figure out. There is certainly no time for boredom in farming!

This winter transition has many things in store. The biggest new adventure will be moving into our greenhouse (at last!). Though we hoped to move in long ago, there have been innumerable problems with our builder, only one of which has been delays. Though the builder is still working on fixing leaks and other issues (we hope), Jake and I will be moving into the growing beds over the next few weeks. After the soil is in place, we will plant herbs and learn about winter greenhouse production. We will also be building a germination chamber for the greenhouse as well as soil sifting and mixing stations for spring bedding plants. It is all very exciting and there is much to learn. It will be great to work with plants and soil even in the wintertime, inside our warm passive solar greenhouse.

The greenhouse will be a relatively small part of my winter work, however. Mostly I will be at my computer working on the farm plan for the next year, ordering seeds, getting our organic certification paperwork in order, developing a catalogue and labels for the new bedding plant business we hope to start in the spring, updating the intern training manual (and adding pictures!), developing new and improved intern classes, and also just catching up on all the e-mails and admin work that have fallen through the cracks over the growing season. I take time to clean out my files, update the spreadsheets I use for tracking memberships, invoices, hours, etc. and generally try to get set up well for spring, when time for admin tasks drops to a minimum again.

Except for the greenhouse, none of the winter work is really what people think of when they think “farming.” Even so, without time spent on those tasks, we could never pull off a successful growing season. I’m not a “seat-of-the-pants” sort of manager, so I take great pains with winter plans, looking for ways to improve all the aspects of our farm operation from growing melons (I plan to give this crop special attention in 2011) to training interns. By setting up goals and procedures in the winter, we are much better positioned to actually improve what we do from year to year. I like that part of farming as well. No matter what we have accomplished, there is always more to learn and a clean slate to work with when the ground thaws and the planting begins again.

Many thanks for being part of our CSA this year! We hope to see you again next year!
Curried Lentils with Butternut Squash

1 cup dry lentils  Other spices to taste (curry powder, turmeric, coriander, salt, etc.)
1 small butternut squash 1 tsp. cayenne powder
1 Tbs. coconut oil 1 tsp. grated ginger root
1 tsp. each cumin seed, coriander seed, and fennel seed
½ Tbs. ground black pepper
¼ cup shredded coconut (optional)

Grease a two-quart baking dish with cooking spray and set aside. Pour the lentils into a deep pot and cover with cold water. Bring the water to boil, reduce the heat, and add raw chunks of the squash (leave the skin on!).

Simmer until the squash is soft – about a half hour (be careful not to over cook, or the squash and lentils get too mushy.) Remove the pot from the heat, drain, and set aside. With tongs, pull out the chunks of squash and mash them roughly, skins and all.

Heat the oil on medium heat in a skillet and add in the cumin, coriander, and fennel seed, and the grated ginger root. Cook until seeds pop (but be careful not to burn them).

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. In a large bowl, mix the lentils and mashed squash with the cooked spices. Add cayenne pepper and other spices to taste. Spoon the mixture into the baking dish. Bake until hot – about 20 minutes. Serve warm, garnished with shredded coconut. Serves 4.

Sweet Potato Chowder

2 Tbs. butter  ½ tsp. ground black pepper
1 large onion, chopped  6 cups vegetable stock
1 Tbs. sugar  4 to 7 sweet potatoes, cut in 1-inch cubes
2 tsp. thyme 1 cup corn kernels
2 bay leaves 1 cup heavy cream
1 tsp. salt 1 tsp. minced garlic

Melt butter in large stockpot and add onion and sugar and caramelize until tender. Add thyme, bay leaves, salt, pepper, and stir. Add stock, sweet potatoes, and corn. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer until potatoes are tender (about 20 minutes). Stir in heavy cream. Remove bay leaves, and puree about half the soup until smooth. Return all to pot and add garlic. Enjoy!

(continued from “In the Share”)

There are a few decorative items in the share this week. The first is the popcorn bundle. Though we are not very good at growing sweet corn, popcorn does well for us. You will have some combination of yellow, red, and/or blue popcorn in your bundle. The kernels themselves still need to dry for a few weeks before they will pop well, so we bundle them together to be hung as decoration until then. When you are ready to pop the corn (which could be anywhere from several weeks to a year from now) rub the kernels from the cobs with your thumbs. Then pop them as you would any other popcorn.

The ristra is both food and decoration as well. A ristra is just a string of dry or drying peppers and can be made with many different types of hot peppers. Your ristra is made from super chilies, which are the hottest peppers we grow. Like the popcorn, the ristra should be hung and allowed to dry before using. Once it is dry, you can pull individual peppers from the string for use throughout the coming year. The interns have been looking forward to making the ristras ever since we harvested the peppers right before the frost. Once we go going, westrung close to 4000 peppers in just a few hours. It was fun.

The last decoration in the share is just that. I would not recommend eating either the jack-o-lantern or the gourds. Though, I suppose you could roast the pumpkin seeds if you carve your jack-o-lantern!

Shallots are a new and unusual item as well. It seems to me those that use shallots in their cooking love them and would never replace them with their near kin garlic or onions. Eggs and salad dressings are popular recipes for shallots. I hope you enjoy experimenting with yours.

All the other items in the share this week will be familiar to you. The sweet potatoes in your bag will have a few cut ends, just like last time. Those cuts are where we sliced off damage or blemishes to save the largest potatoes. The cuts are dry and healed now, so just make a fresh cut to remove the dry end before using. See the recipes on the left for using up both sweet potatoes and butternut squash.

Next week: Don’t forget to pickup the bonus share! It will be harvested, packed, and delivered by our interns and is shaping up into a nice share. There will be squash, leeks, beets or carrots, Brussels sprouts, radishes, a choice of greens, more broccoli if the heads keep growing, and another item or two.

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