**In the Share**

Broccoli/Cauliflower, see signs  
Scallions, 1 bunch  
Beets, 1 bunch  
Green & Yellow Beans, 1 bag  
Summer Squash, 5 pieces  
Cucumbers, 5 pieces  
Fennel, 2 bulbs  
Butterhead Lettuce, 1 head  
Basil, 1 bunch

The good news is there are many excellent vegetables in your share this week – and most of them are familiar and easy to use! The bad news is there are no peas.

As you have heard me say before, the strangely cool and snowy weather of mid- and late- April did a job on some of our earliest crops. Unfortunately, peas are in that group. In order for them to do well, they must go in late enough so that the soil is warm enough for them to germinate, but also early enough so that they have a chance to mature before the real heat of the summer hits. This season was the exact wrong combination for peas. The soil was so cold when they needed to be planted that they did not germinate well; and now the weather is too hot for them to mature many peas. There will be a few peas available bulk this week and there will also be a few on the farm stand, but there were not nearly enough to include in your shares. It is a good thing that we can try again next season for these sweet treats.

Luckily, there is a great deal of good news to take away the sting of the bad. My most favorite item in the share today is the full pound of beans. I just love them. They are simple, delicious, and for the next few weeks, plentiful. My very favorite way to eat them is steamed and topped with just a bit of butter. YUM. I could eat a dinner plate full. So, I grow them because I like to eat them. I also grow them because other folks like to eat them. We have many CSA members and market customers who are unfailingly loyal to our beans. Still I am always hoping to win more converts. So, at market I sample them out to customers and many a one has to buy them after that taste. Last year one woman said she already had a bag full of beans in her fridge, but she still wanted ours because they were so good! She made my back feel instantly better with that one comment.

I often ask myself this question as I am stooped over the row, picking bean after bean for hours. Search through the leaves, find the beans, visually sort out the ones that are too small, sort out the ones that are too big and toss them on the ground, pick the rest one-by-one. Next plant. I have a lot of time to think as I make my way down the row, bean-by-bean, plant-by-plant. Thinking or talking with a fellow bean picker helps take my mind off the ache in my back. And moving my eyes and hands as fast as possible helps move me forward to when I can stand up straight again. While picking beans this week, I couldn’t help but think about what I was doing and why I bother.

I started by remembering picking beans when I was growing up. I didn’t much like it then. My parents did not grow a very large garden, but they often had tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers and green beans. And they were smart enough to make sure that the kids did the green bean harvest. I remember moving slowly down the row with my paper bag scraping along the ground as I filled it with beans, my sister next to me on her own row. “Can we stop when we get half a bag?” “Can we stop when we get to the end of this row?” My mom or dad always said we could stop when we finished the job, keep picking. I cannot recall for sure, but I don’t think that we always did the most thorough job on the beans. We liked the part where we got to sit on the porch and snack the ends a whole lot better. And even after all that work, we still managed to love the eating of green beans.

I still love eating beans. That is definitely part of why I grow them. I would not be able to tolerate the amount of work that goes into them if I did not love them. And my favorite way to eat them is still steamed with a little butter. YUM. I could eat a dinner plate full. So, I grow them because I like to eat them. I also grow them because other folks like to eat them. We have many CSA members and market customers who are unfailingly loyal to our beans. Still I am always hoping to win more converts. So, at market I sample them out to customers and many a one has to buy them after that taste. Last year one woman said she already had a bag full of beans in her fridge, but she still wanted ours because they were so good! She made my back feel instantly better with that one comment.

In the end I guess it’s really that simple: Grow beans because they are so good. As far as green beans, we only grow one variety, the best one! It is called Maxibel and it is the most tender and delicious bean I have ever found. You also have a taste of an excellent yellow bean, Roccor. I hope you enjoy your beans this week. We are still on just our very first planting, so there will be many more beans to come!

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**Claire’s Comments**

I first wrote this piece on beans in 2002, Troy’s first year for the CSA. I’ve brought it back a couple of times since then, with some seasonal updates, because I’m still so in love with this vegetable. For those of you who have read it before, it will not be quite as fresh as the beans in your bag. Rather, I hope it is more like a special dish you eat just once a year.

**Why Grow Green Beans?**

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**Vegetable Vodka Infusions**

from Laura Jasiczek

Although Jim and I have tried infusing many of the things harvested on the farm, fennel, beets, and cucumbers seem to have worked out the best. All three make great infusions to drink neat or on the rocks.

- Fennel imparts a nice anise flavor to vodka making it Ouzo-like. It’s nice straight out of the freezer, served neat for sipping.
- Beets, of course, give you a beautiful, dark red infusion and add a sweetness to the vodka. You can play around with that one and mix it with some different things to serve it martini-style. One recipe I found online that sounds simple, but good was: Lucy Brennan’s Ruby http://imbibemagazine.blogspot.com/2007/03/taste-of-lucy-brennan.html.
- Cucumber vodka is very refreshing and, again, I think it’s best straight out of the freezer.

Making infusions is very simple. Just cut up your veggies and put them into whatever size container of vodka you prefer and add vodka to the top. I recommend starting smaller, to see if you like it. I also recommend using grain vodka. Although I personally think potato vodka is smoother on it’s own, it seems to give too much flavor to infusions, while grain vodka is a bit cleaner. We’ve had good luck with Svedka, as an inexpensive, but decent mid-range vodka. Most infusions are ready after about 3 days, but feel free to sample and go shorter or longer, depending on the strength of flavor you prefer. Just set out on the counter until ready, then remove veggies and pop in the freezer for refreshing, chilled drinks!

**More Ideas for Fennel and Beets**

If you prefer to eat your veggies, instead of drink them, I think fennel and beets are both great pizza toppers! You can pick up ready-made dough at both the Co-op and Roman Candle for cheap and throw together a pizza quickly and easily. If you want to go fancy, a little pesto, fennel, beets, walnuts and goat cheese make an excellent pizza.

For simpler uses, fennel is good brushed with some olive oil and grilled or broiled briefly, in the oven. Beets are also great roasted with a little olive oil (and maybe teriyaki and/or honey) or dry-roasted.