In the Share

Cherry Tomatoes, 91-107 & 1-35
Delicata Squash, 1 piece
Edamame, 1 bag
Green Bean OR Green Cabbage, 1
Carrots, 1 bag or bunch
Collards, 1 bunch
Choice of Sprout, 1 bag
Summer Squash, 3 pieces
Choice of Herb, 1 bunch
Garlic, 1 bulb
Tomatoes, see signs on crates

Though we had to harvest the delicata squash this week, we did hesitate to actually put it in your share. The beginning of the winter squash harvest is a sure sign of fall; but in my opinion actually eating a winter squash pushes the point. We decided to include them because they are truly lovely right now, some of the best delicata we have ever harvested. For those of you that are ready to welcome the fall, the delicata make for good eating right after the harvest. And for those of you who are not ready to dig into the fall fare, these squash should keep for a couple of months.

Whenever you decide to eat it, you have a number of choices. You can cut it in half lengthwise, scoop out the seeds, stuff it with your favorite stuffing, and bake it in the oven. You can slice it into rounds, remove the seeds, and bake it. Or you can even cut it into cubes and steam it. In all cases you can tell it is done when the skin is easy to puncture with a fork. Though you can remove the flesh from the skin when it is done as you would do with most other winter squash, delicata is the one squash that I eat skin and all. For those of you who have not yet tried a delicata, you are in for a treat! (continued on the back)

Claire’s Comments

I recently had dinner with my old friend Rob and he asked why I have not written about the bees yet this year. He reminded me how much folks like to hear about these fascinating insects. So, today, a Bee Report.

As many of you know from previous years, we keep between 4 and 8 beehives at the farm. Sarah and I manage the apiary together and work on building our skills each year through various classes and projects. This spring we took a class with Marla Spivak at the University of Minnesota to learn the “horizontal two queen system.” Spivak is well known among beekeepers and recently won the McArthur “Genius” Award for her work with hygienic bees.

Sarah and I decided before going to the class that our focus this year would be on getting our bees to just live through the winter. Though I had good luck with overwintering when I first started beekeeping, we have not had a hive survive the winter at the farm in a number of years. Overwintering is important not only because it saves the beekeeper from having to buy new bees each year, but also because an overwintered hive is much better equipped to make a surplus of honey. The “horizontal two queen system” is all about getting maximum honey production from overwintered hives. Here’s how it works:

1. In the first year, the bees are allowed to fill five hive boxes with brood and honey. The beekeeper does not take any honey and makes sure the bees are healthy going into winter.
2. Over the first winter the bees eat the honey they stored and come into the spring strong and healthy.
3. In the second spring, the overwintered hive builds up population and begins to make honey. When the population again fills about three boxes, the beekeeper takes a split. That means we leave the overwintered queen in her hive with most of the bees, but take away one box of bees and start a new hive, a split. That split also needs a queen (there is one queen per hive and she lays all the eggs to make new bees). There are many ways to get a queen. We decided to let the split raise their own from eggs that we moved into the split with the brood.
4. After the split raises a queen, we have a parent hive (with the overwintered queen) and a new hive (with the new queen). The new hive in its first year gathers honey for overwintering, just like the parent hive did the year before. And the parent hive, now in its second year, makes honey for us!

This system is called “horizontal two queen” because the parent hive and the split are managed as one hive in terms of total honey production. They sit side by side (horizontally) and they each have a queen (two queen). Spivak sited studies showing that this system has far greater total honey production than managing a hive in the traditional way or with the “vertical two queen system,” which I will leave for another day.

Sarah and I were able to overwinter the hive that we have in our backyard, so we have been managing that one with this new system. Though we still have a few kinks to work out, in general is working wonderfully! So, we do expect to have a little bit of honey to sell this fall. All the hives at the farm are still in their first year, so our goal is to overwinter three of those hives, plus the one in the backyard and go into next year with four parent hives making honey.
Edamame is the other new item in the share this week and is a perennial favorite with CSA members. These fuzzy green/brown pods are fresh soybeans. My favorite way to eat them is still the way I was first introduced to them many years ago at a party. First, bring a pot of salted water to a boil. Add the edamame and cook for 5 to 6 minutes. Test the edamame for doneness at that point. The beans inside the pod should be firm, but should also give to the teeth. If the beans get mushy, they are overcooked. Once they have reached your desired texture, pour them out into a colander to drain away the water. Then serve them in a bowl with a little course salt sprinkled on top. To eat, pull the pods through your teeth to extract the beans directly into your mouth with a taste of the salt from the pod.

You have just a half-pound taste of edamame this week. I expect that you will have even more next week and the week after that. The crop looks great right now.

Tomatoes are coming on strong this week! Today is the peak of the harvest. Unfortunately, the plants are also getting tired so we have many more seconds than firsts. Still, what the plants have lost in quality, they are making up for in quantity. And luckily the cracks and blemishes do not affect their flavor!

Coming next week: More tomatoes, edamame, and scallions. Also possibly more winter squash and the first of the fall lettuce.