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THE WSU ORGANIC STANDARD

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Behind the Scenes of our CSA

Despite the continued rain, hail, and mud we've pushed ahead with the summer plantings for the farm. Last week saw the pumpkins, watermelon, summer squash, pickling cucumbers, and first sweet corn go in the ground. We've got another couple weeks of big plantings before everything is in and then it's just a matter of weeding, harvesting, and enjoying the summer crops!

I had a request from one of the CSA members to discuss in the newsletter how we make some of our decisions regarding the CSA. This is a great opportunity to talk about the details and shed some light for everyone about the "behind the scenes" CSA work. The detail in question was how we decide on the number of shares to sell each season. When we first started the CSA back in 2005 the number of shares was determined by how much money I needed to raise to cover our budget that year. After studying the "going rate" for CSA shares in the Northwest and figuring on what crops we could grow and how many weeks we can offer those crops a CSA plan was developed. We offered two sizes of shares that first year to add flexibility to the business and after selling 85 total shares we reached our budget needs for that first year. Our CSA program was initiated to help cover the costs of the teaching program as WSU was not offering any financial support at the beginning of the project. Over time we've gained more support from the university but still rely heavily on the income from our farm sales to cover the operating expenses of the farm and continue our teaching efforts.

That first year had BIG learning curve! (Thanks to everyone who stuck with us.) We were only using about 1 ½ acres of the 3 we started with

and learned quickly how to determine how much of each crop we needed to grow for a certain number of members. Planning for a CSA farm is similar to one that would sell at a farmer's market but with much more attention to numbers of plants, bed feet of crop, and timing of plantings to ensure a consistent supply of product for a certain number of customers. Over the years we've grown the CSA in number of members and in the size of planted acres. This year we have 110 members: 34 Large and 76 Regular. We cultivate 3 full acres and maintain a fourth acre of roads and pathways around the farm. We've increased the number of members by about 5 each year as the demand for our CSA has grown yet we still turn away interested customers each season.

While we could add more members to the CSA we try to take any extra produce we grow to the Pullman Farmer's Market and actually grow more of certain crops specifically for Southside Dining Hall on campus. This is an easier way for the farm to diversify our sales without growing more of every crop that goes into the CSA. Another very important consideration is balancing our teaching duties with farming efforts. The teaching program is the farm's first priority and thus deserves time and attention that ultimately takes away from more concentrated farming.

I hope this helps give a better understanding of our program and we would welcome more requests for newsletter topics. It's nice to hear from our members and bring light to your questions or topics of interest.

--Brad Jaeckel



Hello!

New to this week's box is Napa cabbage! Napa cabbage is a different species to the more common—and more spherical—red and green cabbages. They're closely related to Bok Choy and are similar in shape—elongated with compact, crinkly and ruffled leaves. To me, Napa cabbages look more delicate, and taste more delicate than other types of cabbages, too. Mild and slightly sweet, Napa cabbage can be braised, added to broth soups, and enjoyed raw. Simply cut lengthwise, remove the core, and thinly slice each half. Unwashed and stored in a closed plastic bag in the fridge, Napa cabbage will keep for a week. This week's recipe is cool and crispy, perfect for the more summery weather that's finally coming our way!

-Jamaica

Spring Rolls

This recipe will make about 20 rolls, so half or double accordingly.

4 cups Napa cabbage, cored and sliced thin
1 cups carrot, shredded or julienned
1 cup green onions or scallions, julienned
½ cup fresh basil, mint or cilantro leaves, shredded
2 oz. oriental vermicelli (bean thread noodles)
juice of 1 lime
~20 rice wrappers

Prepare the vegetables and herbs, and cook the noodles according to package instructions, then chop noodles to be a few inches long. Toss noodles and veggies together with lime juice.

Fill a flat pan with about an inch of warm water. Soak the wrappers, one wrapper at a time for about 15 seconds, until softened. Spread the wrapper on a hard surface, such as a plastic cutting board or metal cookie sheet. Place about a ¼ cup of the vegetable mixture on the bottom ⅓ of the wrapper. Fold the bottom of the wrapper up over the filling. Fold the sides in, then tightly roll up the remainder. Set aside and repeat with the other wrappers until the filling is used up.

These are very good dipped in sweet chili sauce or Coconut Peanut Sauce.

Coconut Peanut Sauce (from Cynthia Lair's, Feeding the Whole Family)

¼ cup creamy peanut butter
2 teaspoons maple syrup
1 tablespoons tamari or shoyu
1 tablespoon brown rice vinegar
2 teaspoons grated ginger
1-2 teaspoons hot pepper oil
½ cup coconut milk.

Combine all ingredients in a small saucepan and cook over low heat, whisking together until smooth. Makes about 1 cup.