

# CSA Newsletter, Week 1 of 20

June 11, 2007

This is a Healthy Alternative 'A' week.

Greetings from Tim, Beth, Bronwyn, and Bob! Welcome to week 1 of our CSA! We are looking forward to a great season providing you with the best produce that we can grow. Each week we will send you an update telling you what's coming and what options, if any, you have to choose from.

We are doing many things differently this year. We have almost twice the number of subscribers as last year, which means we have to streamline the process considerably in order to make things run smoothly.

## Delivery Subscribers

Last year, the e-mail ordering of extras for delivery subscribers did not work well. It took several hours each week of Farmer Tim's time to try to put together the list—and that was time not spent out in the field growing wonderful produce. So this year delivery subscribers will not get to choose extras. Instead we will provide more items in your bag and there will be a swap box at each drop point. We will put a few items in the swap box at the beginning of each day so that those who pick up early still have some choices.

Swap box rules:

1. You have to make a deposit before you make a withdrawal.
2. You can only deposit one item per week. (We want to encourage you to try new things.)
3. You may make a deposit without making a withdrawal.

Deliveries will be made in waxed produce cartons instead of bags in coolers. Since there will be no special orders, there will be no names on the boxes. Everyone will get one box. There will also be some Veggie Lover's boxes containing their additional items. Note that Veggie Lovers will need to take *two* boxes. We do ask that you return your boxes every week so we can reuse them.

## Farm Pick-Up

Many of you have already visited us at our new location—at the Heritage Prairie Market (HPM). This is Tim and Beth's joint venture with Bronwyn Weaver and Bob Archibald. Heritage Prairie Market is located at 2N308 Brundige Rd. Brundige runs between Rte. 38 and Kessler Rd., two miles west of Randall. If that isn't explicit enough for you, you can Map Quest it or go to the HPM web site at [www.hpmfarm.com](http://www.hpmfarm.com) and click on Directions/Map.

Heritage Prairie Market carries a very good selection of local, naturally produced, foods. Subscribers get a 10% discount on all food items in the store. We still have a good selection of plants: herbs, heirloom tomatoes, container tomatoes, sweet bell peppers, ornamental peppers, and decorative annuals.

We will have an herb cutting garden at the new location, so you can still cut your own herbs. The garden is not fully planted yet, mostly due to some germination failures, but by the third week or so we should have a full selection. And in addition to the ever popular Bucky the Farm Dog (who will be on a leash as we can't break him of wanting to retrieve the chickens), Bob and Bronwyn have a host of farm animals. There are paths for wandering and inviting little nooks for sitting and enjoying the fresh air and sunshine (or shade) or for gathering and chatting to other subscribers.

Please note that HPM is a working farm. While it is more visitor-friendly than our old Mongerson pick-up location, it is still a farm. Thus it is full of potential dangers. Many of the animals are large, and even though they are all friendly and people oriented, a horse is still a very big animal and needs to be treated with respect. Even chickens, while smaller, have sharp beaks and claws. There will often be tools and equipment standing around that children should not be playing with. So please do not leave your small children unattended, make sure your older children understand the farm rules and will abide by them, and under no circumstances try to enter a stall or paddock that contains animals unless accompanied by a farm employee. There are many fun things here to see and do, but this can continue only as long as we all exist together in harmony and mutual respect for people, animals, plants, and tools.

## Subscriber Events

We had our first subscriber event of the season in May—a Subscriber/Farmer potluck. It was well attended and enjoyed by all who came. We plan to offer more of these events this year. We have not set dates yet, but will be doing so this week and plan to get the schedule in next week's newsletter.

We hope you enjoy the Erehwon/Heritage Prairie Market experience this year.

## Farm Report

*by Farmer Tim*

We appear to be off to a good start this season and hope to provide a good basket of produce for our subscribers each week. We have nearly completed our first round of planting at the Mongerson Farm (site of last year's CSA pickup) and should get our watermelon patch in over the next week or so. Our garlic plants look the best ever and we should have a great quantity from an expected early July harvest. We are trying for some early tomatoes and have planted about two hundred plants in our two plastic covered hoop houses and the vines are now from two to four feet tall with some small tomatoes already visible. We have one concern about continued pollination of the plants

inside the hoop house because there's not much of a breeze inside to spread the pollen unless we have an east or west wind. We have a design for a wind funnel for each end of the house to capture and speed wind from other directions but we don't have time to work on it right now. We're hoping that Bron can convince her bees to go in and get the job done. If not, we'll get out our electric toothbrush and vibrate all the flower clusters to get the reproductive process going. I can hear the snickering from our subscribers who are visualizing the activities going on inside the hoop house. You're welcome to see this operation – it's just a few feet east of the goat pen. (And would you jostle a few flower clusters as you walk through? ☺)

A second generation of Colorado potato beetles has hatched at Mongerson and boy, are those little guys hungry! We tried picking them off by hand and squeezing them with our fingers but some of our workers are quite disgusted with having little globs of brown spew all over their clothes. Technology to the rescue! We purchased a Dirt Devil "Extreme Power" 15.6 Volt Cordless Hand Vac, set it a maximum power with the extension fully deployed, and "Iron Woman" (more about that later) Steph Sexton buzzed down the row, sucking the little buggers down the chute and into the bag. Then over to Heritage Prairie where we emptied the bag into the chicken pen. The chickens were a little tentative at first but soon all the little crawlers had been snapped up. A good system, I think.

**Konen Farm:** Mike Konen is growing most of our large plant crops: broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, summer squash, winter squash, sweet corn, tomatoes, gourds, pumpkins, and potatoes, plus some free-range chickens at his organic farm near Sugar Grove. He can only do a little irrigation, so the recent rains have really helped to get things growing. The broccoli looks very good and we should have some in two to three weeks. He has made three plantings of sweet corn and we are already salivating over the first harvest.

**Iron Women Farm Team:** This year, as last year, we have a great team of long-distance commuters from Chicago that come out two to five days a week to work on the farm. Shaye Cohn, Monica Mueller, Cassandra Orr, and Steph Sexton ride their bikes to a downtown Metra Station, load their bikes on the train, get off at the La Fox station and pedal to the farm. (Sarah Harmon, who manages the farm store and is a genius at developing new food products, is also a member of this team, cruising down from Silver Glen Rd. on her 10-speed. Sarah is also training for a marathon in the fall!) This has to be an environmentally sound system! Plus, these guys are in great shape and I swear they are such voracious weeders that the thistles in the permanent beds just get up and walk away when they see them coming down the row!

There have been, however, a couple of minor hitches to their travels. First, some drivers seem to have missed the part of driver training class which teaches that bicyclists have a right to the full lane on most roads and should not be yelled at, honked at, or cut in front of, all actions which make their commute more difficult – so if you spot one of our workers on Route 38 around 8:00 in the morning or around 4:00 in the afternoon, please give them some room and cheer them on! Second, Metra has a policy of not allowing bikes on many days when there are festivals in Chicago but they don't seem to advertise

this fact ahead of time and they are not consistent in administering the policy. This week Shaye got on a train and Cassandra got booted off. Steph got on a westbound train to the farm but got booted off coming back and had to leave her bike at the farm. So, if anyone of our subscribers happens to be a Metra executive or knows a Metra executive, could we get a little help for our biking commuters? An Iron Woman special bike pass? After all, Chicago wants to be the leading green city in America and this would help. ☺

**Compost:** We are serious about our request for subscribers to bring us compostable items to be added to our compost pile or to be spread directly on our fields as mulch. This helps us increase field fertility, reduces land fill use, and may save you money if your city charges money to remove yard waste. Most yard waste and kitchen scraps are acceptable except woody branches over ½” in diameter, chemically treated lawn clippings, dog and cat litter, meat and oil products, and weeds that have gone to seed. Just bring any sort of bag and leave outside the gate on pickup days. (Note that we carry bio-bags in the store which are compostable as is—no need to use a petroleum-based plastic bag. We have all three sizes—yard bag, tall kitchen bag, and composter. We also sell counter-top composters that will look attractive on your counter while controlling the smell and flies.) Delivery customers can accumulate waste and bring to the farm when they come for a visit.

Bags left at HPM: This week: 0 Last week: 0 ☹

**Volunteers:** We continue to get great help from our volunteers. This week our Wednesday regulars (Rockin’) Robin Migalla and Steve Trisko helped with a number of tasks including weeding and hilling potatoes, planting tomatoes. Lauren Ginn worked with the crew all of Friday. (Lauren, is it true that washing lettuce was your favorite activity? ;-). Jenny Gresko has also been out several times this season. Phil Rockenbach came out Saturday morning and helped weed and hill potatoes – good conversation made the time fly! If you would like to help, we can promise you anything from a full body workout (I serve as your personal trainer) to a relaxing sit in the field with some good conversation (chairs provided). You may show up any Wednesday after 9 in the morning or email me with a specific day and time and I’ll put you to work.

We will start having monthly volunteer parties as well. Next week’s newsletter we’ll start giving you some dates.

## **CSA Produce Forecast**

*by Farmer Tim*

In this part of the newsletter we try to give you an idea of what may be found in your boxes this week. Note that for the first two to three weeks we may have a limited selection of items and there may not be enough of some things to give to everyone. As in the past, Veggie Lovers will get the first picking of each item (like tomatoes) if there is not enough to go around. Also, this is a forecast and can change overnight based on

weather and pests. (Luckily we missed the large hail and 80 mph winds forecast for Thursday!) You also may note some tiny holes in the leaves of some produce, especially greens. While we try to produce cosmetically good produce, there are some pests, like flea beetles, that are very difficult to eradicate without great expense and the use of icky chemicals. We ask subscribers to be patient while we work on these problems. We try to put subscribers first for limited items, but we also need to carry a small supply of them in the store. So if you see something in the store but it's not on the distribution table, remember, you may buy it at a subscriber discount in the store.

**This week** we should have herbs, lettuce, spinach, chinese cabbage, savoy cabbage, green onions, sugar snap peas, mibuna, swiss chard, a few strawberries and maybe another item or two. We also may include a potted herb or heirloom tomato plant. Some weeks we hope to designate an area (strawberry, cherry tomato, raspberry, bean or other hard-to-pick crop) for subscriber U-Pick for those with lots of energy, good hand/eye coordination and patiencs (characteristics that are gradually fading from my list of capabilities!). When you come to the farm, look for a tub of discarded produce next to the chicken corral and throw out something for the chickens to nibble on! Cackle, cackle... Alternatively, you can hike out to the goat pen and throw some greens to the goats.

**Next week** we could add kohlrabi, kale, and zucchini which have been flowering for a couple of weeks, have no cucumber beetles (yea!) and are showing tiny babies.

## Heritage Prairie Happenings

*by Beth Propst*

### Turkeys to order

Cindee Robinson from Belvidere is raising some free range turkeys for us, but they need to be ordered ahead of time. We haven't determined the exact price yet, but it will be between \$4.00 and \$5.00 per pound. Turkeys should be between 12 and 16 pounds. Let us know what size you would like when you order, and we will try to give you the exact size. In order to reserve your turkey, you need to make a \$15.00 deposit.

There will also be a limited number of heritage breed turkeys available. The price for these will be slightly higher. But the deposit is still the same.

In addition to the bugs and grass they scrounge on their own, Cindee feeds her turkeys a mixture of ground corn, roasted soybeans, oats, flax, fish meal, calcium, grit, probiotic (Nutri-balancer), and kelp.

Order now, because we will open this to regular store customers this week.

**Farm Store**

Sarah Harmon, who works in our store and is a member of the Iron Woman Farm Team (see above), is helping us develop new products. Try her flax-based veggie crackers or her flavored sunflowers seeds (great on a salad).

Sarah is also our very own Green Queen—she has shamed Bronwyn and myself into buying compostable bags for the store. Sarah’s crackers are now sold in corn-based, compostable plastic bags, so when you are finished with them you can put them in your composter or bring them back to the farm with your compostable materials (see above). We will be investigating more and more earth-friendly products and methods over time.

This year we are drying or freezing unsold items from the store before they go bad. So far, we have dried mushrooms, onions, and herbs and plan to do many more things as the season progresses. We hope to put together some soup mixes using our own ingredients so people can eat local even in January. If you have any ideas, we would love to hear them.

## Pages from *Grandma Beth's Cookbook*

by *Beth Propst*

I grew up learning to cook by tasting. Unless she was baking, my mother never measured anything. She would taste it and decide whether it needed more pepper or thyme or whatever. My grandmother cooked the same way. So do I. Even if I am using a recipe, it is just to get a sense of what ingredients to include and relative quantities. My mother was also known for making up or modifying recipes on the spur of the moment based on what was available in the fridge and the pantry. I do the same. Thus, my recipes are often unique, either made up on the spur of the moment (at least the first time) or modified from some other recipe. Often the basic recipe has many variations, depending on what is available. Play with them, have fun with them (remember cooking isn't rocket science), and if you've never cooked this way before, take a chance.

### Scrambled Eggs

When I was growing up, my mother used to stretch leftovers by adding them to scrambled eggs. Hence we had *Scrambled Macaroni and Cheese*, *Scrambled Spaghetti*, *Scrambled Rice*, and so on. (Note that these dishes would be served as supper, not breakfast. My mother, who seldom ate breakfast herself, hardly ever cooked breakfast.) As a result, I usually found ordinary scrambled eggs a little boring. So I developed my own version of scrambled eggs. It is sort of a game. “What’s in the fridge that I can put into the eggs? How many things can I put into the eggs? What new thing can I put into the eggs?” Now, eggs from the farm are much better than eggs from the store, but by now, my habits are firmly entrenched. Besides, adding other foods to the eggs can be a way to stretch a few eggs when you are running low or a way to use up leftovers. So here are some farm-fresh ideas of add-ins for your eggs.

- Grated or crumbled cheese (number 1 add-in from my perspective—great way to use up that last little bit of cheese that is about to go bad)
- Herbs (fresh if you can get them, and you can pick your own whenever you come to the farm)
- Sprouts (the most nutritious foods, ounce for ounce, and we carry them at the store or you can start your own—add them at the very end or sprinkle them on top)
- Salsa (add it in at the last minute, or serve it on top for a Huevos Rancheros effect)
- Chopped veggies (I have used tomatoes, broccoli, and beans, but you could use just about any veggie)
- Onions and garlic (anything's better with onions and garlic!)
- Mushrooms (we have several excellent varieties at the store)

### Garlic Sugar Peas

Mince garlic (or garlic scapes) and onion. Wash peas, trim ends, and cut in half. Sauté garlic and onion in olive oil for about a minute. Add the peas. Stir to coat with olive oil. Stir fry until reaching the desired level of tenderness. (We have an ongoing battle about this—I like them still a little crisp and chewy, Tim likes them cooked a little longer until they are completely soft.) For extra zing, add a little lemon juice while cooking. Herbs can be added in the last minute of cooking. Try thyme, lemon thyme, tarragon, or mint. Winter savory would also be good. Wash the herbs, strip the leaves off the stem (most herb stems are woody and not nice to eat), and chop before adding to your dish.

### Chinese Cabbage Salad

Sesame seeds  
 Rice vinegar  
 Sesame oil  
 Honey  
 Salt and pepper to taste  
 Olive oil  
 Shredded cabbage  
 Shredded carrots  
 Crushed ramen noodles

- In a small skillet, toast sesame seeds over medium heat until golden brown and fragrant.
- In a small bowl, mix together vinegar, sesame oil, olive oil, sugar, salt, pepper, and ramen seasoning packet.
- In a large bowl, mix together cabbage, carrots, and crushed ramen noodles. Toss with dressing to coat evenly. Top with toasted sesame seeds.

Instead of making your own dressing, you could use the Asian Vinaigrette dressing developed exclusively for Heritage Prairie by Moveable Feast in Geneva. Check the cooler for more salad dressings.

Until next week ....

P.S. Please email us with questions, comments, suggestions, recipes, and we will include them in future newsletters. We really hope to get a lot of recipes so that in a year or two we can create the Heritage Prairie Market Cookbook.

All newsletters will be posted on the HPM web site in the Forums section by Monday morning.