

THE TIPI TIMES

October 6, 2011, week 21 (purple EOW)

Tipi Produce, 14706 W. Ahara Rd., Evansville, WI 53536, 608-882-6196, csa@tipiproduce.com, www.tipiproduce.com

THIS WEEK'S BOX CONTAINS:

Butternut squash
Carrots, 2 lb
Romano beans, 1 ¼ lb
Golden beets with greens
Dill heads
Onions
Green tomatoes, 2
Pepper medley, Italian or
orange or red or yellow
Cauliflower OR kohlrabi
OR purple broccoli

Some members will
receive raspberries.

NEXT WEEK'S BOX WILL PROBABLY CONTAIN:*

Winter squash or sweet
potatoes, greens,
peppers, poblano chiles,
and more

Pumpkin and Gleaning Party The farm party this past Sunday was a big success. The weather was picture-perfect. About 300 members attended, all in a great mood. I would guess about half the visitors were children. Our final list of gleaning crops was: pumpkins, broccoli shoots, kale and collards, plum, slicing and cherry tomatoes, carrots, dill, watermelons, edamame, Swiss chard and eggplant. That's a much longer list than usual. Frost on Friday and Saturday nights pushed a few more crops onto the gleaning list.



Carrots straight from the ground.
Photo by Katie Dean.

Several members asked how we choose the gleaning crops. First of all, remember that to glean means to pick through a field after the harvest is done. Some of the crops we offered fit that description. We have finished harvesting edamame, Swiss chard, and watermelons. The tomatoes were not on the gleaning list until after the hard frost on Saturday night. We did not protect that field from frost, which ends our harvests from it. We cautioned members to pick carefully through the tomatoes. Fruits pressed against the earth were most likely to be undamaged. We offer other crops because we have more than we expect to sell. Both our first and second kale plantings are ready to pick right now, so there's lots available. It was great to see the kale fans picking big bundles.

The carrots are a different story. We have not finished harvesting those fields - in fact, we've barely begun. However, we like to allow members to dig carrots because kids respond so strongly to the experience. Many members have told us that harvesting carrots at the farm gets their kids to eat them at home. How great is that?

Here is one member's description of her day on the farm: "The gleaning party today will forever be one of my favorite memories with my family. My 6 year-old son LOVED picking carrots and even stated, "these are better than candy!" When my 1 year-old walked out of the field with a mini broccoli tree in each hand and a huge grin on her face, I knew this was the start of a great afternoon. We are so grateful for the time you gave us on your farm." That's *exactly* what we hope for.

CSA member Katie Dean has written an article about her trip to the gleaning party in her CapTimes food blog. Go to http://host.madison.com/entertainment/dining/blog/article_06c150a2-ef87-11e0-b5e8-001cc4c002e0.html. Thanks for writing about us Katie.

Bad Berries A member contacted to report that the raspberries he received last week were in very poor shape. He described them as "interspersed with mold and crushed." That surprised me, as the berries looked good when we packed them. Fortunately, I had kept a flat of raspberries in the cooler this week, allowing me to examine some from the same harvests. I found that some pints were excellent, some were so-so, and a few were atrocious, with collapsed and rotting berries. Uh oh. I quickly distributed a survey on Saturday asking about the quality of the berries received in the CSA boxes. Here's what we learned. For the berries sent last

week, 40% of members rated the berries as unacceptable. For previous weeks, 6% said they were unacceptable. That's a big difference. Member comments matched our observations; some berries were OK, while others were too soft and had begun to break down.

We are still learning how to handle our new raspberry crop. We learned last week that raspberries cannot be picked when wet. Not even slightly wet. We sent our picking crew into the field after it stopped raining, but there was enough moisture to endanger the berries once they were picked. Now we know. We are not going to try to replace those berries. Let's chalk it up to a learning experience. We have some ideas to improve the berry packaging. Our berry crop is finished for this season, so we have time to make changes by next year.

This experience does highlight the sort of decision we face. It was a rainy week. What should we do under those conditions? The choices are to harvest berries under risky conditions in order to provide more to the members, or leave them in the field to rot. Next time, we will wait until they dry, even if it means wasting berries. We grow and deliver a lot of produce each year, and it's not all perfect. Our focus is on good flavor and eating quality. It is unnerving for us when problems like this develop after the produce leaves the farm.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the survey. Your feedback gave us valuable insight into what happens within our CSA boxes after they leave the farm.

Beth

Menu Ideas Farm cooks Eric and Lacey both cook with green tomatoes and have encouraged us to send them in the CSA boxes. It is an opportunity to send something with a sour/tangy/citrusy flavor, a note that is generally missing from our boxes. We've sent only two green tomatoes, just a bit for you to play around with. Here are Eric and Lacey's ideas of how to prepare them:

- Fried green tomatoes. This is the classic way to prep green tomatoes.
- If you prefer to avoid frying, try slicing the tomatoes, dredging in seasoned bread crumbs, then baking on an oiled cookie sheet until softened.
- Use as a substitute for tomatillos.
- Slice and add to casseroles.

I followed their last suggestion. I added thin green tomato slices when preparing a lasagna, then baked the lasagna for one hour (I use the raw-noodle approach that requires long cooking). The green tomatoes were a great addition. They softened but kept their shape and tang. I also added sliced red peppers, onions, and minced raw beet greens to the lasagna. All were nicely cooked by the end of an hour. FYI, I added about 2/3 of the beet green bundle to a 9x13 lasagna. I think I could have added the entire bundle if minced finely enough.

Farm and Veggie Notes. I mentioned above that there was a hard frost on Saturday night. That brought our tomato season to an end, excepting this week's green tomatoes. We protected our big pepper fields through this frost. We'll keep the peppers going as long as possible - they are a great addition to fall menus. The frost is a blessing in disguise. Now we can move on to cleaning up the fields. Our workers do not enjoy pulling up plastic mulch at the end of the year. It is a dirty job, but a more pleasant job during nice weather.

Butternut squash - This is a small variety called 'Metro.' This type cures quickly (ie is ready to eat quickly) so we send this type first. Some are quite small, in which case we'll send two.

Romano beans - We nearly lost these beans to the frost, but they survived to provide one final picking.

Dill heads - The bundles contain a mix of flowers and young seed heads. Taste them to see which you like best. I think the flowers taste like the essence of dill, while the young seeds taste more like caraway. Either way, they are good to cook with. To chop the flowers or seeds, gather a one head together so the flowers/seeds are in a bundle, then cut free from the umbel with a sharp knife. You can chop the seeds a bit more, or crush them with the side of a knife.

Green tomatoes - See menu ideas. Store in the refrigerator.

Golden beets with greens - The greens are in excellent shape, and can be cooked like Swiss chard. The amount of beet roots you will receive is modest. A simple way to cook them is in the microwave. Slice in half or into wedges, place in a covered bowl with a little water, and microwave on high until soft (6 to 11 minutes). Prepare as a salad or add to other dishes. These golden beets are a lovely color. To preserve the best color, peel them after they are cooked.

Kohlrabi (green or purple globe) - Some of you will receive a very cool-looking purple variety.