



Check on our honey bees last week after splitting a hive with new queens.

FARM ECONOMY

As we are about to host a summer potluck for our local chapter of the Wisconsin Farmer's Union, our thoughts can't help but dive into the struggling economic situation Wisconsin farmers are presently facing. WFU supports legislative action and farmer cooperation to navigate this difficult situation.

Wisconsin lost nearly 700 dairy farms last year, almost two a day, in a downturn now headed into its fifth year. Family farms are at the mercy of trade wars, economies of scale and a complex pricing system. In April of 2019, as farmers were forced with making the decision to stick out another year or not, we lost a record 90 more dairy farms in Wisconsin. The current economy isn't much better for commodity crop farmers as the relations between US and our leading ag export nations continue to fray.

There is an even bigger problem brewing as a result of losing farms. Our small town economies are centered around these farms. Mechanics, hardware and lumber stores, implement dealers, grain mills, seed dealers, agronomists, veterinarians and the list goes on. Every where you look, the economic support system for the farming industry is present and when the farms shutdown, so do many other businesses.

None of us like to see our rural life slipping away, so the big question hangs out there. What can the average consumer do? That's easy, seek local dairy products. Buying as directly as possible helps them capture as much of the food dollar as possible. It's worth it when you consider the big picture. Ask your grocery store or restaurant owner where their dairy products are coming from. Simply starting the conversation makes them consider their role in the crisis as well. Their actions will also affect their customer base in the long term as well. Write to your representatives and tell them how important farming is to our rural economy. Congress could make important changes to foster a fair marketplace for farmers and fix the broken milk pricing system. Even just stopping by for a visit with positive thoughts, neighborly conversation and a distraction from the situation will help.

Growing for you,

eric + rebecca

IN THE BAG

Carrots

Zucchini

Spinach

Cucumber

Fern Dill

Red Onion

Fennel

Swiss Chard

Lettuce

Snap Peas (*larges only*)

FRESH PORK

This week we picked up fresh meat processed by Geiss Meats in Merrill. Breakfast links are back in stock after a brief shortage along with pork chops which we never thought we'd run out of. And we also now offer NEW sliced ham we are calling deli-style ham. It is in small packs sliced to about 1/8". Our crew tested it out for lunch this week with our first ripe slicing tomato and it was given all sorts of thumbs up. We will be stocking it at the farmers markets while supplies lasts. The summer pork packs are still available as we mentioned in last week's email. Please let us know if we can deliver any pork to you with your share.

THANK YOU

What a great evening! Thank you everyone who came and enjoyed a farm-to-table experience with us. We worked for several days transforming our growing space into an event venue and preparing the food, with as much as possible coming from the very fields where we sat and dined. Your connection to the food you eat is important to us. Thank you!

RED ONION

Right now the onions are putting growth into the bulb by photosynthesizing in large greens leaves. It will be months before the onions are mature and ready for curing and dry storage. You can use the entire onion including the green tops in recipes that call for onions or scallions. Store fresh, uncured onions wrapped in the fridge. This red variety is called Cabernet. It is a strong, sweet onion that goes great raw in fresh cucumber salad! Green tops or red slices.

SPINACH

We are thrilled to have some spinach for our membership in the heat of July. What an unusual season! Our apologies for the holes in the leaves and mud from heavy rains. Wash well!

While spinach is loaded with iron, its absorption is blocked by naturally occurring oxalic acid. An easy way to solve this problem is to pair spinach with a food high in vitamin C. Mandarin oranges or lemon juice. Another way to reduce the power of oxalic acid is to boil for at least two minutes.

We often hear about how good spinach is for the eyes and bones, but few folks know it aides digestion. Spinach eases constipation and protects the mucus lining of the stomach, keeping us free of ulcers. It also flushes out toxins from the colon.

Eat spinach for the skin care benefits too. The bounty of vitamins and minerals can bring you quick relief from dry, itchy skin and lavish you with a radiant complexion. Regular consumption of fresh, organic spinach juice has been shown to improve skin health dramatically. Feel good and look great too!

DILL WEED/FERN DILL

Dill is a unique plant in that both its leaves and seeds are used as a seasoning. Dill's green leaves are wispy and fernlike and have a soft, sweet taste. Dill's name comes from the old Norse word dilla which means "to lull." This name reflects dill's traditional uses as both a carminative stomach soother and an insomnia reliever

Fresh dill should always be stored in the refrigerator either wrapped in a damp paper towel or with its stems placed in a container of water. Since it is very fragile, even if stored properly, dill will only keep fresh for a few days. Dill can be frozen, either whole or chopped. Dill can also be dried and stored in airtight containers. It pairs perfectly with cukes in fresh cucumber salad.

FENNEL

Fennel is on the menu for our farm dinner this year, because it is pork's best friend. If you like to munch on it raw, you should notice a distinct black licorice flavor crossed with a fruity celery. The actual vegetable consists of a swollen stem (like a kohlrabi) and edible stems (like celery) and frond leaves, which can be eaten as well. Most recipes focus on the bulbous stem which should be cored like a cabbage.

Everyone in our family likes to pull off branches just to nibble on them. Fennel is a great digestive aid and known for calming an upset stomach. Hence the popularity of fennel tea after a filling meal.

At our farm dinner in 2017, we finely chopped the fennel for a coleslaw-type salad that tasted amazing with roasted pork. Last season, we tested a roasted fennel recipe with honey and olive oil. It was delicious! The high heat completely changed the flavor. Ask us for the recipe if you did not get it last year.

SWISS CHARD

Chard is the edible leaf and stem portion of a plant very closely related to the beet. In fact, the part of the plant above the soil looks identical. The only difference is that there is no round, edible root. This means chard is very healthy for you, loaded with vitamins A, K and C and 13 different antioxidants! Don't skip this one folks. We eat a lot fresh on salads and in wraps, but we also recommend simply sautéing chard in butter with a little salt and pepper. If you have to mask the flavor to get your picky eater to eat it, finely chop and add to veggie rice, orzo or barley pilaf with some fresh garlic.

CARROTS

Our earliest planting of carrots is finally ready to share! They are tender and delicious and there are many more to come. Consider this a sampling. The leaves are still tender, so consider putting them to use in a veggie stock with zucchini and celery, or lay a bed of carrot greens under your pot roast for added flavor and depth. We also chop them and dry them for use in the winter to add flavor to soups and stews.

HAVE A VEGGIE QUESTION?

Odds are if you've got a question, someone else probably has to same one. Don't hesitate to call for help identifying new veggies.

HOME 715-427-1002 CELL/TEXT 715-905-0431

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