



A BEGINNER'S
GUIDE TO
CSA
SUCCESS

**ELIMINATE
WASTE!**

HOW TO HANDLE
YOUR EXCESS
PRODUCE & AVOID
FOOD WASTE

**TOOLS OF THE
TRADE**

ESSENTIAL KITCHEN
TOOLS THAT WILL
SET YOU UP FOR
SUCCESS

**STORAGE
GUIDE**

HOW TO MAXIMIZE
SHELF LIFE &
PRIORITIZE YOUR
MEAL PLANNING



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CSA CAN BE HARD, BUT IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE.

If you are a first time CSA member or early in your CSA journey, you might not realize how CSA changes how you eat and plan. For farmers market regulars eating with the seasons might be natural but for many of us it changes how we plan, cook and even organize our pantry.

CSA and supporting local farms is incredibly rewarding, and the quality and freshness of the food can't be beat, but cooking with fresh food and bringing a constant supply of fresh vegetables into your home every week can be overwhelming at times.

So as your farmers we have created a guide that helps you understand how to efficiently deal with the bounty and serves as a resource for the whole season.

Throughout this e-book you will learn tips, tricks and strategies to help you understand how to prioritize, deal with challenges, and deal with excess quickly so you can feel confident this CSA season!

Always know that if you are challenged and need extra help WE ARE HERE FOR YOU. Call, email, message or text! As farmers it is an honor and a joy to help you in your CSA journey!

Food Storage Guide

COUNTER TOP FRUITS & VEGGIES



Tomatoes
Melons
Zucchini
Summer Squash

Best if not refrigerated.

DRY STORAGE VEGGIES

Cured Onions
Shallots
Pumpkins
Winter Squash
Sweet Potatoes
Potatoes
Garlic

Store at a cool 50°F, dark & dry; or counter top will work for several weeks. Refrigerate after cutting. Unless you're making chips, cold storage does not hurt potatoes.

BUNCHES W/ ROOTS & LEAVES



Beets
Onions
Scallions
Carrots
Radishes
Green Garlic
Kohlrabi
Turnips
Leeks

Separate roots & greens immediately. Store in separate loose bags in the fridge. Use tops within the week.

BULK ROOTS



Carrots
Daikon Radish
Rutabaga
Turnips
Kohlrabi
Beets
Parsnips

Store in a loose plastic bag or a covered container in the fridge. These should last months! Sort weekly - items that have spots or imperfections should be used up first.

OTHER CRISPER ITEMS

Peas
Broccoli
Cucumbers
Beans
Cabbage
Brussels Sprouts
Cauliflower
Tomatillos
Peppers
Corn



Crisper in a bag. Do not rinse before storage.

LEAFY GREENS & HERBS

Kale
Swiss Chard
Collards
Lettuce
Baby Greens

Store in loose plastic bag, or container (with paper towel to regulate moisture) in fridge. Wilted greens can be chopped & blanched or used in a pesto.

SPECIAL ITEMS



Basil

Store like a flower bouquet & change out water daily. If you can't use it all up soon, make a pesto!

• Freeze veggie scraps to make broth!

Sustainability Tips

Support local farms & eat seasonally!

Reusable containers are eco- & meal-prep friendly!



STORE THINGS PROPERLY

We talk a lot about storage throughout the course of the CSA. It will be the first section of every newsletter. You'll see it in the storage guide we give you before the season begins. We will mention it again and again.

There's a reason for this. Proper storage of vegetables is essential. If you store things properly, they last longer, and you don't have to rush to use them. Most vegetables can last 1-3 weeks based on the quality of storage. And that means less food waste.



STORAGE TIPS

1

CUT THE EDIBLE GREENS FROM THINGS LIKE CARROTS, BEETS, KOHLRABI, AND RADISHES

You will likely want to save these edible greens but when you store them together the greens will drain moisture from the roots. Remove the greens and store separately from the roots.

2

BAG IT UP!

Storing vegetables loose in the fridge is easy and uses less plastic, but isn't actually great for long-term storage. You should store most of your veggies (especially your greens and roots!) in plastic bags in the fridge after you get home. Wash the bags and re-use them. Reusable containers and plastic like (silicon) bags work great too.

3

WASH ONLY WHAT YOU PLAN TO USE

Everything coming from our farm will be washed and well-cleaned. Washing it before use will only add unnecessary moisture that will cause produce to lose crispness and get soggy faster. Over time, most CSA members discover that if you just wash the amount of vegetables you are planning to use/prepare, they will stay fresh a lot longer.

4

**REMOVE RUBBERBANDS OR
TWISTIE TIES FOR BETTER
CIRCULATION**

5

**READ YOUR NEWSLETTER!!
USE IT TO SET PRIORITIES**

Our CSA newsletter will always tell you everything you need to know about where to store things (fridge versus pantry versus basement) as well as whether it wants to be stored in a bag (or not), and how long you can expect it to last.

It's a good idea to take some time to read through the newsletter each week and mentally (or literally) sort all of the veggies based on what will expire fastest. This way you'll know what you should prioritize cooking first.

6

**STORE FRUITS & VEGETABLES
SEPARATELY**

We won't be giving you much fruit, but that doesn't mean you won't have a bunch in your fridge already. The ethylene gas given off by fruit can cause faster spoiling in your vegetables.

7

**POST A STORAGE CHEATSHEET
ON THE SIDE OF YOUR FRIDGE**

Though our newsletter is a great resource, you won't always want to go look it up. Having our one-page veggie storage guide posted somewhere easy to see will save you time during busy weeks.





PRACTICE MICRO- PREPPING ON CSA DAY & THROUGH OUT THE WEEK

A lot of CSA members begin prepping veggies right away the night they bring home their CSA box. They find that certain techniques like peeling and/or cutting the carrots, slicing the celery, cucumbers, or bell peppers right away not only makes life easier, but also leads to their families grabbing veggies as snacks throughout the week.

We call these "micro-prep" moments and they are a good way to stay on top of your produce and not get bogged down by the knife work inherent in cooking with lots of veggies.



INVEST IN THE RIGHT KITCHEN TOOLS

Like any activity, cooking isn't very fun without the proper equipment. Here is a list of the kitchen items we use most for cooking up our veggies.

1 A GOOD KNIFE (PREFERABLY A CHEF'S KNIFE THAT IS CONSISTENTLY SHARPENED)

Food prep is so much faster and safer when you spend the money for a high quality knife. To find the best knife for you, it's best to go to a kitchen store and try them out by hand. It's all about how it feels in your hand.

2 SHEET PANS OR BAKING SHEETS

When you join a CSA, one of the exit strategies you learn about is "the Sheet Pan Meal." This allows you to throw your entire meal (meat, veggie, starch) onto one sheet pan, and prep a meal in 30-45 minutes in one place. It will also come in hand for freezing.

The sheet pan should have a lip and be large enough to handle large portions of food. Make sure it can fit in your freezer. You can buy these at any store, online or get at most thrift stores!

3

A CAST-IRON SKILLET OR OTHER PAN THAT CAN GO FROM STOVETOP TO OVEN. IDEALLY WITH OVEN SAFE LID

4

DEBBY MEYER GREEN BAGS OR RESUSABLE ZIPLOCKS

There are lots of great options that reduce waste but allow you to store, prep or transport veggies! Word to the wise we have not had good experiences with bees wax coated products. .

5

A VEGETABLE PEELER

This is a multi-purpose tool every home cook should have. You will use this not only to peel veggies, but also to shave vegetables for salads or to make root veggie or zucchini noodles! .

6

A MANDOLIN OR VEGETABLE SLICER

The easiest way to thinly slice a bunch of vegetables for salad for the week is definitely with a mandolin. They're also great for matchsticking vegetables as well as making chips or fries. If you have a food processor this is unneeded.

7

SPLURGE ITEM: A FOOD PROCESSOR OR STICK BLENDER

Now this is the highest ticket item on the list and may not be something you invest in your first year, but over time most of our CSA members wind up getting one.

Either is great for dressings, salsa, pesto, and pureeing items like soups and sauces. IA food processor is great for shredding carrots or making cauliflower "rice."



LEARN HOW TO IDENTIFY YOUR VEGGIES



It can be hard to unpack things properly or store it correctly if you have no idea what the heck it is.

Every time we give you a less common vegetable or variety of a vegetable, we will reference it in our CSA newsletter. Also every week's newsletter comes with a photo so you can easily know what you are dealing with. Be sure to check this newsletter each week, so you can learn your veggies by season's end. You can also check out our weekly Facebook/instagram photo posted the day before CSA!

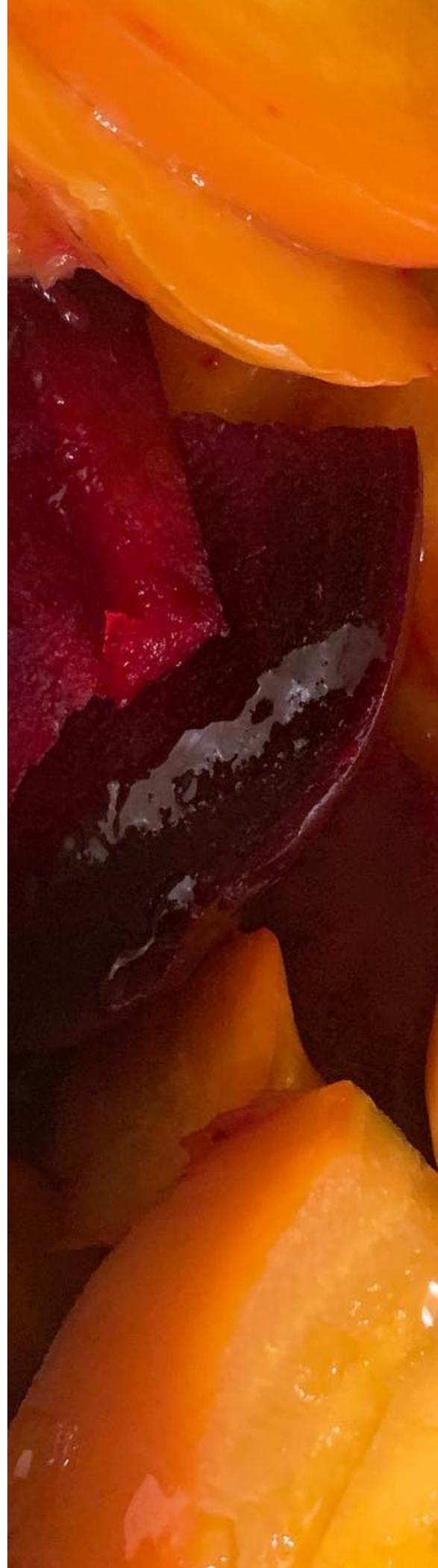
GET (AND STAY) INSPIRED

One of the most rewarding (and fun!) parts of being in a CSA is trying our new vegetables and recipes! CSA is a great excuse to experiment with new techniques, and a to get more variety into your diet.

So don't just stick to old stand by recipes when there's a whole world of cooking to explore. Stay inspired throughout the CSA season by looking outside your own ideas or the cookbooks you've used for years. Instead, we suggest you:

- 1** CHECK OUT OUR CSA NEWSLETTER FOR RECIPES.
- 2** FIND A COUPLE FAVORITE BLOGS (WHO USE A LOT OF FRESH, SEASONAL PRODUCE) AND CONTINUALLY GO THERE FOR INSPIRATION.
- 3** TREAT YOURSELF TO A NEW COOKBOOK EVERY CSA SEASON.

We have copies of *From Asparagus to Zucchini* and *Farm-Fresh And Fast* (Both by FairShare CSA Coalition) in our Online CSA Store. They're a great place to start!



OUR FAVORITE COOKBOOKS & FOOD BLOGS

BLOGS & WEBSITES

101 Cookbooks
Half Baked Harvest
Minimalist Baker
Cookie and Kate
Naturally Ella
Smitten Kitchen
The Leek & The Carrot
Epicurious.com
NYTIME Cooking

COOKBOOKS

Six Seasons by Joshua McFadden

Bounty from the Box by Mi Ae Lipe

The Vegetable Butcher by Cara Mangini

How to Cook Everything by Mark Bittman

From Asparagus to Zucchini by FairShare CSA Coalition





TRY NEW THINGS

One of the best things about being a part of a CSA is the opportunity to try new vegetables you aren't familiar with and experimenting with different combinations of food and flavors. Keep things extra interesting by selecting recipes that aren't the kind of thing you usually would make.

Some of our more experienced CSA members like to intentionally select recipes that are outside their "standard wheelhouse" or that use a common vegetable in a different way. For example, instead of just roasting or grilling summer squash every week, opt for something unique like a squash pie.

TAKE INVENTORY & SET PRIORITIES BEFORE THE NEXT CSA DELIVERY

When you're receiving a box week after week, things can really start to pile up. CSA can feel overwhelming when the vegetables just keep coming. Before the next week's box arrives, it's really important to take stock of the veggies you still have laying around and try to eat, wash, prep or even freeze those things that you know you likely won't eat within the "fresh window."

This will help you feel less overwhelmed when the next box arrives.





LEARN SOME TRIED & TRUE EXIT STRATEGIES

No matter how great you are at enjoying your CSA share, staying inspired and using up your produce each week, there might be weeks where you feel like you just can't possibly keep up in the kitchen.

This is the time for an "exit strategy": a quick, go-to method to use up produce fast so you can prepare for the next batch of bounty! You can find our favorite exit strategies on the next few pages.

OUR FAVORITE EXIT STRATEGIES



1

WHIPPING UP A STIR FRY IS A GREAT WAY TO USE UP ODDS & ENDS BEFORE THE NEXT BOX ARRIVES.

2

ROAST IT! OR EVEN BETTER, EXPLORE THE ART OF THE SHEET PAN MEAL!

Whenever you don't know what to do with the last two vegetables left in your fridge, I urge you to give roasting a try. There is hardly a vegetable that doesn't taste amazing roasted and if you can turn it into a sheet pan meal, all the better! Google "sheet pan meals" if you aren't familiar. It is a serious game changer.

3

WHIP UP SOME PESTO

You can make pesto out of pretty much any green you receive from the farm (basil, kale, spinach, green garlic, scallions, carrot tops) .And if you make too much, it freezes up great!

4

TRY MAKING GREEN CUBES

At our farm, we love green cubes. This is where you take a bunch of blanched greens and puree them together and then put them into ice cube trays. Then add them to sauces or soups as you please.

5

JUST GRILL IT!

When you aren't sure what to make with something or short on time- toss in some olive oil, salt, and pepper and grill it. Works great for MOST veggies (even some of the more unique ones).

6

IF ALL ELSE FAILS, THROW IT IN THE FREEZER

One of the absolute best ways to deal with produce you don't think you'll get to is utilize that freezer. You would be surprised how many vegetables can go straight into the freezer (no blanching or prep required): kale, spinach, chard, tomatoes, peppers, carrots, beets, peas, corn, onions, shredded zucchini. Toss them in freezer bags or freezer-proof containers and get them into the freezer. Or, if you're feeling ambitious you can take things a bit further. If you have too much produce at any given time, chop it up and freeze or prep sauces for freezing so you can lessen your waste!

7

PLAY AROUND WITH MEALS THAT CAN INCORPORATE MANY VEGGIES AT ONCE

Think quiche, pizza, pasta, chili, tacos, spring rolls, scrambled eggs, etc.





PRESERVING THE HARVEST

Another great way to make the most of your CSA experience and lessen the amount of food waste is to learn some preservation techniques.

We listed freezing as one of our exit strategies because it is one of the quickest and easiest ways to deal with excess produce. But that is not the only method of preservation! On the next page you will find a few other CSA favorite preservation techniques.

PRESERVATION TIPS

1

SAVE YOUR SCRAPS FOR VEGGIE STOCK

Don't toss your scraps! Put them in a gallon-sized bag in the freezer and keep adding until full. Then in the fall or winter, add the veggies to a full pot of water, bring to a boil and let simmer at least 45 minutes and strain. Keep the liquid, toss the solids, and then you have delicious homemade vegetable stock for soups which you can freeze!

2

PLAY WITH OTHER SIMPLE TECHNIQUES LIKE FRIDGE PICKLES OR SALSA

3

EXPERIMENT WITH KIMCHI, KRAUTS AND OTHER FERMENTED PRODUCTS

4

BATCH COOK & FREEZE HALF

Take advantage of the abundance by making double batches of things and freezing half. It's so nice to have those meals prepped and ready for a busy night.

5

AS YOUR CONFIDENCE GROWS, BEGIN TO EXPERIMENT WITH VARIOUS CANNING METHODS





KNOW THE RISKS & REWARDS

No “Beginner’s Guide to CSA” would be complete without bringing up the understood “contract” between farmer and member.

When you join a CSA, you are shaking the farmer’s hand and giving your word that you will stand behind him/her through thick and thin that season. You financially commit your dollars to their operation.

In return, your farmers will grow the best vegetables they can to make good on that investment.

As your farmers we set out with a plan – and determine what will be in the box each week. But Mother Nature is fickle. She can send too much rain, flea beetle infestations, or overly high temperatures that cause plants to bolt and go to seed. Sometimes a specific vegetable just doesn't look good enough to send.

As farmers, we do our part to minimize the risks. We know how important it is to keep the soil healthy. When we tend to our soil, healthy plants follow -- leading to better disease resistance, better yields and better taste.

But every year, there is something that isn't perfect . As a member of a CSA farm, you ride this risk with the farmer.

As farmers it is our job to keep you informed and as a CSA member if you are ever wondering why you might see ripe sweet corn in June but not in your CSA or cucumbers look different than you have seen in the store PLEASE reach out! It is our job as farmers to explain that the sweet corn is from Indiana or that we choose snack cucumbers because people love them once they try them!

