

MACSAC
Madison Area Community Supported Agriculture Coalition

JUST EATING

A newsletter for CSA farm members
and others interested in eating
seasonally, locally, and organically

Spring 2001 Volume 2 Issue 1

Welcome 2001 CSA Members!

by John Hendrickson
MACSAC Coordinator

Welcome to Community Support Agriculture! What could be more simple and pleasurable than enjoying tasty healthy food direct from a local farm? CSA offers this and so much more.

Joining one of our dozen plus farms is a great opportunity for you, your family, and your health. The organic produce provided direct from your farmer is unbeatable for flavor, freshness, variety and convenience. Our farming practices respect the environment and the people who consume the harvest. Membership offers you a relationship with the land, the source of your food, and your farmers - a unique and wonderful opportunity. Don't miss it!

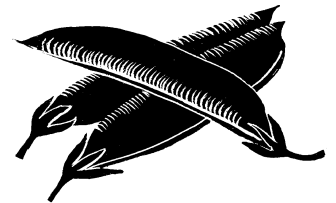
While the growing season may seem a distant glimmer, CSA growers are already deep into the planning and planting process. By signing up now as CSA member, they'll know exactly who their growing for and how much to plant. And you

can begin looking forward to weekly surprise packages of fresh vegetables.

A great amount has already been accomplished by the dedicated group of community members and farms that comprise the Madison Area Community Supported Agriculture Coalition (MACSAC). Joining in the work of the Coalition is yet another opportunity. We've produced our very own unique cookbook and have a committed program for assisting lower income and special needs groups to become a part of CSA. These and other activities await needed volunteers.

The surest answer to preserving small family farms is putting your food dollar directly in the hands of your farmer. Please read on and learn more from the perspective of other farmers, CSA members like yourself, and MACSAC volunteers.

Thank you for joining, and enjoy the bounty of the 2001 growing season! 🍏



The Partner Shares Program:

by Doug Wubben
MACSAC Partner Shares Program Coordinator

This year will be the fifth year that the Partner Shares Program has worked to make CSA shares available to low-income and special-needs households. By providing financial assistance to households and institutions, the program ensures that participants receive healthy, organic produce from a CSA farm share.

The program's goals are: 1. To make the cost of CSA share affordable for low-income participants and to spread payments out over the course of the growing season 2. To provide access to healthy food 3. To ensure that CSA farmer receive the full price of a share.

To accomplish these goals, the program has established an Assistance Fund, which pays CSA farmers the regular price of the share at the beginning of the season. Members of low-income/special-needs households are then responsible for paying only a portion of the share cost back to the Assistance Fund over the course of the growing season. (Continued on page 2)

Why Just Eating?

CSA farming is an alternative relationship between farmers and consumers that is based on justice among communities, society, and the environment. Citizens and farmers take responsibility for this justice by making choices about the food we eat: how it is grown, harvested, and processed. After all, it's Just Eating!



MemberSpeak: What's that thing in our box?

by Jacqueline Houtman
Member of Vermont Valley
Community Farm

Every Thursday evening between June and October, my husband comes home with his bicycle panniers filled with

vegetables. I rush out to meet him and see what delights are in store for us that week. Sometimes it's tomatoes and peppers and sweet corn, but there could be celeriac or kohlrabi or daikon or fennel, or some other unfamiliar or downright ugly plant material. Ten years ago, I would have turned these alien growths away at the front door. Now I welcome them, sometimes because I've grown to love them, but sometimes just because they're so strange and unattractive.

For the last five years, we've been members of a CSA farm. CSA stands for community supported agriculture, and it's a phenomenon that has really taken off in the last few years. According to Doug Wubben at the Madison Area Community Supported Agriculture Coalition (MACSAC), there are thirteen CSA farms in the Madison area, and over 50 in Wisconsin, placing our state in the top three nationwide. The idea is that consumers buy shares in a farm in the winter or early spring. The farmers use that money to purchase their seeds and supplies for the season. Then, when harvest begins, the farmers pack whatever is ripe that week into boxes and truck them to pickup sites around Madison. There my husband opens up our box and transfers our weekly allotment into his bike panniers.

Our CSA is a kind of vegetable of the week club. It's like

the Book of the Month Club (or the Potato of the Month Club--there really is one, my sisters and I gave it to my parents for Christmas one year). You sign up because you like vegetables (or books or potatoes) in general, but you don't know exactly what will be offered when.

That's my favorite part of our CSA -- the surprise element. I never know exactly what will be in our box. I usually have a general idea of what vegetables are in season, but each week's shipment is still something new and exciting. It's like Christmas when I was a kid. I could tell that that package under the tree was an album, but I had to wait until I opened it on Christmas morning to know if it was the Monkees, or Paul Revere and the Raiders, or Herman's Hermits. It could have been something totally unexpected, in which case it might stay unplayed on the shelf until I unloaded it at a garage sale or, if I played it a couple of times, I might have realized that it was pretty good.

Our CSA has expanded my dietary repertoire. I was never much of a vegetable eater. Corn. Maybe some green beans if I was feeling adventurous. In the produce aisle, I would gravitate toward the familiar, plastic-wrapped celery and carrots, leaving the Jerusalem artichokes and jicama for more daring souls. Now I'm forced to think about how in the world to prepare these things. I've had to come up with something to do with eggplant besides parmigiana. The kale and tortellini recipe we developed has become a staple in our home. Root Soup, a puree of winter vegetables, was developed for celeriac, but is a great catchall recipe for all those bulbous things in the pantry. And the hairy fresh soybeans we first encountered in a CSA delivery have become such a favorite that we planted two packets in our own small plot to ensure a good supply.

(Continued on page 4)

(Partner Shares, Continues from page 1)

Grants and donations for the Assistance Fund come from local organizations, religious groups, foundations, fundraising events, and individuals. The **Farm-A-Thon** is a particularly enjoyable fundraising activity that Partner Shares sponsors. Farm-A-Thon participants raise money for the Assistance Fund by seeking sponsors for the labor that they do at a CSA farm during a partial or full-day event. Students from college classes, members of churches, and community groups are just some of the groups that have participated in Farm-A-Thons. This event offers an intensive, hands-on experience with CSA farming while helping households in need.

The Partner Shares Board is seeking new members to help with organizing its program activities including: farm-a-thons, other fundraising events, nutrition/cooking workshops, and farm visits for participants. For more information or to schedule a Farm-A-Thon contact Doug at 226-0300 x1, or partnershares@wrdc.org. 🐦

In The News

Organic Production Reduces E-coli Risks

A United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) report released in July of 2000 concluded that organic practices can actually reduce e-coli infection that causes food poisoning and also reduce the levels of contaminants in foods. The Food and Agriculture Organization is the largest autonomous agency within the United Nations.

The full FAO report is available for download as a Word document from : <http://www.fao.org/organicag/frame2-e.htm>

CSA in the City: Troy Farm plans growing fast

by Anna Rabin
Troy CSA Organizing Committee

In the past six months, the dream of having a Community Supported Agriculture Farm at Troy has taken several giant steps towards becoming a reality. Spurred on by a generous grant from the Oscar Mayer Family Foundation, the Troy CSA Farm organizing committee began meeting last September. Community members, farmers (including Madison Community Supported Agriculture Coalition staff and members) and representatives from a variety of non-profit organizations and the University of Wisconsin have met monthly to plan the future of the farm. Thus far, committee members have staked site boundaries, created a plan for hiring a staff person, researched funding opportunities, and worked on a mission statement.

Some of the goals of the farm include: Creating a working organic CSA farm that integrates Northside adults and youth into its operations. Make produce accessible to low-income households. Educating the Madison community about CSAs and sustainable food systems.



This Spring, the committee (acting on behalf of Friends of Troy Gardens) will hire a half-time farmer. A Site Coordinator will also be hired for the overall Troy Project. The site coordinator will publicize the CSA, recruit volunteers and shareholders, and build relationships with Northside organizations and businesses and Madison-wide sustainable agriculture and food organizations. The farmer will coordinate this year's planting of selected crops and prepare for getting the CSA up and running in 2002.

The Troy CSA farm is very much a work-in-progress. We encourage you to stop by the site (behind Troy Community Garden at 600 Troy Drive) and check it out for yourself. We also welcome any feedback, comments, and involvement from community members!

Want to be on the Troy Organizing Committee? We are always looking for new members, and the next meeting is Monday, April 2nd at 6:30pm at a location to-be-announced.

If you or someone you know is interested in either of the staff positions, would like more information about the project, or would like to be on the Troy CSA Organizing Committee please call Irene at 246-4730, ext 218 or email her at irenes@cacsw.org.

Helping You To Use Those Beets (and kale, celeriac, fennel, daikon, kohlrabi, ...)

From Asparagus to Zucchini



From Asparagus to Zucchini: A Guide to Farm-Fresh, Seasonal Produce, was written and produced by MACSAC members in 1996. It was created to help members of CSA farms better use and enjoy local, seasonal produce. The cookbook features 46 different vegetable and

herb sections which include nutritional, historical and storage information as well as cooking tips and specific recipes—over 370 recipes in all! Other sections of the book include essays that address how our food choices affect our economy, environment, communities, quality of life and agricultural systems. The book's 200 pages are graced with beautiful illustrations by a local artist.

Here's what some people have to say about the book:
 "This book gives me nice recipes for the goodies we find in our box each week." - CSA member in Illinois.
 "Excellent book—great ideas - super resources—yummy recipes. Thank you!" - CSA farmer in Alaska.
 "I love this cookbook! When my CSA share arrives each week, I look up a few of the vegetables, read about their history, and then choose a recipe." - CSA member in Viroqua, WI.

Pick up your copy today at a Madison natural food store, grocery coop, or bookstore. You can also order by calling MACSAC—see right.

To order a copy of
From A to Z,
 call 608-226-0300 x1
 or email macsac@wrdc.org.
 Copies are \$19.00, which
 includes shipping.

MACSAC Membership and/or Contribution Form

Name _____
 Address _____

 Phone _____
 Email _____

Enclosed, please find a check in the amount of:
\$1000 \$500 \$100 \$50 \$30 Other \$ _____

Send checks, payable to MACSAC, to:
 4915 Monona Drive, Suite 304, Monona WI 53716
Thank you for your support!

Member Speak (continued from page 2)

I'm not the only one who is eating better as a CSA member. Our four-year-old will often pick at his vegetables until we remind him that they were grown by OUR farmer on OUR farm. That sense of ownership somehow makes the food more appealing. We've been to visit the farm, so he knows where our food comes from. He was most interested in the tractors and in throwing sticks into the creek, but he also enjoyed meeting our farmers.

We had intellectual reasons for joining a CSA. It's good for the farmers, since they get paid up front and share the risk of crop failures with their subscribers. It's good for the land because the crops are grown organically and sustainably. Mostly, it's good for us because the food is fresh and organic and varied. And it's there. If it arrives in my house on a weekly basis, I'm more likely to eat it. I don't remember ever saying "I think I'll go out and get some beets for dinner tonight."

Since I've been a CSA member, I've learned that the tastiest vegetables are not necessarily the prettiest, and that the most unusual foods (yellow tomatoes, purple potatoes) might become my favorites. Now I'm not really taken aback by that 18-inch long, one-inch diameter lavender thing that I think is an eggplant. Or the twisting stems of garlic scapes. Or even rutabagas.

I'm still not sure about the fennel. ✍

**It's not too late to join a CSA farm or
MACSAC for the 2001 season!
Call 226-0300 x1 or email
macsac@wrdc.org for details.**

Just Eating is the bi-annual newsletter of the Madison Area Community Supported Agriculture Coalition (MACSAC). The goal is to provide information and educational materials for CSA members and the general public about CSA farming, sustainable agriculture, and eating seasonally and locally. Submissions are welcome 1 month prior to printing. Send to macsac@wrdc.org or 4915 Monona Drive #304, Monona WI 53716. Editor: Doug Wubben MACSAC logo and food book etchings: Bill Redinger.



4915 Monona Drive, Suite 304
Monona WI 53716

Phone: 608-226-0300 x1

Fax: 608-226-0301

Email: macsac@wrdc.org

Web: www.wisc.edu/cias/macsac

Place
Stamp
Here

Address
Correction
Requested