

# Farm Notes

## CSA Newsletter

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Potomac Vegetable Farms  
www.potomacvegetablefarms.com

*Tell about cooking and eating a favorite dish or meal.  
Let's talk about FOOD, for a change!*

### Good Ingredients, Great Food!

By Sarah Waybright

Food is what brought me to the farm – I came to dietetics as a practice with a desire to share my love for food, and show how “healthy” food can be (and should be) delicious. If nutrition is the intersection of food and health science, then farming is where food connects us to the environment. Good ingredients not only come from good soil, but make for excellent dishes with much less effort. Having access to fresh produce when it is ripe to the very minute means not only the best flavor, but the highest nutrient content. There is a reason you shouldn't try to make gazpacho in the winter and butternut squash in the middle of July!



*The best flavor comes from mixing your ripe tomatoes, all colors and types*

Since it IS the middle of summer, you SHOULD make gazpacho. Here is an easy recipe that features all the golden produce of high summer – enjoy it, and find more on my website, [www.whyfoodworks.com](http://www.whyfoodworks.com) !

### Yellow Gazpacho Recipe

- 2 lbs yellow tomatoes (add in some little yellow sungolds, too!)
- 1 yellow bell pepper
- 1/2 yellow onion
- kernels cut from one ear of corn
- 1 medium cucumber, peeled if you prefer
- 1 clove garlic
- 2 Tbsp white wine vinegar
- 2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 tsp salt

Combine all ingredients in a blender and pulse until chunky - or smooth, if you prefer! Delicious served with crusty bread and a little more olive oil for dipping.

## Communal Lunch

By Sam Sedon

I always tell people that the reason I'm a farmer is because I'm hungry - and I'm only half kidding. There are a million reasons why I believe in doing this work, and the incredible food is easily at the top of the list. Being able to sample the first cherry tomatoes of summer, warm off the vine, simmering pots of root veggie soup in the depths of winter, heading out into the fields at dusk to harvest a head of lettuce for that night's dinner - these are the moments when I feel most grateful for this work. One of the best parts of working on Potomac Vegetable Farms is all of the meals that we share together. This season, beyond our weekly potlucks, we have started the practice of cooking lunch for each other. Every Tuesday, two members of the crew leave the farm a couple of hours early to prepare a meal for the rest of the team. The meals vary, and just in the past few weeks we've had risotto and



*At this memorable lunch, we were fed by the Root to Rise women. Here we are all waiting patiently for their memorable feast at a beautifully set table in the rain.*

roasted veg, curried lentils, fried rice, and lots of big gorgeous salads. When everyone starts to head out of the fields at 12:30, ravenous, it feels so good to be one of the cooks that is putting out food we've just prepared. And when it's not your turn to cook, it is so amazing to be able to end the morning by sitting down with our friends to enjoy a beautiful meal made from the food that we grow.

## Not Much of a Summer Cook

By Hana Newcomb

In the winter, I make soup. Soup is my department. I once kept a list of all the different kinds of soup I made



*Vida made a beautiful pie for the "round foods" dinner*

during the off- season - I was aiming to make a hundred different soups, but lost momentum by early spring at about 75 iterations.

In the summertime, I am rarely in the kitchen. I am lucky that my husband is willing and ready to cook even after his own long day of work. It is the potlucks that define summer for us. We go from one potluck to the next, bouncing between Loudoun and Vienna. There are themed potlucks and one of the most memorable was the "round foods" dinner, as a farewell celebration for Scout. Most are gloriously random though, variations on a seasonal theme.

## The Ever So Versatile Tomato Sandwich

By Ciara Prencipe

As it gets too hot in the summer to cook, and the tomatoes come in faster and faster, I survive almost totally on tomato sandwiches. Endlessly customizable, and all you really need is good bread and a ripe PVF tomato to get started. The other day I was helping my mom move, and before I left I made us some tomato wraps. I broiled some pepper jack cheese on a tortilla until it was just melty, then added sliced tomatoes, salt & pepper, and topped them with arugula and basil from her



garden. It was the perfect cure for our hangry-ness! I'm embarrassed to say they were so good I made four more. One by one I made them, taking special trips out to the garden for more greenery each time, and after each one I thought "yeah I could eat another" until I finished all of her tortillas. Sorry mom!

Since then I've been eating a lot of open-faced tomato sandwiches with sausage and sautéed onions, or bacon and avocado, plus whatever cheese I have on hand. We should all be eating as many tomatoes as we can right now, because they're just so good this time of year and they'll be gone before we know it!

## Squash, Onions, Eggplant and Tomatoes: Ratatouille!

By Nina Stewart

A vegetable I eat all through summer and fall is squash. Squash with onions, eggplant, and tomato sauce creates amazing ratatouille, an easy and colorful dish that is great side for any meal.

- 1 Large Zucchini, sliced
- 1 Large Yellow Summer Squash, sliced
- 2 Small Eggplants, sliced
- 1 Red Bell Pepper, sliced
- 1/2 Small Yellow Onion, diced
- 2 Garlic Cloves, minced
- 15 oz. can Crushed Tomatoes
- Fresh Thyme
- 1 tsp Salt, divided

Preheat oven to 400F



*This elegant version of ratatouille shines at our Friday potlucks*

In a bowl add crushed tomatoes, diced onions, garlic, and 1/2 tsp. of salt. Stir to combine. Pour tomato mixture into a casserole dish making sure it covers the bottom of the dish. Place vegetables into the dish alternating squash, eggplant, zucchini, and red pepper, in a spiral until you reach the center. Sprinkle with fresh thyme and 1/2 tsp of salt. Bake for 40 minutes. Then remove from oven, let cool for 15 minutes. Enjoy!

## Lasagna

By Samuel Watkins

We have started a fun tradition in Loudoun, it's called Farm Family Lasagna. The concept is easy:



*The product of many hands in a tiny kitchen. It's magic*

First you gather up every ingredient you can find that will taste good in lasagna. Second, you get together with your farm family and every-

one who eats has to contribute. Third, chaos ensues as farmer hands build layer after layer after layer, after layer. Fourth, it goes in the oven and you HAVE to do something fun together while it bakes. Finally, you eat the delicious creation and feel very satisfied.

There is inevitably push and pull when you have "too many cooks in the kitchen," but no detail gets neglected! We have 3 people rolling sheets of pasta dough made from locally grown and milled flour. Someone else prepares the sauce or perhaps has already canned some. Another has to prep the various fillings: locally raised meat, cheese or vegetables from our farm. Then, a team that assembles each layer, in spite of some heckling from the other room. There is magic in cooking, and the collective energies of the farm people combine to make a powerful spell.

## Braised Leeks (Better Than Boiled)

By Vida Castro

If you thought that all farming was about was how to grow food, then I would remind you that we also have to sell this food. If you're trying to sell a bunch of leeks to a person, the best way is to explain how to prepare those leeks. We've joked that one of the easiest ways to sell anything is to tell the customer, "you know, that goes well with bacon!" This year I had to cook leeks for the first time, because a customer told me with the assertiveness that comes from experience, "All you have to do is boil them!" I think I forgot about this customer's simple method, because I ended up following a Martha Stewart recipe online that required wine and broth, however, I love the dish so much I have prepared it 4 times this season

### My version of Martha Stewart's braised leeks

- 2 tbsp butter
- 1/4 cup vegetable broth
- 1/4 cup wine (I've used white and sake - both work well!)
- 5-7 long leeks, sliced in half, the leafy greens chopped off
- Salt and pepper to taste

Melt the butter in a pan. Fry the cut side of the leeks for 3 minutes. Flip and fry the other side for another 3 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Flip once more, and add the wine and then vegetable broth. Let simmer for 15 minutes.



## *Notes from the Field*

### **No Ego in Farming**

By Katherine Collins

I had the pleasure of working for Potomac Vegetable Farms for two growing seasons (2014 & 2015). Then I began work at Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture, where I founded and currently manage the 2.5-acre production farm. Every year I learn a truck-full of things about growing vegetables. And every year, I learn just how much more there is to learn; I learn from my mistakes and I try not to make the same mistakes twice.

Every winter, I spend weeks reviewing how the past year went, planning for the following season, placing the needed orders and learning new farming techniques from articles, podcasts, workshops and conferences. It's not always a relaxing time for me. As a "do-er," I find the visioning stage of creating and executing a plan to be the most stressful because it's when I build up

all of my hopes and expectations for the season and worry that I won't be able to fulfill them. For the past several weeks, along with several weeks in May and June, I have watched pieces of my carefully-laid plans unravel, and in some cases, rot with the record-breaking rains we have had.

The good news is that I have lots of way more experienced farmers to ask advice of when things don't go quite right. I've often written to Hana with upsetting farming news: "root maggot ate my collards again" or "why do they call it spotted cucumber beetle if they actually eat EVERYTHING?!" Or just to ask a seemingly simple farming question like "how the heck do I get carrots to germinate?" After those conversations or after experiencing a huge crop loss, I'm reminded that there isn't much room for ego in farming.

After successes and bumper crops, which make it easier to forget about the things that were outside your control, I try to remind myself of this too. If you let your yearly successes and failures define you too much in this profession, you'll never last.

Because as growers we put our whole selves into this work, it's natural to pin your hopes on the success of your plan. We try to create an achievable schedule for the season, to keep our supplies and tools tidy and organized and to execute our checklists. But sometimes, as is the case with all of the rain we have gotten in JULY of all months, things do not go as expected and you have to pivot and hurl all your weight at Plan B. This lack of control, for a person who likes to see what's ahead, is what challenges, thrills, terrifies and humbles me season after season.



*The watermelon succumbed to the floods but somehow the okra always does well on Katherine's farm. Crop failures and successes, right next to each other.*