

OWN YOUR
FOOD.



CROMWELL VALLEY C.S.A.
Organic Community Supported Agriculture

CVCSA Community Newsletter 2009 Season

JUNE 6, 2009

Letter from the Board President

Greetings Members!

Welcome to the Cromwell Valley Community Supported Agriculture's 12th season of growing. Not only will you be receiving the best organic veggies in the area, you will be supporting local sustainable agriculture.

The farm team and the board have been working diligently throughout the year to bring you what we expect to be a bountiful harvest. It is quite evident what the farm team has been doing. Two new greenhouses have been constructed, fenced areas have been increased, improved gates have been added, cover crop has been turned under, seedlings transplanted, peas trellised and the list goes on. Of course we can't forget the planting, potting and repotting of hundreds of heirloom varieties of veggies for our first (annual?) plant sale. Thanks to all of you who came out and supported not only us, but TALMAR and the Herring Run Watershed Association. And then there are the strawberries! Have you ever tasted such sweet berries?

As for the board, it may not be so easy to see what they are doing. That is expected to change. You will find highlights from our monthly meetings in this newsletter and, as soon as we get our improved website up and running, we will be posting our minutes. We currently have 10 board members and expect to vote in #11 at our next meeting, so we have room for one more. We are all volunteers. We all work, most of us have families, some attend school. We can always use more help. Even if you do not wish to commit to

regular board meetings, please consider attending a meeting to see how you can help.

Let me catch you up on three of the board's endeavors. First, we have submitted an application to AmeriCorps. Through this federally funded program, we hope to provide a group of young adults with hands on learning experience in organic farming while giving us assistance with never ending work. We will let you know if we are awarded this opportunity. Next, we have joined with Fusion Group, a 501c3 organization that will receive tax-deductible donations on our behalf to help fund our intern program. We will be sending out information as to how you can make a tax-deductible contribution to Fusion group to help support our interns. Finally, we have started the process of applying for 501c3 status. While the paperwork appears overwhelming, Chad (the one who has helped us through Yahoo Groups, switches and searches for help) is attacking it with gusto! We'll keep you posted on that as well.

One last note: Please take advantage of the array of workshops we will be offering in connection with Cromwell Valley Park. You'll find everything from healthy soil to healthy eating. Check this newsletter and the park calendar of events for dates and times and fees.

The harvest may be small right now....but, just you wait!

See you 'round the farm,

Mimi Knuth

Highlights in this issue:

- Sign up for a workshop
- Meet your Head Farmer
- Try a new recipe
- Learn what's going on at the farm
- Enjoy something fun for the kids (and the young at heart)

Meet Your Farmers: Matt Belmont—Head Farmer



(Picture courtesy of Flickr user [Nicholas T](#))

“Just as it is positive for consumers to get to know where their food comes from, it is good for farmers to know where their food goes and how people use it.”

Throughout the season, we'll be featuring interviews with some of the most important people on the farm—our farmers. You'll get to know not only our Head Farmer, featured in this issue, but also the Assistant Farmer and our valuable interns.

This month, Matt took time out from his buys schedule to answer a few questions for us.

Why did you decide to become a farmer?

It was never a decision. It's just something that I knew I wanted to do, had to do, since I was a small child, even though I was not raised in a farming family. I have tried several other occupations and found that I could not forget about farming. It's more like a compulsion that I was born with.

How long have you been farming?

Not counting apprenticeships and internships, about seven or eight years.

What brought you to CVCSA?

My now-ex-wife and I were struggling to develop a market farm in rural Tennessee, and heard through her brother (who has long lived in the Baltimore area) that CVCSA needed a farmer or two. We applied and were accepted. That was in January 2005.

What is your favorite thing about working for a CSA?

Just as it is positive for consumers to get to know where their food comes from, it is good for farmers to know where their food goes and how people use it. We get to know their faces just as they get to know ours. It's a wonderful, although sometimes highly stressful, mutual learning experience. Some members have vital skills to contribute to the farm; for some it is an opportunity to acquire basic agricultural skills and knowledge.

What would you say is the most difficult thing about being a farmer?

Economic challenges: low remuneration, lack of health insurance. Successful, long-established farmers can reach a more profitable level where they can get past these difficulties. I'm moving in that direction, but am not there yet.

What are your favorite things to grow and why?

Perennial crops, especially shrubs and trees. It gives you a chance to establish a long-term relationship with what you're growing--developing an apple tree or a blueberry bush into the form and productivity that you desire is a years-long nurturing and iterative learning process. It's rather like having a long, deep, slow conversation with some very contemplative friends. You also don't have to till the ground in order to grow them. This means I don't have to destroy organic matter and beneficial soil organisms in order to grow the crop.

Thanks to Matt for sharing his farming life with us. Now that you know a little more about him, if you see Matt around the farm, make sure to introduce yourself and thank him for his hard work.

Upcoming Events and Workshops

Cromwell Valley CSA, Gunpowder Valley Conservancy, Herring Run Watershed Association and Willow Grove Conservancy are presenting several workshops this year to help you make the most of your harvest shares. You'll also find lessons that will help you reduce your environmental impact, like the upcoming Rain Barrel Workshop presented by Cromwell Valley CSA and Gunpowder Valley Conservancy, and Composting 101 taught by our very own Head Farmer Matt Belmont. Mark your calendars and register today!

SATURDAY JUNE 20

10 AM - NOON, WILLOW GROVE NATURE CENTER

RAIN BARREL WORKSHOP

Building your own rain barrel is fun and easy, and best of all, you'll have your very own barrel to take home with you by lunch time! This workshop is meant for individuals interested in saving water and reducing rainwater runoff which can carry pollutants to our streams and bay. The water you save can be used for garden and lawn watering, washing your car or tools, or it can simply be released more gradually into the ground where it can recharge our groundwater supplies. Save water, save money, and save our streams all at the same time! If you are interested in assembling your own rain barrel or just want to learn more about rain barrels, register today! Workshop is free. If you wish to take a barrel home with you the cost is \$60 (Gunpowder Valley Conservancy members \$50); cost includes rain barrel and assembly kit. Space is limited to 15 builders or participants.

If you would like a rain barrel but can not attend the workshop you can buy one pre-assembled for \$75 (GVC members \$60). To buy a rain barrel contact Peggy Perry at 410-668-0118 or little-owl@msn.com.

SUNDAY JUNE 28

9 - 11 AM, SHERWOOD FARM

COMPOSTING 101

Cromwell Valley CSA Head Farmer Matt Belmont digs dirt, and can teach you how to enrich your own soil with composted yard and kitchen waste. Meet at the CSA sign just inside the Sherwood entrance. CSA members \$2, non-members \$4.

SUNDAY JULY 19

2 - 4 PM, WILLOW GROVE NATURE CENTER

FREEZING FOOD 101

Learn how to deal with the July bounty of squash and other veggies by freezing some for a taste of summer next winter! Basic preparation techniques and freezing processes for optimal taste and nutrient retention will be covered. \$3 CSA members, \$5 non-members

Save water, save money and save our streams by building your own rain barrel. Sign up now!

Strawberry Panzanella (Makes about 6 servings)



(Picture courtesy of Flickr user ~MVI~)

Ingredients:

- 1/4 cup unsalted butter
- 1/4 cup + 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- couple pinches of fine grain salt
- 1 pound loaf of hearty day-old bread (like a nutty whole-grain), cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1+ pint basket of ripe strawberries, chopped
- 8 ounce container of plain Greek yogurt
- poppy seeds for garnish (optional)

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 350F degrees. Melt the butter in a large pot. Stir in the sugar and salt, stirring until the sugar dissolves. Remove pot from the heat and add bread cubes, tossing until the cubes are well covered. Place the bread cubes in a single layer on a baking sheet and cover with any remaining liquid. Heat the bread cubes in the oven until well toasted (about 15 minutes), tossing a few times to make sure cubes toast evenly.

While bread is toasting, mash half the chopped strawberries in a small bowl until juicy but still chunky. Stir in the remaining 2 tablespoons of brown sugar and transfer to a large bowl.

Once toasted, allow the bread cubes to cool several minutes. Toss them with the mashed strawberries in the large bowl to coat the cubes. Toss in the remaining chopped strawberries. Divide into servings and top with a dollop of yogurt (or serve it on the side). Sprinkle with poppy seeds and enjoy.

(Recipe adapted from www.101cookbooks.com and submitted by CVCSA member Reba Goodall.)

Baby Spinach and Strawberry Salad



(Picture courtesy of Ami Spencer)

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup strawberries, halved
- 2 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar
- 1 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 Tbsp. fresh mint leaves
- 6 cups baby spinach
- 1 large radish, chopped
- 1 small spring onion, chopped, whites and greens separated
- 3/4 cup strawberries, quartered or cut in eighths
- fresh mint leaves, for garnish

Instructions:

For the dressing, mix the first four ingredients in a food processor or blender until smooth. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

In a large bowl, toss the spinach, radishes and onion to mix. Evenly split the salad into the number of servings you'd like. Top each salad with equal amounts of strawberries and add a few mint leaves. Drizzle with about 1-2 Tbsp. dressing immediately before serving.

Makes 2 dinner-sized or 4 side salads.

* This salad is also great with crumbled feta or goat cheese and/or walnuts.

(Recipe submitted by Ami Spencer)

For the Kids



Farm Update (June 9-13, 2009)



(Picture courtesy of Flickr user [thebittenword](#).)

Welcome 2 All!

Greetings to all new members of Cromwell Valley CSA, and welcome back to all returning members. I hope you're managing to stay dry. I am not, but it's a happy season anyway.

We're a small but energetic crew this year, myself, Matt Belmont, lead farmer; Andrea Anderson, assistant farmer; lead intern Mohammed Jennai, or "Mo;" and intern Austin Redwood. We also have fifteen work-exchange members who regularly contribute their hours toward the operation of the farm in various capacities, and numerous volunteers who have helped make our workload more manageable, particularly with regards to pulling weeds out of our raspberries and strawberries, a never-ending task. We also have a slowly-growing set of mechanical equipment to help us cut down on hand labor and manage a larger crop.

It's been a wet start to the season and so your first couple of shares are necessarily going to be lighter than they ordinarily would be, but I do not expect this to continue. By sometime next week you'll be enjoying our annual avalanche of peas, and our greens are loving this weather.

So once again, welcome to 2009 growing season at CVCSA, and I hope to be seeing you all on the farm.

Your farmer,

Matt Belmont

In Your Shares



(Picture courtesy of Flickr user [Shawn Allen](#))

It looks like your shares for the upcoming week will include a bit more variety. You can expect:

- Peas
- Lettuce
- Scallions
- Herbs

And for those hoping for a bit of the coveted crop, Matt will also be keeping a watch on the asparagus.