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FOOD.



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

CVCSA Community Newsletter 2009 Season

JULY 25, 2009

Member Highlight: Meet Dora

Highlights in this issue:

- Meet Dora!
- Participate in a workshop before it's too late
- Learn about cucurbits
- Make some soup
- Draw a veggie picture

Dora and her family have been members of Cromwell Valley CSA for several seasons now and Dora has participated at varying levels in the CVCSA community.

How long have you been a member of CVCSA and why did you choose to join?

This is our 4th season. We joined when I discovered I was pregnant with my first child and (almost simultaneously) that we couldn't afford to shop at Whole Foods.

What is your favorite thing about being a member of CVCSA?

FOOD! I love to eat!

If you don't mind, please share a bit about yourself.

We are a family of 4 living in the Govans neighborhood in the city. My husband works for a congressman and is in the Coast Guard reserves, and I am at home with the kids, but was a Realtor for a few years before that and will be attending law school at UB full time this fall.

Has being a member of CVCSA changed you or your family in any way?

I'm much more adventurous with my foods than I was before joining, and more likely to pick something out at the store that is off the beaten path. I've also expanded my storage repertoire by learning how to make and freeze a

wider range of fresh foods to enjoy in the winter and early spring between seasons. And, oddly, I've developed an addiction of some sort.

Yesterday I actually got excited when my mother in law gave back the beet greens from her share. I catch myself standing at the kitchen sink thinking longingly about giant, crisp, damp leaves of chard. I was tempted to take the kale from the table centerpieces at a winter wedding we attended and stash it in my purse for the vegetable soup mom makes that I love so much. I'm a weirdo.

You've been involved with CVCSA in a variety of capacities. Could you tell us a bit about your involvement and how it has affected your CVCSA experience?

One of the things that makes this organization so unique is that each member truly gets to choose their own level of involvement. I did a work exchange one year, aiming to meet some people and get outside a bit. Working in the fields helped me lose the baby-weight, which was a bonus. I also was a board member, which I really enjoyed. As a stay at home mom I don't often get to talk to adults about adult things, and I really loved it. And I was membership coordinator for 1.5 seasons, and I especially enjoyed that job, since I was part salesperson and part cheerleader - stuff I'm really good at. It was a joy to talk to so many interesting and informed people. But at each step, all I had to do was decide what I wanted to be doing and I got to do it. Not many organizations are so accommodating! While the CVCSA doesn't fit with every lifestyle, the more involved a member is, the more rich and enriching the experience is.

Thanks to Dora for sharing her family's CSA experience with us. If you see Dora and her kids on the farm, say hello and introduce yourself!



Lentil Vegetable Soup (Makes 4 to 6 servings)

Don't have time to cook up those vegetables? Try a versatile soup!

Ingredients:

- 1 c lentils
- 4 cups light-colored liquid (this can be water, chicken stock, veggie stock, or garlic stock...or whatever strikes your fancy)
- 2 garlic cloves
- 2 med potatoes, diced
- 1 c diced carrots
- 1 c peas
- about 2 handfuls chopped chard/kale/spinach/beet greens
- bay leaf

Instructions:

Rinse the lentils very well. Keep an eye out for stones or ugly lentils (if they don't look mostly like the rest, they're probably not very tasty). Discard any that float.

In a pot, add lentils with the liquid, garlic cloves, potatoes and bay leaf. Bring to a boil, then lower to simmer for 10 min.

Add the diced carrots, simmer 10 more min. If peas are fresh, add them with the carrots. If they're frozen, add them with the greens, simmer about 5-6 min.

Throw in random fresh herbs near the end of cooking. Basil and cilantro should be added right before serving, since they don't hold up well to the cooking.

This is a really flexible recipe. If you have other veggies, feel free to add them. Just make sure you add veggies of similar cooking needs at the same time. Turnips and radishes sub great for potatoes. Onions would be a great addition - sauté them first in the pan, then add with the lentils and liquid. Add green beans when they're available. The only part you want to stick to closely to get soup is 1 c lentils to 4 c liquid. After that, go crazy!

(Recipe contributed by CVCSA member Cami.)



(Picture courtesy of Flickr user maggiphotos.)

For the Kids



Draw a picture and write about it.

Get a lesson in
canning and
savor the flavors
of summer all
year long!



(Picture courtesy of Flickr user ellievanhoutte.)

Workshops

For anyone interested in storing up all those vegetables we're about to get, the next workshop will teach you how to can your goods. For more information or to sign up for any of these sessions, contact the park office at 410.887.2503 or email info@cromwellvalleypark.org for more details. Workshop details are below:

SATURDAY AUGUST 1
10 AM - 12 PM, WILLOW GROVE NATURE CENTER
CANNING 101

Tomatoes are ideal candidates for canning: whole, diced, juiced, or made into sauce, salsa... Learn how to safely process and preserve tomatoes as well as other fruits and veggies in glass jars for economical, long-term storage. \$5 CSA members, \$7 non-members includes canning materials.

SATURDAY AUGUST 8
3 PM - 4 PM, WILLOW GROVE NATURE CENTER
CHARD-O-RAMA: COOKING GREENS, DELICIOUSLY

Got chard? CVCSA head farmer Matt Belmont will be on hand to demonstrate quick, easy and delicious ways to deal with the bounty of summer greens.

In Your Shares (July 28 & August 1)

In the coming week, you can expect:

- Potatoes
- Lettuce
- Scallions
- Garlic
- Chard
- Possibly cucumbers and/or zucchini and maybe some U-pick blackberries

Farm Update

On Cucurbits

So what is a cucurbit? It is a member of the plant family Cucurbitaceae, which includes so many of our most loved summer and fall annual fruits: summer squashes (including zucchini), winter squashes, pumpkins, watermelons, cucumbers, gourds, and cantaloupe (why can't it elope, anyway?). The squashes, pumpkins, and gourds are all natives of the Americas; cucumbers are of Eurasian origin, while the watermelon hails from West Africa.

Getting cucurbits started is not difficult. They are large-seeded and love to germinate quickly. If you start pumpkins or squash seeds in trays or pots to get an early start, you should ideally already have your plot prepared since it will completely fill the pot and be crawling all over the place within two weeks after germination. If started from seed outdoors, it is best to wait until all danger of frost is past and plant them in the traditional mounds, several seeds to a hill. After plants have established themselves, they love to have more soil tossed upon them.

Watermelons and cucumbers, especially watermelons, start at a more sedate pace but will suddenly begin crawling several weeks after germination. Watermelons need the highest temperatures for growing of all the members of this family. The other cucurbits, while they need high soil temperatures to germinate and do not tolerate frost, also appreciate a little shade in the height of the summer. Thus the traditional Native American "three sisters" companion planting strategy—corn, beans, and squash. Corn is seeded first. When the corn is about two feet high, beans are sown between the corn plants. Squash is then sown in hills in between the corn rows. The corn serves as a trellis for the beans, which feed nitrogen to the corn, which provides shade for the squash, which smothers the weeds in between the rows.

Cucumbers are the most sedate growers in this family and can be planted about 6-9" apart. They can be trained to a trellis, which makes the fruit easier to spot and can improve the quality of the fruit. It relies on a constant, moderate supply of fresh water.

Squashes require abundant water for germination and establishment and for maximum yields; however, once established, if planted in soil with good water retention, they have remarkable drought tolerance, as their roots dive deep. Squashes and pumpkins are spaced from 2 feet to 6 feet apart, depending on the variety. In the garden, it is highly inadvisable to plant squashes near low-growing vegetables such as carrots, lettuce, beets, etc.

Cucumber beetles, squash bugs, and squash vine borers are the three most common pests of the cucurbits in the mid-Atlantic region. Cucumber beetles are highly mobile and are capable of rapidly spreading bacterial wilt, a deadly disease that wilts the entire plant overnight. Watermelons are the least sensitive to these pests and diseases, while zucchini and yellow squash are among the most sensitive. Cucumbers and squashes can be protected with row cover while young, which is then removed to allow pollinators access to the plants.

There is a great deal more to be said about this wonderful family than can't be covered in a short newsletter, but I'm sure you'd rather just serve them baked, sautéed, or fresh upon your plates in the coming months than worry about their academic details.

Happy eating!

Matt



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