

TUV HASHAVUA: BEST OF THE WEEK



**TUV HA'ARETZ
CSA AT THE
FOREST HILLS
JEWISH CENTER**

How a Small Homestead Became a CSA Farm

Sarah Milstein, motherearthnews.com

The idea of CSA first developed in Japan. Called *teikei*, meaning "food with the farmer's face on it," the concept moved to Europe and then, in 1985, it was introduced to the U.S., where the term Community Supported Agriculture was coined.

For growers, a major benefit of CSA is the receipt of cash up front during the winter months, when it is most needed but least forthcoming. And, with the season long support of a community, you are guaranteed a market for your produce and are thus relieved of some of the risk of small-scale farming.

Members buy shares of farm's harvest before the season begins; Then, usually June through late fall, CSA members receive a share of the farm's bounty. CSA growers may make weekly deliveries to distribution points, or members may pick up at the farm. Typically, seven to ten types of fresh organic vegetables are delivered or picked up each week.

The community supported agriculture model is very flexible, and every CSA group is unique. In some groups, members pay ahead of time for a full season, with the understanding that they will accept some of the risks of production (crop failures) and may enjoy some of the bounty (great weather for a particular crop). In other groups, members subscribe on a monthly basis and receive a predetermined amount of produce each week. Most CSA groups offer vegetables as their basic share. But some groups also offer fruit, herbs, and anything else the farm can produce.

In 1992, Debby and Pete Kavakos began growing produce on an acre of their homestead property, Stoneledge Farm in upstate New York. They sold their vegetables at a local farmers' market and to restaurants. They knew they wanted to expand their business, but realized after a few seasons that local markets would not be big enough to support their growth.

In 1996, the Kavakoses learned about CSA through an organic agriculture newsletter. They thought a New York city-based CSA group might meet their needs. "A big part of the reason we we farm is for the family aspects, and the CSA group allows us to tap the city market, but with a much shorter trip. It takes between six and eight hours total to drive down, unload the truck, visit with members and do a little city shopping, then drive back," Debby explains. "It works for our family and with our marketing goals."

To start their group, Debby contacted Just Food, a New York City nonprofit organization that works on food-related issues. Just Food helped her find a few interested city people who could work with her to build a membership and to find a distribution site.

The Kavakoses now grow 140 shares on 15 acres, and would like

WEEK #6: 7/8/2014

Many Thanks to Our
Volunteers:

7/8 Pick-up: 5:00 to 8:00PM

Carrie Leifer

Daisy Alter

Benjamin Pecora-Sanefski

Unclaimed Shares Delivery:

Alfred Rosenblatt

7/15 Pick-up: 5:00 to 8:00PM

Bonnie Chernin

Mindy Weinblatt

Sara Paige

Unclaimed Shares Delivery:

Lenny Fuchs

LAST MINUTE CONTACT INFO:
For urgent last-minute pick-up or volunteering changes on pick-up day, call/text **Felicia 917-627-0669** or email **Judy trupinjet@gmail.com**

TUV HA'ARETZ CSA at the
Forest Hills Jewish Center
106-06 Queens Blvd.
Forest Hills, NY 11375
718-264-7000, ext 250 | tuv@fhjc.org

- **Tuv Ha'Aretz CSA:** www.foresthillstuvcsa.com
- **Facebook:** www.facebook.com/tuvFHJC
- **Twitter:** twitter.com/#!/tuvfhjc
- **Golden Earthworm:** www.goldenearthworm.squarespace.com
- **FHJC:** www.fhjc.org
- **Hazon:** www.hazon.org

to double their shares over the next three or four years. Two CSA groups comprise more than 90% of the couple's business, with their remaining shares going to a few local people. With the promise of growth, the farm has been able to invest in a 40' x 60' pole barn and some new equipment, including a tractor and delivery truck. Debby now farms full time, with help from the Kavakos kids; they hope that next year, Pete will be able to quit his off-farm job and work with the family full time, as well.

Though ideal in many ways, the CSA group is not a perfect solution for the Kavakos family. "It's harder to be a CSA grower than a regular market gardener," observes Debby, "because you have to have many goodies each week. With a farmers' market, you leave your failures at home and bring what you have. But with the CSA shares, you can't just have a bagful of cabbage and that's it. People expect a variety of good things. It makes it hard to predict the share contents, sometimes."

"We might be able to make more per acre if we sold at a farmers' market," Debby says. "And there's lots of stress because people have already paid and have expectations of our deliveries. Plus, managing the CSA group is not always easy. It took a while to build trust and respect between the growers and the members. At first, we were worried: Are the members going to tell us how to run our farm? We're still working out some of those communications and a sense of which jobs the members do and which things we do. It's a continual learning process."

Generally speaking, farmers rely on a core group – a committee of four to ten committed CSA members who volunteer to take responsibility for CSA functions that happen beyond the garden gates – including recruiting members, finding and overseeing the distribution site, keeping treasury and membership records, coordinating member volunteer shifts at the distribution site, running community events such as potlucks and farm festivals, educating members about local agriculture and cooking with fresh produce, and maintaining food pantry connections. A core group can also work with the grower to figure out an annual budget for the farm and set the share price.

Getting to know the farmer is key to a satisfying and enjoyable CSA season. Members obviously benefit in that they receive a variety of fresh vegetables every week, and they can enjoy the experience more if they understand the farm and communicate with the farmers.

Mother Earth News is America's leading magazine about sustainable, self-reliant living

7/8 What's in the Box: Zucchini, Batavian Lettuce, Radicchio, Cabbage, Swiss Chard, Chioggia Beets, Basil, Carrots

GOLDEN EARTHWORM FARM NOTES

It's been another busy week of transplanting, seeding, harvesting and irrigating! We seeded the second set of green beans on Sunday. You can expect to see them in your shares some time this month.

Dry and hot ... perfect growing conditions for our summer crops. Keeping everything irrigated is the biggest challenge in this weather!



BASIL CITRUS ADE

Serves 6 | *from*
vegetariantimes.com

4 c fresh basil
¾ c sugar
6 c water, divided
1 c lemon or lime juice
(approx. 6 lemons or
10 limes, depending on
size of fruit)

In a medium saucepan over medium heat, stir together sugar and basil leaves. Simmer 5 minutes without stirring. Strain and cool. To serve, stir together basil syrup with 4 cups water and lemon juice. Chill well, serve over ice.



VEGETABLE LO MEIN

Serves 4 | *Adapted from*
blueapron.com

2 tbsp soy sauce
1 tbsp corn starch
3 tbsp hoisin sauce
½ cup cold water
2 tbsp vegetable oil
3 cloves garlic, minced
1-inch piece ginger, minced
1 bunch mint
1 bunch basil (or thai basil)
1 red onion, thinly sliced
1 zucchini, cut into ¼" batons
1 cup sliced cabbage and/or
swiss chard (including stems)
1 carrot, cut into ¼" batons
6 oz lo mein or soba noodles,
cooked to al dente, refreshed
in cold water

salt and pepper, to taste

In a small bowl, whisk together corn starch, soy sauce, hoisin sauce and water till smooth. Set aside.

Put oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add onion, garlic, ginger and cook with stirring till softened, 1-2 min. Add carrots, cabbage and zucchini and cook till softened and bright, 2-3 min.

Add prepared sauce to the pan of vegetables, and simmer. Cook 2 min, till thickened.

Add rinsed and drained noodles, along with half the basil and mint. Add up to ¾ cup additional water as desired for texture. Toss to coat until heated through and combined, about 2 min. Season to taste with salt and pepper, and garnish with remaining herbs.



**BRING PLASTIC
BAGS TO WRAP
YOUR SHARE**