



TUV HASHAVUA

BEST OF THE WEEK

**MANY THANKS
TO OUR
VOLUNTEERS !**

8/18 [Week #13 – A]

5-8pm Pick-up

**Angelita Alvarado-
Santos**

**Ruth Dominguez
Rachael Janowitz
Joan Ferng**

1pm Truck Unloading

**Marci Birnbaum
Jessica Keane
Alexa Weitzman**

8pm Unclaimed Shares
David Snyder

8/25 [Week #14 – B]

5-8pm Pick-up

**Esfir Kandinov
Yelena Simkhayeva
Liliya Simkhayeva**

1pm Truck Unloading

**Jessica Keane
Min Kuo
Brian Gardner Hoashi**

8pm Unclaimed Shares
Jessica Pace

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

- **Tuv Ha'Aretz CSA:**
foresthilstuvcsa.com
- **Facebook:**
www.facebook.com/tuvFHJC
- **Twitter:** @tuvFHJC
- **Golden Earthworm Farm:**
goldenearthworm.com
- **FHJC:** www.fhjc.org
- **Hazon:** www.hazon.org

CSAs vs. Farmers' Markets: A Complex Question

Martha Merzig, Member, Tuv Ha'Aretz CSA

For both farmers and consumers, the decision to participate in a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program or attend a farmers' market is a complex one. As CSA subscribers, we all know the strengths and weaknesses of a subscription. But what about farmers? How do farms make the decision to sell through farmer's markets or organize a CSA (or both)? While this article only scratches the surface of the complex CSA/farmers' market conversation, it will hopefully give readers a taste of the many factors farmers have to take into account.

First, farmers' markets. Many producers, especially small or young farms, have great success with farmers' markets because they provide freedom and flexibility. Farm size is a non-issue: even backyard hobbyists can sell, making a farmers' market a great entry point into the food economy. Crop diversity (or lack thereof) is not a deterrent. Producers aren't limited by the number or quantity of crops grown: from a single specialty crop to a wide range of products, farmers can sell whatever is ready for harvest. Most farmers' market organizations have an established customer base and good local advertising, so farmers don't carry the burden of attracting customers. Through regular market attendance, farms can establish a reputation and solid customer base that can springboard into bigger and better distribution channels.

But sometimes the no-rules structure of the market isn't enough to make it worthwhile for farmers. Although farmers' markets are popular with consumers and nationwide their numbers continue increase by leaps and bounds, selling through a market is not always the right fit.

Markets require hours spent away from the farm. Labor must be allocated to transport, set up, and staff a market booth. Sometimes, if budgets are tight, farmers have to sacrifice production time in favor of being at the market. And once there, selling a farm's crop is not guaranteed. The vast majority of market transactions are small, meaning many transactions per hour are required to make the day worthwhile. Although farmers have the freedom to sell whatever they choose, only popular crops sell well. Consumers prefer familiar, well-known fruits and vegetables, even though these crops might mean less efficient land use or require higher maintenance and overhead. Further, only the most attractive, shapely, blemish-free produce can come to market. Perfectly good (but small or oddly shaped) veggies are often passed over, meaning significant potential waste. And as with all retail, weather plays a big part in sales. When weather is bad, fewer customers make the journey to market and sales slow. A rainy market day could leave a farmer with excess perishable inventory as less is sold.

CSA programs, in contrast, offer some answers to the problems posed by the farmers' market structure, but CSAs, too, are not right for everyone.

On the plus side, prepaid subscriptions mean farms have capital available before the growing season begins in earnest. This allows farmers to buy seed, pay laborers, and service equipment without needing to rely quite as much on business loans. CSAs also help stabilize a farm's income, easing the pain of less productive years. Farmers are relieved of the need to dedicate man-hours to

selling, since buyers have prepaid for their goods. Cosmetics and product size are not as significant an issue with CSAs because the contents of individual shares are usually pre-packaged for members; shareholders don't pick for themselves. Less common varieties of fruits and veggies can be included, with farmers giving instruction on ways to use unusual fruits and veggies. CSAs help build and develop a farm's 'brand' (and by extension, brand loyalty) through regular communication with members.

But CSAs often have a high bar for entry. Farms must be able to provide enough crop variety in each box (and over the course of the growing season) to satisfy their customers' needs and make subscriptions an attractive proposition. CSAs are most commonly based in urban centers, so transportation costs can sometimes be higher than selling at a market closer to the farm. Farms generally need to have a well-established reputation before groups will invest as shareholders in their harvest, making it difficult for young farms to participate. A certain amount of legal expertise is required to navigate the necessary (and sometimes complex) seasonal agreements with shareholder organizations. CSAs are a relatively new institution and generally are not as widely advertised as farmers markets: usually groups rely on word-of-mouth and a core group of organizers to sustain membership.

There is no perfect solution to bringing a harvest to market, and CSAs and farmers' markets are just two methods among a spectrum of choices. The size of the farm, its location, the diversity of crops grown, and availability of local outlets all directly affect which program provides the best fit. Many farms (including our own Golden Earthworm) use a combination of CSA subscriptions and farmers' market sales to generate income. There is no one-size-fits-all answer. But the moral of the story? Whether you're a farmers' market fan or CSA all the way, keep supporting local farmers!

Martha Merzig is a graphic designer and avid food lover. Raised in upstate New York near dairy and fruit farms, her perfect summer morning includes picking blueberries with family. She lives in Forest Hills with her husband and pet cockatiel.

DRIVERS WANTED! We are still in need of a few additional volunteers for some unclaimed shares delivery slots: 09/01 (A-week) and 10/27 (A-week)

If you have access to a car, please email me directly with the date(s) you can help: IWARCH@GMAIL.COM Even if you have already fulfilled your volunteer requirement by doing another task, you can still take one of these shifts. All volunteers are greatly appreciated!

WHAT'S IN THE BOX??

Red Tomatoes, Cherry Tomatoes, Onions, Zucchini, Green Bell Peppers, Red Potatoes FRUIT: Pears, Donut Peaches

SUMMER TIAN

Beth, budgetbytes.com | Serves 6

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 medium onion, diced fine
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 medium zucchini
- 1 medium yellow squash
- 1 medium potato
- 1 medium tomato
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 cup shredded cheese

Heat the oven to 400F. In a skillet over medium heat, cook onions and garlic with olive oil until softened, 5 minutes. Thinly slice the rest of the vegetables.

Butter or oil-spray an 8x8 square baking dish. Spread the cooked onion and garlic evenly across the bottom of the dish.

Stack the sliced vegetables, alternating them: zucchini, potato, squash, and tomato, and repeat. Arrange the stacked vegetables in the baking dish up-ended, standing them so the "coins" are vertical. Sprinkle over liberally with salt, pepper, and thyme.

Cover the dish with foil or a lid and bake for 30 minutes. Remove the over, top with cheese, and bake 15-20 minutes more, or until cheese is golden brown. Serve hot or at room temperature.

AGRODOLCE

marthastewart.com | 1.5 cups

- 2 large bell peppers
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1/4 cup raisins
- 1/4 cup port wine
- 1 tbsp chopped parsley
- 1 tbsp balsamic vinegar
- coarse salt
- freshly ground black pepper

Heat oven to 450F. Rub peppers with oil. Place on a baking sheet, and roast until peppers are blistered, 15 minutes. Transfer peppers to a bowl and immediately cover with plastic wrap; when cool, remove skins and discard. Stem and seed peppers and slice or chop. Set aside.

Put raisins, port, and 2 tbsp water in a small saucepan with lid over medium heat and cook until plump, 5 minutes.

Combine raisins and liquid with peppers, parsley, and vinegar. Season with salt and black pepper, and toss together.

Agrodolce can be made up to 2 days in advance and kept covered and chilled.

Do your work-out with the TRUCK UNLOADING mid-day volunteer shift!

We need volunteers for August, September, and beyond. This is a great shift for those who want a mid-day volunteer task: it is **from 1-2pm on Tuesdays**. You'll have to sign up for 4 weeks, however they need not be in a row. Thank you for fulfilling your mandatory commitment! Please contact **Alexa: alexaweitzman@gmail.com**

CHERRY TOMATO VINAIGRETTE

Christine Dutton, mediterraneanlivingt.com | Serves 4

- 1 pint of cherry tomatoes, half cut in half, the rest left whole
- 4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil, divided
- 1/2 of one small red onion, finely chopped
- 1/4 tsp onion powder
- 1/4 tsp cumin
- 1/2 tsp dill
- 1 tbsp white balsamic vinegar
- salt and pepper

Heat up half the olive oil in a small pan and add onions. Cook onions until softened, about 3-4 minutes. Add tomatoes remainder of oil and spices and cook on medium for an additional five minutes until tomatoes are softened. Finish with vinegar and cook for one minute. Add salt and pepper to taste.