

# Otter Hook Farms

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Traditional Family Farming



## **Week of September 29, 2009, Harvest Week 17**

This week's share includes: Potatoes, Cabbage, Winter Squash, Saute mix, and Arugula

Next week should have: Potatoes, Winter Squash, Onions, Baby Bok Choy, Arugula and Greens

### Rustic Cabbage Soup Recipe

*1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil*

*a big pinch of salt*

*1/2 pound potatoes, skin on, cut 1/4-inch pieces*

*4 cloves garlic, chopped*

*1/2 large yellow onion, thinly sliced*

*5 cups stock*

*1 1/2 cups white beans, precooked or canned (drained & rinsed well)*

*1/2 medium cabbage, cored and sliced into 1/4-inch ribbons*

*more good-quality extra-virgin olive oil for drizzling*

*1/2 cup Parmesan cheese, freshly grated*

*Warm the olive oil in a large thick-bottomed pot over medium-high heat. Stir in the salt and potatoes. Cover and cook until they are a bit tender and starting to brown a bit, about 5 minutes - it's o.k. to uncover to stir a couple times. Stir in the garlic and onion and cook for another minute or two. Add the stock and the beans and bring the pot to a simmer. Stir in the cabbage and cook for a couple more minutes, until the cabbage softens up a bit. Now adjust the seasoning - getting the seasoning right is important or your soup will taste flat and uninteresting. Taste and add more salt if needed, the amount of salt you will need to add will depend on how salty your stock is (varying widely between brands, homemade, etc)...*

*Serve drizzled with a bit of olive oil and a generous dusting of cheese.*

*Serves 4.*

Early on in the season, when the shares were looking good and the produce was plentiful, Chris wanted me to share in the newsletters information on losses we were experiencing then...how the pea harvest was lower than we planned for because turkeys came and ate half the peas just after they sprouted, or how three plantings of spring mustard greens and turnips were decimated by flea beetles. At the time, I vetoed sharing some of this with you in favor of keeping the newsletters positive, and with the reasoning that if you never knew what we planned for you to have, it was no loss to you not to get it.

Now that we're at week seventeen and the share has been awfully thin for the last six weeks, we think it fair to share with you exactly what losses we (and you, by virtue of your share in the farm) have experienced during this record-breaking wet and cold season. We do this not so anyone will feel bad, but so that you will know that we should have had a beautiful share with lots of variety all season, and it was not for lack of planning or trying that we did not...it was simply a bad year for growing vegetables.

**Root Crops:** 750 row feet each of beets and carrots (5 weeks of each) rotted in the ground due to all the rain. August plantings of beets failed to germinate - our supplier must have sent some bad seed. That would have supplied beets for about now through the end of the season. Because we like beets and carrots so much, our plan was to have one or the other every week. Two weeks' worth of parsnips, fennel and leeks also succumbed to the rain. Spring turnips were eaten by flea beetles as soon as the tops surfaced, so we didn't have much of them, although the fall planting always does better for us and we expect to have them starting next week or the week after that through the end of the season. Radishes, as you all know, were magnificent, and our potatoes (though a little small) are wonderful.

**Brassicas:** The spring broccoli and cabbage were incredible. We irrigated in May, and these crops thrive in cool and moderately wet conditions, so it was great weather for them. The fall crops have not been so lucky - we had several week's worth of plants first get hit by June hail. We bought some seedlings and rushed to get them in. They grew, and you did get one week of that planting, but we found that some of the plants were rotting in the stem, and getting some black in the florets, which we learned was downy mildew, a disease usually reserved for squash and melons, but due to all the rain also affected brassicas. Some of the Brussels sprouts, too, ended up with fungal infections and we had some plants simply die from all the rain. The fall cabbages became snail food, so we had to strip quite a lot off the heads to get them to you this week.

**Vines:** June hail hit summer and winter squash seedlings (for succession plantings), along with melons, the week we planned to get them planted. We direct seeded successions of the squashes and got some from those, but lack of warm and sunny days held these plants back from producing as they should have. Summer squash plants are now done, having succumbed to fungal infections (thanks to the wet), and the winter squash are almost all harvested. We'll have enough to give out for the rest of the weeks, but we were again hoping for twice as much as we actually harvested. The melon plants we bought to replace the ones we started were too wet for too long and did not survive. Our cucumber plants did poorly - we had very little yield, and what we did get were cucumber "balls" - oddly shaped from all the rain. All of these plants need many more sunny and warm days than we got in June and July.

**Greens and Beans:** Spring lettuce was great. As the rains came on, there were some slugs, but we got a lot of nice heads anyway. All the rain kept us from putting in succession plantings, so we weren't able to get any more in until August. We had planned on having lettuce every week through the end of September. Swiss chard is usually a staple green for us - we had some bad seed that didn't germinate early on, and then again we couldn't get in successions with all the rain. Those succession plantings are really important when it comes to greens throughout the season, because what you plant in May can't keep through September and October. Because of the length of time required to grow certain greens, like kale, by the time we could get back in the garden with the Rototiller, it was just too late to put them in. We should have had more weeks of green beans, but the plants didn't reach full size or production, nor did we get in every planting of those we needed to, thanks to the rain.

**Tomatoes:** late blight got them all. **Peppers:** too cold, too wet - where we had them did not have ideal drainage, so the plants were very stunted. Eggplants would have done better with more heat, but we had them on black plastic which helped. Next year, the peppers and tomatoes are going on plastic, too. As much as we don't like the idea of the plastic, the results were undeniable.

So that is the bulk of it in a nutshell. We are building some raised beds and adding drainage to help deal with overabundance of wet weather in the future. We're also adding to our organic matter with cover crops and grass mulches, and using rock powders and calcium to improve the soil's nutrient availability and drainage. If next year turns out to be dry, we'll get to further test out our ponds and the irrigation system we got this spring! We are looking forward to the future with hope, and learning more and more each season. We appreciate the support we've gotten from all our members, some of you for the past two seasons. Thank you for your patience as we learn how to deal with mother nature's curveballs. We hope our experiences are giving you some insight into small-scale farming and some delicious vegetables, to enjoy, as well.