

Johnson's Backyard Garden, May 19th

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We'd like your input for the newsletter! Please send related news articles, book reviews, recipes, etc to carolyn@johnsonbackyardgarden.com

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1) In Your Box this Week

Onions
Rainbow Chard
Tomatoes
Zucchini Squash
Patty Pan Squash
Bi-color Zephyr Squash
Banana Pepper
Green Bell Pepper
Strawberries or Asparagus
Cucumbers - ?
Grapefruit (Wed)

As the unexpected never fails to happen, keep in mind that this list is subject to change depending on availability and quality of crops on harvest day. You'll find the most accurate packing list on the homepage of our [website](#). The website list also features links to online recipes, pictures (for the more mysterious veggies) and other interesting tidbits.

2) Farm News

- Today we had a visit from News 8. They featured our workshare program as part of a series of short pieces on activities in the Austin area. Not sure when it's set to air, but we'll let you know!

- **Farmstand** plans are solidifying...we are planning on beginning Saturday June 7th, the stand will be open 9 am to 1 pm and will double as the farm CSA pick-up site. Nothing fancy to begin with, we'll have a small tent setup in the pecan orchard with vegetables for sale. We'll also have a few goat milk products - fresh chevre, feta, goat milk soap and possibly goat milk. Enjoy the excitement of a Saturday morning harvest on the farm; bring the kids, have a picnic in the orchard and pickup some veggies.



- Caroline and Carolyn will no longer be confused on the farm as Caroline is heading for drier pastures west of Austin for the summer. She will be missed!
- We're still busy planting – just today we seeded four more rows of cucumbers, one more watermelon row and five more rows of honey dews and canteloupe.
- Green beans will be ripe and in your boxes soon! We have three varieties this year – Isar and Maxibel, both of which are varieties of French fillet beans, and Royal Burgundy, a bush bean.
- Thanks to Todd, one of our CSA workshares, we now have an antenna for our wireless internet which extends the signal all the way out to the pecan orchard, as well as all the residences. It looks something like a pringles can, or perhaps a stun gun, towering above the farm office. Brenton is very pleased to have put an old TV antenna we had to such good use.



- The latest storm to hit town thankfully did not bring us any damage, however, our first generation of irrigation risers which are made of flexible piping have been spontaneously exploding in the heat. The geysers are pretty exciting, but we'd much rather have the water coming out of the drip tape and onto the plants, so we're in the process of replacing all the flexible pipe with solid pipe.



3) Benefit for Local Farm Family

There are times when ‘community supported agriculture’ means more than a box of vegetables. Last week we went on a tour graciously hosted by Gary and Sarah Rowland of Hairston Creek Farm in Burnett Texas to sample Seeds of Change varieties. While there we found out that Sarah has very recently been diagnosed with an aggressive form of breast cancer. In an attempt to ease the financial burden both of Sarah's treatment and the reduced time that can be devoted to their farming business, friends and neighbors are raising funds and will be holding a fundraising event at the [Barr Mansion](#) in Austin on Thursday **May 29th** at 7pm. There will be tastings of dishes prepared by leading area chefs using ingredients from Austin area farms, as well as a silent auction. For more information or to donate to the Rowland family online visit <http://rowland.austinfarm.org>

4) Beef Shares Available

Don't wait 'til the cows come home, reserve your beef share today! One share will be approximately 75-85 pounds of beef, packaged as a variety of cuts. The steers have been raised right down the road from us on our neighbor Sam's Y & B Ranch (as well as a year in our fields before the vegetables expanded); they have been raised naturally, grass-fed and are antibiotic and hormone free. Some of this beef will also be used by Jesse Griffin of the Dai Due Supper Club for the Outstanding in the Field dinner that will be held at our farm in October. A \$250 deposit will reserve your share. This deposit will be deducted from the final cost of the meat calculated at the time of butchering. Contact us for more details!

5) Change We Can Stomach

Extracted from Dan Barber's [editorial](#) in the May 11, 2008 edition of the New York Times

“With the price of oil at more than \$120 a barrel (up from less than \$30 for most of the last 50 years), small and midsize nonpolluting farms, the ones growing the healthiest and best-tasting food, are gaining a competitive advantage.

The high cost of oil alone will not be enough to reform American agriculture, however.

But it is possible to nudge the revolution along – for instance, by changing how we measure the value of food. If we stop calculating the cost per quantity and begin considering the cost per nutrient value, the demand for higher-quality food would rise.

Organic fruits and vegetables contain 40 percent more nutrients than their chemical-fed counterparts. And animals raised on pasture provide us with meat and dairy products containing more beta carotene and at least three times more C.L.A (conjugated linoleic acid, shown in animal studies to reduce the risk of cancer) than those raised on grain.”

5) Tomatoes!

You've probably noticed that the tomatoes in your boxes recently are suddenly *less* ripe than before. How odd, you may think, this seems like an incongruous digression of seasons. Not at all. The first of this season's tomatoes were organic greenhouse tomatoes, the more recent, not as ripe ones, are the first to come from our fields. We have over 20 rows of tomatoes, and more than 15 varieties. Sun golds and Sweet Million cherry tomatoes, Cherokee Purples, Zapotec Pink Ribs, Aunt Rudy's German Greens, Oaxacan Jewels, San Marzano Romas and good ol' Bush Early Girls and Beefsteak Slicers to name a few... it's going to be a good summer.

To ripen, keep the tomatoes in the paper bag and leave them on the counter. They don't need to be refrigerated unless they are over-ripe.



6) Win a 4-week CSA Membership...

...by designing the winning Johnson's Backyard Garden logo or t-shirt design!

Submit logo and/or t-shirts designs by email, snail mail, or in person. Winner(s) will be chosen by the JBG team, or perhaps we'll put it to a vote through the newsletter.

Deadline: June 15, 2008

7) Vegetable Storage Tips

We aim to grow and package our vegetables to maintain the highest taste and nutritional quality possible. However, once they've left the farm it's up to you to keep them fresh and nutritious. There's no refrigeration at the CSA drop points so it's good to pick up your box as early as possible, especially as the weather heats up. Here are some additional tips for storing this week's share:

- **Citrus** is best kept at room temperature of 60-70 degrees and used within two weeks. Do not store in plastic bags.
- **Cucumbers** and **Peppers** should be stored in the crisper, and washed before use.
- **Greens** should be kept in plastic bags. Any bunch greens can be freshened by cutting an inch of the bottom stalks and soaking the entire bunch in cold water for 10 minutes. Place in a plastic bag in the fridge for a few hours to revive.
- **Onions** are best kept moderately cool, no lower than 50 degrees. A cool, dry dark place is best- on the counter, in a cupboard or basket.
- **Summer Squash** will last 4-7 days in plastic bags in the crisper.
- **Tomatoes** should be kept uncovered at room temp, but can be refrigerated if very ripe. Place them in a sunny window to ripen.

Checkout our [storage tips](#) on our website for a more complete guide, and of course feel free to contact us with any questions.

8) Recipes

Growing food all day sure does work up an appetite – grow food to eat food, to grow food....the cycle is never-ending. Each of us on the farm has our own way of packing in the calories to keep going – Beth makes a mean green smoothie, I've been experimenting with making homemade powerbars, or "field food" and Will forages by knocking on my door regularly (but he makes a mean cup of coffee, and always has cold beer). The interns have a reserve of 50 pounds of rice and 50 pounds of pinto beans. Thus pinto beans, as well as peanut butter and greens, find their way into nearly everything that comes out of my kitchen. I know that sounds weird, but I'm generally too hungry to care. It's ironic, we have high quality vegetables at our fingertips, yet often we're too hungry to appreciate them in the gourmet sense.

Here are a few of our "recipes"

First from Beth Johnson, Brenton's wife:

Beth's Green Smoothie

Greens – Spinach, chard, kale, whatever you have – enough to fill the food processor to the point that you have to use some muscle to get them to fit

Yogurt

Frozen blueberries

Flax seeds – pureed in a coffee grinder

Orange or Apple Juice

Puree the greens first, then add everything else according to your taste preferences. Let the food processor run for several minutes to get a good consistency. Then drink and feel really healthy and full of iron!

Warning: these are habit forming and will quickly use up all of your week's greens.

Will's Shepherd's Pie

Crust:

mix masa flour with water, press into a pie pan

Filling:

Potatoes, cut into exact quarter inch cubes and boiled until just tender

Pinto beans, refried style

Green bell pepper, sliced and meticulously arranged on top

Seasoning to taste (ie lots of Louisiana hot sauce)

Assemble everything into the crust and bake for awhile at 350ish.

Carol Lynn's Cast Iron Field Food

This started out as pretty typical cornbread, something I've always loved to make. The road to becoming field food began gradually – the first addition I made was flax seeds, then came pureed spinach one week when it really needed to be used up. After that I let go of any attachment to cornbread and now just use it as a vehicle to deliver protein in any form it's available. When I read over the ingredients it doesn't really sound very appetizing, but it's actually surprisingly palatable! I suppose I could just buy granola bars (or look a recipe for some), but that would be much less fun.

To start with, put a greased 8-10 inch cast iron skillet in the oven as it preheats to 350. Then mix the dry ingredients, which starts off normally enough with:

1 cup corn meal

2 t baking powder

½ t baking soda

Then it gets a little strange as I add some flax seeds and one cup of mixed grains (you could just use flour if you prefer) - oats and kasha are my favorites, I've also been experimenting with the high protein grains such as quinoa and amaranth. ½ to 1 T cinnamon is also necessary at this point.

In a separate bowl mix the wet ingredients:

1 cup yogurt

3 eggs

3 T blackstrap molasses (for iron, calcium and magnesium!)

3 T butter

Now brace yourselves, here's where it gets really weird -

one bunch of pureed greens, usually spinach

4 T peanut butter

And sometimes, depending on just how hungry I am, I add pinto beans. Really. You'll never even know

they're in there.

Finally, mix the wet and dry ingredients together. Bake at 350 for as long as it takes to clean up the kitchen, being sure to check that the middle is cooked before you call it done.

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And now for a recipe that you might actually like to replicate! CSA member Sue Young passed along a recipe from Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* which features some the ever abundant swiss chard, as well as other veggies in your box.

More seasonal recipes from Kingsolver's book can be found here <http://www.animalvegetablemiracle.com/Recipes.html>

### **Eggs in a Nest**

(This recipe makes dinner for a family of four, but can easily be cut in half.)

2 cups uncooked brown rice

Olive oil – a few tbsp

1 medium **onion**, chopped, and garlic to taste

Carrots, chopped

½ cup dried **tomatoes** (or one cup fresh)

1 *really large* bunch of **chard**, coarsely chopped

8 eggs

Cook rice with 4 cups water in a covered pot while other ingredients are being prepared.

Sauté onions and garlic in olive oil in a wide skillet until lightly golden. Add carrots and tomatoes and sauté for a few more minutes, adding just enough water to rehydrate the dried tomatoes.

Mix with other vegetables and cover pan for a few minutes. Uncover, stir well, then use the back of a spoon to make depressions in the cooked leaves, circling the pan like numbers on a clock.

Break an egg into each depression, being careful to keep yolks whole. Cover pan again and allow eggs to poach for 3 to 5 minutes. Remove from heat and serve over rice.

We would love to share your recipes too! Please email your favorites to [carolyn@johnsonsbakyardgarden.com](mailto:carolyn@johnsonsbakyardgarden.com)

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10) Johnson's Backyard Garden Contact Information

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