



# Stone Soup

Stearns Farm CSA • Community Supported Agriculture  
862 Edmands Road, Framingham, MA 01701 - [www.stearnsfarmcsa.org](http://www.stearnsfarmcsa.org)  
Winter Share 2008-9 Newsletter Issue 3 of 3 JANUARY



## WINTER'S REFLECTION

By Kathy Huckins, Farm Manager

This month, on Friday the 9th or Friday the 23rd between noon and 4pm, you will be picking up your last share of produce grown on Stearns Farm CSA during the 2008 year. Even though you are picking up many pounds of root crops from our new root cellar and a few pounds of greens from our new greenhouse, all of these crops were planted last year or even the year before.

The ten pounds of potatoes you will receive in your share were planted last May, the parsnips and popcorn in June, the beets, carrots and rutabagas in July. The garlic was planted in the fall of 2007. The leeks and shallots were planted in April. Even the greens had to be planted in October, at the latest, in order to have a crop to harvest this month.

We at Stearns are playing the role of final harvest and storage for you, a responsibility that was part of most households a century ago. Their summers and falls were full of canning, freezing, drying and storage in basements, under beds in cool rooms of the house or in underground root cellars. By investing in two new buildings this past year, we are able to handle the storage issue for you, mostly. You still need to store your share when you get home, but it is minimal compared to a century ago.

My reason for offering the Winter Share is to enable folks to eat off of our land as long as possible into the winter season and beyond. This can keep us from buying foods that are not local and fresh at our supermarkets. It can also teach us to eat with the seasons. What are you going to do with 8 or 9 pounds of parsnips? No, we can't provide you with melons and peas now.

We have become accustomed to enjoying roots from our cellars in the winter, but GREENS from a greenhouse during this season—now that is AMAZING. Yes, you will have fresh spinach, adolescent kale, baby bok choy and about 7 varieties of greens and leaf lettuce mixed together in your share this

month. I consider that a miracle of sorts. Of course we prepped the land, planted and tended the crops, built a house over them, monitored the temperature by manual venting, and applied row covers over it all to keep the crops as toasty as possible. With the right methods and timing and tending, we have greens for you in January. We all wish we had MORE greens, but we are grateful for having SOME. If we wanted more greens we would have to build a heated house and pass on those heating costs to you. We prefer to keep it simple and grow what we can without heat.

Today—Wednesday—Chris is out in the field harvesting the last of the leeks, if they are not totally frozen. Since they do not store well in the root cellar, we left them in the field. Last week he took out the rest of the parsnips. It is cold work and can only be done on sunny days, midday, and with ample protection. It is challenging. Washing and preparing the shares in the first greenhouse without running water and with temperatures in the 40s on a cloudy day is not even close to comfortable. Yet, we have had some wonderful helpers, work-for-shares and volunteers who have come no matter what, to help. We are very grateful for their endurance and enthusiastic spirit.

*(continued, next page)*

Sometimes we are scrambling to get your share ready by noon on your pickup day because our harvesting in the greenhouse is based on the sun. If it is cloudy, the greens are still frozen and cannot be harvested until the day warms up a bit. Following harvest, they are brought to the first greenhouse to be washed and mixed, weighed and bagged. We must complete all these steps before we know how much you will receive in your share. We have realized that the time frame is too tight.

Our Winter Share Experiment has been a success, and as with any experiment, we have learned a lot. We need to time the planting of some of our greens differently. We need better regulation of the temperature in our root cellar. We

need a different place to store our winter squash, onions, shallots, sweet potatoes and garlic, as the root cellar is too cold and humid for these crops. We need year-round water and a heated area to wash and prep the crops. We need to be warmer when we work.

On the success side, Chris and Sonya have done a terrific job keeping on track and continually making up new systems to handle the conditions of farming in the winter. Many people have stopped by to help or bring coffee and treats. Anything warm is always gratefully received. We have Brian Holland to thank for designing and building the root cellar, John Blanchard to thank for the greenhouse, Brian to thank for managing the greenhouse construction, and all the farmers before us who have provided guidance to this new offering at our farm. We thank all of you for trusting us by buying a share, knowing it was our first attempt. Without your support, we couldn't do it at all.

Yes, it is almost time to celebrate and put our feet up. Oh, no—my mind has been so full of this project that I almost forgot to get going on the 2009 SUMMER growing season. Yes, January is when I write the crop plan, lay out the fields, order the seeds and determine the planting dates for the field and greenhouse. I better get going! See you soon.



Photo by David Ferrini

### IN YOUR WINTER SHARE PICKUP

*From the root cellar:* potatoes, parsnips, beets, carrots, rutabagas, shallots and garlic. *From the field:* leeks.  
*From the greenhouse:* salad and leaf lettuce greens mix, spinach, adolescent kale, baby bok choy. Popcorn.



Check out our home page to watch our Assistant Grower, Chris Kantlehner, explain how to make the perfect bowl of local, organic **Stearns Farm popcorn**—from start to finish.

### WINTER SHARE PICKUPS

Friday, January 9	Final pickup 12-4 pm (Group 1)
Friday, January 23	Final pickup 12-4 pm (Group 2)



## A LOCAL SUCCESS

By Chris Kantlehner, Assistant Grower

Both Kathy and I recently returned from a winter Farmer-to-Farmer conference in the Green Mountain State, a conference that gathered growers from across the Northeast. The range of experience was wide: from farmers who have dreams of someday starting their own market garden to farmers whose experience is longer than the years I have lived.

Guest speakers of note included Dan Kaplan, farm manager of Brookfield CSA in Amherst, and Paul and Sandy Arnold, owners and operators of Pleasant Valley Farm in Argyle, NY. Both have very different farms. Dan Kaplan runs a successful CSA, and the Arnolds have an extremely lucrative operation selling to farmers markets. Both are making a living in organic vegetable production and enjoying their lives immensely while doing it. The conference was both inspiring as a farmer and as a consumer to see how locally grown food is becoming a staple on tables across the Northeast.

I have had a great winter working on this exciting new phase of the farm. For me, the most rewarding part has been everyone coming to the farm to pick up their bulky bag of root crops and their freshly packed bag of fresh greens with smiles and gratitude. I thank you members of Stearns Farm CSA for supporting your farm, because



without your demand for "great" food, this CSA would not be here. Thank you, and enjoy your potatoes.

—Peace and love,  
Chris

## SHREDDED ROOT VEGETABLE PANCAKES

From *Eating Well Magazine*

The perfect Winter Share Recipe. Red beets and golden carrots look especially festive in these zesty cakes. Eat as a main course or make bite-size for a beautiful appetizer.



- 1 large egg, lightly beaten
- ¼ cup whole-wheat flour
- 3 tablespoons chopped scallions
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill or 1 teaspoon dried
- 1 tablespoon prepared horseradish
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 4 cups assorted root vegetables, peeled and shredded (such as beets, carrots, parsnips, potatoes, rutabagas, turnips, and celeriac), about 1½ pounds
- 2 slices cooked bacon, crumbled (optional)
- 6 teaspoons canola oil, divided
- sour cream for garnish

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Coat a baking sheet with cooking spray.
2. Whisk egg, flour, scallions, dill, horseradish, salt and pepper in a large bowl. Stir in vegetables and bacon (if using).
3. Heat 2 teaspoons oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Cook 4 pancakes per batch: place about ¼ cup vegetable mixture in a little of the oil and press with the back of a spatula to flatten into a 2- to 3-inch pancake. Cook until crispy and golden, 1 1/2 to 3 minutes per side. Transfer the pancakes to the prepared baking sheet. Continue with 2 more batches, using the remaining 4 teaspoons oil and vegetable mixture. Transfer the baking sheet to the oven and bake for 15 minutes. Garnish with sour cream if desired. Makes 12 pancakes.

## THANK YOU, WINTER SHARERS

See you next spring!



### MISSION STATEMENT

To preserve the historic Stearns farm as a sustainable all-natural garden, providing locally grown food in partnership between the land, the farmer, and the community.

- by using the CSA model
- by providing fair compensation, adequate working conditions, and support to the farmer
- by practicing good stewardship
- by donating excess food to the needy
- by encouraging the community to actively participate in the farming process
- by providing learning opportunities
- by fostering relationships between the CSA and the wider community and
- by providing a beautiful place that is nourishing to body and soul

### FARM CONTACT INFORMATION

Contact	Position	Email/phone
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Stearns Farm CSA is open Tuesday through Saturday from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

## JANUARY—Sweetness in the Heart of Winter

We'd always heard that chicken soup had miraculous powers to fend off the fiercest cold. This week, circumstances forced us to test that hypothesis—and it worked! I don't promise you'll have the same results, but I do promise you'll enjoy a tasty, comforting meal. Chicken soup recipes tend to be handed down for generations, with many regional and ethnic variations, from chili to lemon grass. In our family's version, the humble parsnip is considered essential, but these pale cousins of the carrot can also add floral sweetness to almost anything—creamy purées, savory sides, and sumptuous desserts too. Try a few of these ideas and please tell us about your own favorites.

**PARSNIP-SCENTED CHICKEN SOUP.** Parsnips give aromatic character to this rich, yet simple version of the classic “cure-all.” The basic broth freezes well. Serves about 6–8.

½ bone-in chicken or equivalent parts (thighs, backs, etc.)*	1 celery heart with leaves, chopped
6 cups water	1 cup chopped parsley
1 large onion, coarsely chopped	½ cup chopped fresh dill
1–2 parsnips, peeled and coarsely chopped	salt and pepper (preferably white) to taste
1–2 large carrots, scraped and coarsely chopped	½–¾ lb boneless chicken breast, cut in ½-inch cubes
2–3 stalks celery, coarsely chopped	1–2 medium carrots sliced crosswise in thin circles
	additional minced fresh parsley and dill to taste

\**You can start with canned stock, but homemade is far better!* Rinse chicken parts and cover with water. Bring to gentle simmer and cook about 10 minutes, skimming off any scum that rises until most of the scum is gone. Simmer for half an hour more, then add chopped vegetables. Cover and cook for about an hour, until broth is very “chickeny.” About 30 minutes before cooking ends, add herbs and celery heart and season to taste with salt and pepper. Cool. Separate solids from broth and discard solids, retaining broth. Chill until fat can be lifted off broth (or use fat separator). You can do all of this a day ahead. When ready to serve, heat broth to a simmer and poach chicken breast gently until done. Remove meat and set aside. Add thinly sliced carrots to broth and cook until crisp-tender, then return chicken meat to pot, stir in freshly minced herbs, and taste and adjust seasonings. Serve hot over separately cooked noodles or rice, if desired. 6–8 servings.

**PARSNIPS & PEARS.** A smooth, sweet purée that's equally at home beside the roast or spooned on top of potato pancakes instead of applesauce.

3 ripe pears, peeled, cored and diced	3 Tbs buttermilk, yogurt, or half and half
3–4 medium parsnips, peeled and diced	¼ tsp ground cardamom or nutmeg
water	salt and pepper to taste

Place pears and parsnips in a small pan and add about ¼ cup of water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat to low, cover, and cook until parsnips are very soft, about 15 minutes. Drain. Using blender or food processor, lightly purée pears and parsnips with remaining ingredients. About 4 servings.

**BUTTERED PARSNIPS.** There's an old saying: “*Fine words butter no parsnips,*” but parsnips themselves are fine with nothing more than a little butter! Adapted from “Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone” by Deborah Madison.

1–2 pounds parsnips, peeled	salt and pepper to taste
2–3 Tbs butter	parsley or tarragon, minced

Cut parsnips into pieces of about equal size. Steam or boil in salted water until just tender, about 5–10 minutes. Drain well and toss with butter and herbs, seasoning to taste with salt and pepper. Serve immediately. 3–6 servings.

**PARSNIP-PECAN CAKE.** The parsnips add delicate flavor and texture to this surprising dessert without overpowering the other ingredients. Adapted from “The Victory Garden Cookbook” by Marian Morash.

1¼ cups vegetable oil	2 tsp cinnamon
1¼ cups sugar	¼ tsp salt
2 cups flour	4 eggs
1 Tbs baking powder	3 cups raw parsnips, peeled and grated
1 Tbs baking soda	1½ cups pecans, finely chopped.

Preheat oven to 325 F. Beat oil and sugar together. Mix dry ingredients separately and beat eggs. Add dry ingredients and eggs alternately to oil/sugar mixture, beating well with each addition. Stir in parsnips and then pecans. Pour into buttered tube pan and bake for 1 hour and 10 minutes. Cool 10 minutes before removing from pan.

*Parsnip Prep and Storage:* Scrape like carrots, and trim away the tough stem end and stringy root. Thicker parsnips may have a woody core, which should be removed before use. Stored dry and loosely wrapped in the bottom of the refrigerator, parsnips will keep for weeks, even months.