



Table of Contents

- 1) In Your Box this Week
- 2) Farm News
- 3) Eat the View
- 4) Food for Thoughts
- 5) Kitchen Soup
- 6) Vegetable Storage Tips

- 7) Recipes
- 8) Subscribe/Unsubscribe to Newsletter
- 9) Johnson's Backyard Garden Contact Information

Please send newsletter feedback, suggestions and contributions to carolyn@johnsonsbackyardgarden.com
We're on MySpace, [be our friend!](#)

1) In Your Box this Week

Zucchini
Cucumber
Sweet Peppers
Hot Peppers
Eggplant
Basil
Okra
Watermelon
Sweet Dumpling or Kabocha Squash
And a Mystery Vegetable!

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 our [website](#).

2) Farm News

- **IMPORTANT!!** Email is our primary means of communication with our members. Initial e-mails often go into members' spam or junk mail folders. Please be sure you've enabled your e-mail program to receive messages from farm@johnsonsbackyardgarden.com (which presumably if you're reading this, you already have). Additionally, you can update your email preferences in the 'members' section of our website.
- Welcome to Andrew, our newest intern who arrived Monday and has jumped right in!
- The test well drilling was a success, we found water! The new well will be going in up by our greenhouse, not the spot we'd had in mind originally, but if there's water we can't be picky.
- This past weekend the farm was the site of the "largest controlled burn" the Travis County Fire Dept has ever seen as we continued clearing out the pecan brush in the back field.



3) Eat the View

"Eat the View" is a campaign to plant healthy, edible landscapes in high-impact, high visibility places, whether it's the "First Lawn" or the lawn in front of your child's school. A large part of the campaign's focus is to petition the next president to plant an organic food garden on the White House lawn, with part of the produce going to the White House kitchen and the rest to local food pantries. Sign the petition [here!](#)

Marsha Prillwitz, who attended the Slow Food convention last week in San Francisco, sent us this photo of the San Francisco city hall where a 'victory garden' has already been planted by a coalition of gardening groups and city residents. Pretty cool!



4) Food For Thought *Carolyn Fryberger*

The most recent newsletter that I received from the Food Research and Action Center (a non-profit food policy advocacy organization in DC) described a challenge undertaken last year by congressmen to live for a week on a food stamp budget of \$21 a week (more info on the challenge [here](#)). Three dollars a day, one dollar per meal: that's the average amount distributed through the federal Food Stamp program, which assists more than 26 million Americans with their grocery budget. These 26 million are part of a larger group of 'food insecure' citizens, comprising some 36 million Americans. Needless to say with increases in food and fuel prices, this year \$21 doesn't buy the basket of groceries it did last year.

US Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.) participated in the challenge, and found it very challenging indeed. "Living on food stamps is not just about the food. It takes a lot of planning ahead to live on a food stamp budget, and still, even if you get the calories you need, you can't get the nutrients. Maybe some nutrition expert can figure out how one can eat healthily on a food stamp diet, but I can't see how it's done. Fruits and vegetables, especially fresh ones, are very expensive relative to foods like pastas and bread." In addition to the difficulty of achieving a healthy diet on a food stamp budget, many of these 'food

insecure' folks live in neighborhoods with limited access to fresh, nutritious foods. "Food deserts" as author and food policy advocate Mark Winne calls these neighborhoods in his book *Closing the Food Gap*. Residents of such areas often have to travel a great distance by bus to do their grocery shopping. This already inconvenient trip becomes even more cumbersome when loaded down with a week's worth of groceries for your family. Thus as the popularity of local and organic increases, many Americans still struggle to access even the most basic of healthy foods.

As an intern, I spend about \$25 per week on food, about equal to the food stamp budget. However, I am only feeding one person, and I don't live in a food desert, rather I live in an oasis. My challenge is to figure out how to deal with the abundance of food that surrounds me, giving in to the grocery store as little as possible. There are a few staples I have found that I cannot do without, however, things that necessitate a trip to town if I run out: coffee, chocolate, tortillas, cornmeal, peanut butter and cheese.

5) Kitchen Soup

Kitchen Soup is always vegetarian. I suppose that rule had some origin in minestrone, but I also find that a protein based stock all too easily masks the more subtle vegetable flavors. Here is how it is made: Pull all the leftover veggies from the fridge. Sort out the iffy ones for compost, and look at what you have, fresh and cooked. If there are three kinds of mushrooms, and a solitary green bean, you are looking at mushroom soup or pilaf. This soup needs at least four or five components to be successful. Of course, one element will be a can of beans. Another may easily be a can of tomatoes. Here is the general recipe I used last night when we had Kitchen Soup.

Cooked elements: green beans, roasted zucchini, half a head of roasted garlic and a handful of lima beans. Raw elements: Not quite enough spinach for a salad, half a chopped onion, some arugula, a turnip, six baby carrots and three red potatoes.... the last 1/2 glass from a bottle of white wine.

No one gets to be a star in this soup- it is an ensemble play. Think of M*A*S*H instead of Monk... The combination and balance is different every time, and is occasionally spectacular, and sometimes only really good. Herbs, especially fresh herbs, can be what makes the difference. Fresh basil for garnish (it disappears when cooked in,) or in winter a spoonful of pesto when the fresh stuff isn't available adds a sunny flavor. The requisites for me for additions would be the aforementioned can of beans, probably chopped fresh or canned tomatoes, a pasta and a nice topping of grated Parmesan, the best I can afford. I prefer roasted or sautéed vegetables in this and most recipes. Adding water, by steaming or boiling, dilutes flavors and destroys textures. By giving each piece a caramelized shell, the flavor skyrockets, and each bite is a collection of flavors rather than a common mush. I diced the onion, carrot, turnip and potatoes, tossed with a little olive oil and black pepper and put in a 400° oven for about 28 minutes, stirring twice. I don't add salt when roasting the vegetables, because dehydrating them through roasting effectively increases what salt content they have, and if the finished soup needs salt, it can be added, or better yet, added in the form of Parmesan.

While the vegetables are roasting, I start a couple of quarts of water boiling in a big soup pot, get out my canned goods, and about one cup of some sort of small pasta. If you want to skip my pasta rant, go on to the next paragraph. It is close to my heart, so I am sure in the coming months you will get another chance to hear it: Don't skimp on pasta. While there is plenty of cheap stuff around, it is the equivalent of Wonder Bread. The good stuff doesn't have to be prohibitively expensive, either, although this may be one of the rare cases when cost and value are roughly parallel. Here's what you look for: a pale golden

color, rather than a dim beige, indicating a hard wheat like semolina was used in the dough, and a rough texture on the pasta itself. There are two standard ways to make pasta. The cheaper version is to extrude it through plastic dies. The problem comes in because the plastic is relatively soft, so the dough must also be soft, almost a batter. When pasta made in this fashion is boiled, it rehydrates, the water gets milky with way too much dissolving starch, and it is almost impossible to cook the pasta to anything between crunchy and mush. The rougher textured pasta comes from a sturdy dough passed through a bronze die. The boiling water stays almost clear, and it is easy to cook to a true al dente. Some of the very high end brands such as Rustichella d'Abruzzo are even air dried, rather than oven dried, giving them a dense, luscious and almost meaty texture when cooked. {{kicking away soapbox}}

Onwards: your kitchen should look like this: wonderful roasting smells coming from the oven, a bowl with the cooked vegetables and raw greens to one side of the stove, and a boiling half gallon of water. There is a can of white beans and a can of chopped tomatoes on the counter, already opened. Find a small pasta, like elbow or bowties, shells, or my favorite, orchiette, meaning little ears. If you are looking at a total of about four cups of mixed vegetables, add a double handful of pasta to the water, and cook until almost done. Next, dump in everything else and bring it back to a boil, then take the soup off of the heat. It's done but it will be better tomorrow.

Dip out a bowl, nuke it and top with Parmesan and maybe a little basil pesto. This soup can freeze, but usually doesn't last that long around here. For a more specific recipe:

Kitchen Soup

1 cup each of any of these, or a combination to total four cups:

Roasted: Carrots, onions, potatoes, garlic, celery, turnips, fennel bulbs, butternut squash, corn, eggplant, green beans, lima beans, leeks, mushrooms. I avoid cruciferous veggies like broccoli or cauliflower as they seem to take over everything, and are better as solo acts. Peppers can get bitter, and beets are, well, beets. This soup doesn't look appetizing in pink.

Raw: Spinach, arugula, possibly a small amount of cabbage. Stronger winter greens like collards and mustard and turnip greens like to take over the soup as well.

1 cup small pasta

1 can chopped tomatoes (or peeled, seeded, chopped fresh, but you won't be able to tell the difference, so only when tomatoes are abundant and you don't mind the extra work. I have been to the factory for Muir Glen tomatoes, in the middle of what seems like The Tomato Planet, and there isn't a better product anywhere.)

1 can beans- I like cannellini, again, a bow to minestrone, but any bean works. I have used pintos, and added a can of green chilies to onions, garlic, potatoes, chayote and orzo, then topped with grated cheddar. Damn good- same structure different genre.)

Boil your pasta in 8 cups of water, add everything, return to a boil, take off the heat and serve, or cool, then reheat tomorrow.

Buon Appetito!

Elaine DiRico is a long-time CSA member and food writer in Austin. Email her with questions and recipe requests at Elaine@dirico.com

6) 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. Here are some additional tips on how to store this week's share:

Fridge

- **Peppers** and **Cucumbers** should be stored in the crisper, and washed in cold water before use.
- **Zucchini** and other **Summer Squash** will last 4-7 days in plastic bags in the crisper.
- **Okra** will keep for only two or three days. Refrigerate unwashed, dry okra pods in the vegetable crisper, loosely wrapped in perforated plastic bags. Wet pods will quickly mold and become slimy. When the ridges and tips of the pod start to turn dark, use it or lose it. Once it starts to darken, okra will quickly deteriorate.

Counter

- **Basil** keeps best in a perforated bag kept at around 60°F, it will keep for 10 to 14 days. In contrast, refrigerated basil lasts only two or three days. You can also store stems in a vase in your kitchen, close at hand for cooking. As with flower bouquets, change the water in the vase every few days.
- **Eggplant** and **Winter Squash** 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. Eggplant are delicate and do not store well, so try to use them within a few days.
- **Melons** should be stored uncut in a cool dark place. Keep cut melons in the refrigerator.

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

Long-term Storage

"The time will come when winter will ask you what you were doing all summer." - Henry Clay

[The National Center for Home Food Preservation](#) is your guide for how to can, freeze, dry, pickle or ferment just about anything.

7) Recipes

Baked Spiced Butternut Squash

This recipe is from Retta, six-year old daughter of CSA member Suzanne Johnson. Retta also has her own (super cute) [cooking show](#) which features this recipe (and the karate-chopping of a butternut squash, a skill I'd sure like to learn).

Ingredients:

1 small butternut squash

melted butter

cinnamon sugar

Preparation:

Brush a pan with butter and heat oven to 350°.

Carefully cut each squash in half lengthwise (or have your friend karate chop it) and scoop out seeds and soft fibers with a spoon. Brush the inside of each squash with butter. Sprinkle with cinnamon sugar. Place squash halves, seasoned cut side down, in the prepared pan. Add 1/2 cup water to the pan. Bake for 1 hour or until the squash is tender. Serve halves immediately. Delicious!

We would love to share your recipes too! Please email your favorites to Carolyn@johnsonsbackyardgarden.com

8) Subscribe/Unsubscribe To Newsletter

Forwarded from a friend? Sign up for your own copy [here](#).
To unsubscribe, click [here](#).

9) Johnson's Backyard Garden Contact Information

Johnson's Backyard Garden
9515 Hergotz Lane, Box E
Austin, Texas 78742

Office phone: (512) 386-5273
Office Hours: M-F, 8am – 12pm
e-mail: farm@johnsonsbackyardgarden.com
website: www.johnsonsbackyardgarden.com

