



Open Hands Farm CSA Handbook for Members

Open Hands Farm, LLC
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Welcome to the Farm!

This handbook is an attempt to address common questions members have throughout the season, and provides information that will hopefully help make being a part of Open Hands Farm a full and rewarding experience. We hope that you will be able to use this book as a reference during the season, not only to help you make the best use of the farm in your life, but also to make sure we're all on the same page with logistics on the farm. Please feel free to ask questions and share your thoughts on anything in this booklet and anywhere on the farm.



Share Distribution Times

Tuesday and Thursday 1:30-6:30pm

You can U-Pick anytime!

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.
(507) 645-2871 openhandsfarm@gmail.com

We are very excited for another great season on the farm! Our shareholders are what make the farm shine. Thanks for your support and dedication! It means so much to us.

With gratitude,
Erin and Ben

How It Works

When You Arrive

- Please park on the right side of the driveway, at a right angle.
- For safety reasons, do not drive up to or past the barn.
- If needed, please ask Erin or Ben about handicapped parking.
- While driving, keep in mind that children are everywhere!

Getting Your Vegetables

- In an effort to keep plastic from the land-fill, please bring re-usable bags with you to pick up your share. If you forget, we will always have plastic bags available for your use. We also have re-usable bags for sale in the share room.
- Please sign-in on the table by the door.
- There are signs throughout the shareroom stating how much of each vegetable you can take. Please ask Erin or Ben if you have any questions, as the veggies and amounts vary throughout the season.
- Please wash your hands before picking up the vegetables. There are tongs for your use to pick up the greens.
- If you are ever feeling sick and think it may be contagious, please send someone else to pick up your share, or we would be more than happy to bag it up for you. We want the farm to always be a healthy place for everyone who comes here.

Changing Pick-up Days

If you are not able to make your regular pick up day, please fill out the **"change pick up day form"** to let us know which day you will be coming instead. This helps us know how much to harvest each day, so there is plenty of food for everyone. This google form can be accessed any time through a link in every newsletter, on our website, or in an email sent in May.

Going Out of Town

If you are going out of town, you have a couple of options: You can give your share that week to a friend or family member (it makes for a great thank-you gift for someone taking care of your house or animals), or you can tell us to donate your share to the food shelf. If you are sending someone, no need to tell us. Just have them introduce themselves to us, show we can show them around. If you'd like to donate your share, please check the donate option on the **"change pick up day form"**.

Children on the Farm

We LOVE to have children on the farm!!

Kids hanging out and picking vegetables from the U-pick sections gives the farm extra vibrancy and life. Not only do the kids learn about where their food comes from and about caring for the earth, but the farm also benefits from the energy of their excitement and laughter!

We want kids to feel at home here, and we also want them to be safe. To help both these things happen, we have established some guidelines:

- Please know where your children are at all times.
- We ask that you supervise your children while U-picking and make sure they stay in the designated areas and on the designated paths. The farm is a good place to teach children to be aware of what their feet are walking on.
- Because of sharp tools and objects, kids are not allowed in any buildings except the shareroom (which is the front part of the first floor of the barn).
- Children are not allowed on tractors unless accompanied by a farmer.
- Children are not allowed near the wood piles, as they may topple if bumped. They are also not allowed on our playset in the back of our house, due to potential liability issues since we are not able to monitor it back there.
- HAVE FUN!!!

Dogs on the Farm

We also love to have dogs on the farm. But because of possible destruction of crops, disruption of other people's experiences, and spreading of pathogens, please keep your dog on a leash and do not bring your dog into the barn or out into the field with you. If you keep your dog on a leash and keep them on the driveway it is okay to have dogs here, but otherwise, it is best to leave them at home.

A Note about Our Growing Practices

The farm is Certified Organic. And for everybody's health, we do not even spray any of the pesticides allowed by the organic standards. Instead, we use various growing practices to try to keep the farm eco-system healthy and balanced. The most dramatic of these is attracting beneficial insects with flowers blossoming at all times during the season. The flowers give the beneficial insects pollen to eat and then those same insects eat the bugs that we don't want.

The other primary (and less visible way) we avoid pesticides is by feeding the soil. We regularly add well-composted manure and, as needed, calcium, sulfur, and other minerals. If we have healthy soil, we will have healthy plants (and healthy people who eat the plants!) that have a better chance of fending off any diseases and insects that may come along.

In general, we try to work with nature's intricacies to create a healthy and diverse eco-system within our small farm and surrounding woodlands.

The Northfield Food Shelf

It is part of our mission to give healthy food to our neighbors in need. There are 2 main ways that we donate the farm's fresh produce to the Food Shelf.

- Every share day we try to harvest more food than everyone will need so you have a wide variety of vegetables to choose from, and the extra goes to the Food Shelf.
- Any item that you choose not to take as a part of your share also goes to the Food Shelf. None of the CSA vegetables at the share pick-up go to waste!

Thanks to your support, we are able to build this important mission into our daily farm activities. Also, a big THANK YOU to the volunteer drivers that tirelessly bring the food to the Food Shelf each week! If you are interested in being a Food Shelf driver, please let us know. Your help is greatly appreciated!

Some Guidelines for U-Pick Crops

Before U-Picking, always check the U-Pick Board at the barn and wash your hands at the handwashing station.

- Most U-Pick crops come into ripeness slowly, peak and plateau, then may drop off quickly. For some crops, this process will be reflected in limits that we put on the crops. To ensure that every member gets some of the crop, we may have to start out with very small limits and then gradually increase. Please be respectful of these limits.
- If there is a limit on a U-Pick crop, that is the limit per share, per week. If the crop is unlimited, you can come as many times during the week to pick as much as you would like.
- If you are picking large quantities of a U-Pick crop that does not have a limit, start at the least-picked end and work towards the more-picked end. This allows a member who is in a hurry, or unable to go to the far end, to pick at the beginning of the row.
- Please bring your own U-Pick containers. We will have some containers near the barn if you forget.
- NEVER put dirty containers back in the Rubbermaid. If you use a container while you are here, please take it home and wash it or wash it at the handwashing station. Also, NEVER use the flower water to wash the container. That water may have been sitting around for a few days and is not sanitary for washing.
- Please only pick crops that are designated as U-Pick crops. All other crops in the field are picked exclusively by the farmers. Also, please do not pick any fruit that is on the edges of the fields and woods. Those are for personal use by the farmers.
- Please stay in designated U-Pick areas, on the designated paths or farm roads.



How to Pick U-Pick Crops

Peas—Use 2 hands to gently pick off the peas, by holding the plant with one hand and the pea with the other hand. They taste best when big and fat, but not too fat. Taste around to find the size that tastes best.

Beans—These plants are tough and like to be picked heavy. The beans lose flavor as they get bigger, so pick when they are midsized. By picking all that are ready, you help the plants to keep flowering and providing more beans.

Basil—To ensure a long and abundant harvest of basil, please pick the young plantings by pinching the tops above where there is a “v” of new leaves. When you pick above a “v”, the new leaves that are left will grow and become new tops to pinch, and on and on. If the young plants are picked too far down, or if just the leaves are taken off, they will not continue to grow for a long harvest. After you pick a young planting, look back at where you’ve picked and it should look like you haven’t even been there.

Dill, cilantro, and all other herbs—Use scissors, cut only outer leaves, and leave the growing stem (at the center of plant). Pick from many plants, rather than just one.

Flowers—These will keep best if cut with a scissors and put in a container with water. Again, it’s best to pick from many plants rather than one. We welcome any dead-heading of old flowers (removing of dead and withering flowers), if you feel inclined!

Strawberries, Raspberries, and Cherry Tomatoes—Pick only the ripest. Please pay attention to the limits, as these tend to be the most coveted of the U-Pick crops and they may start producing slowly.

Tomatillos— These are ripe when they fill the husk completely, and can be picked like tomatoes.

Please ask if you have any questions about any of these crops. Enjoy!

What to Do with All Those Vegetables??!!

Every week, we give out 1 or 2 recipes that highlight a crop that is particularly abundant that week. We now also have over 100 recipes posted on our website, categorized by vegetable, for your use.

The following cookbooks are great at highlighting vegetables:

Asparagus to Zucchini Cookbook by MACSAC (Madison Area CSA Coalition). For sale at the farm!

Simply in Season by Mary Beth Lund and Cathleen Hockman-Wert

Rolling Prairie Cookbook by Nancy O'Connor

You can also find more cookbook titles on our website and many of you have taught us that the internet is a great resource for cooking ideas and recipes.

Basics of Freezing Vegetables

This is a general guide to freezing. There are specific blanching times under each vegetable in the next section.

- Prepare the vegetable to its useable state (chop, peel, etc as desired)
- Bring water to a boil
- For vegetables that require blanching: Submerge the vegetable in the boiling water for a specific time, depending on each vegetable (see following pages)
- Immediately run under cold water, or dunk in ice water, to stop the cooking process
- Drain
- Pack in an air-tight container or zip-lock bag
- Freeze and enjoy the taste of summer in the winter!
- To keep peppers and berries from sticking together, freeze on a cookie sheet first

The books Stocking Up and Putting Food By are good resources for more detailed information on freezing and canning. If you have never canned before, we recommend learning from an experienced canner and using the books as an additional resource.

Storage Options for Each Vegetable

Beans—Keep in fridge in a plastic bag for 3– 5 days. To freeze, blanch for 2–3 minutes.

Beets—Will store in fridge for weeks in a closed plastic bag, Tupperware container or hydrator drawer. To freeze, blanch with skins on for 25–30 minutes, until tender. Peel after cooking and before freezing.



Boc choy & Joi choy—Will store in fridge for 1 week in a closed bag or Tupperware container.

Broccoli—Best if used within a few days. Store in a closed plastic bag or Tupperware container. To freeze, blanch for 3–4 minutes.

Brussels Sprouts—Keep best on stalk. Put a plastic bag over stalk and store for up to 1 week. To freeze, blanch 3–5 minutes.

Cabbage—Will store in fridge for 3 weeks to 2 months or more in a loose plastic bag or the hydrator drawer.

Carrots—Will store in fridge for weeks to months in a perforated plastic bag. To freeze, blanch 3 minutes.

Cauliflower—Will store in fridge for 1 week in a closed plastic bag. To freeze, blanch 2–4 minutes

Celeriac—Will store in fridge for 1 week to 3 months in a perforated plastic bag, Tupperware container or hydrator drawer.

Celery—Can go limp very quickly if not stored properly. Immediately wrap in a damp towel and put in a closed plastic bag or Tupperware container. Or to maintain maximum crispness, store stems upright in a container with an inch of water (this may dilute flavor).

Chinese Cabbage—Will store in fridge for up to 2 weeks in a closed plastic bag or Tupperware container.

Storage Options for Each Vegetable (continued)

Cucumbers–Will store in a closed plastic bag or Tupperware container for up to 1 week.

Eggplant–Best stored at 50 degrees, but can be stored in fridge for up to 1 week in a closed plastic bag or Tupperware container. If eggplants wrinkle or get brown spots in your fridge, try eating them sooner or storing at 50 degrees. To freeze, roast with oil, cool, and put in a freezer bag.

Fennel–The bulbs will store in the fridge for up to 2 weeks in a closed plastic bag or Tupperware container. Wrap leaves in a damp towel to keep from going limp.



Garlic Scapes–Will keep in the fridge in a closed bag for up to 1 month.

Garlic–Store in a well-ventilated space in your kitchen or basement and out of direct sun. Stores best through the winter at 50–60 degrees.

Greens, Lettuce, and Spinach– Will store best for 1 to 2 weeks if stored in a closed Tupperware container with or without a slightly damp cloth on the bottom. Otherwise can be stored in a closed plastic bag. To freeze spinach, blanch 2 minutes.

Herbs–Use soon, as most herbs do not store well. Some can be dried though. Ask us for details on each herb.

Kale, Collards, Swiss Chard–Store up to 2 weeks in fridge in closed plastic bag or Tupperware container. To freeze, blanch 2 to 3 minutes.

Leeks– Store in closed plastic bag in the fridge for a few weeks. To freeze, just chop and freeze.

Melons–99% of our melons are picked ripe and ready to eat. For longest storage (a little over a week), put them in the fridge whole. Or for a quick and easy snack, chop them up into bit size pieces and store in a Tupperware container. This method will keep the melon good a little less than a week.

Storage Options for Each Vegetable (continued)

Onions –Store in a well-ventilated area of your kitchen and out of direct sun.

Parsnips, Radishes, Turnips, Rutabagas–Store in your fridge for up to 1 month in a perforated plastic bag or Tupperware container

Peas– Store in a closed bag in the fridge for a few days. To freeze, take shell off and blanch 1 1/2 minutes.

Peppers–Store in fridge for 1 to 2 weeks in a closed plastic bag or Tupperware container. To freeze, no need to blanch. You can just chop up and put in a bag. Hot peppers can be frozen whole.



Scallions–Store in fridge for 1 to 2 weeks in a closed plastic bag or Tupperware container.

Summer Squash & Zucchini– Store in fridge for 1 to 2 weeks in a closed plastic bag or Tupperware container. To freeze, blanch 3 minutes.

Sweet Potatoes–Store in a dark, well-ventilated area that is above 50 degrees. If stored properly, ours generally hold into December or January. To freeze, bake whole and puree or chop into cubes and bake.

Tomatoes & Tomatillos–Leave on your counter until ready to use. To freeze tomatoes, just chop up and put in a bag—no need to blanch, (but you can blanch if you want to remove the skins). Eat cherry tomatoes quickly. Tomatillos can quickly be made into salsa verde which freezes well.

Winter Squash–Store in a spot that is above 50 degrees and low in humidity. (Your counter or cupboard should work well for short-term storage.) For long-term storage, good circulation, low humidity, and keeping it closer to 50 degrees (but not below) are important.

Thank you for being an integral part of the success of this small diverse farm. You are helping create a thriving local economy and food system. Here's to everyone's health and well-being!

