

someone is at the farmstand to ask for more, or we have a separate bin of produce that is "extra", maybe subscribers wouldn't feel awkward about asking. We will practice that for the winter and see if it works out for everyone, then we'll know for next year. I also think it would be beneficial to send anonymous surveys once a month or so throughout the season to check in with everyone, so we know how we're doing before the end of the season.

Another surprise to me is that fully half of the subscriber base felt that there was not enough diversity. That begs me to ask, "what else would you like?" So, I will be sending a followup survey to find out what, specifically you would like more of. A few years ago we added a lot of "specialty" or gourmet items to the shares, and it didn't go over well with most folks. Most people didn't want fennel or radicchio, or even fava beans. So, we pulled back and tried to stick to the basics more. I'm working on a solution for that problem, and it will also be on the followup survey.

It is important to me to get more people involved more with the farm. As our kids have grown and it's easier for me to have them with me on the farm and see what captures their interest, I have come up with more ideas for including your children too. Again, please answer these questions on the survey.

There were a lot of great ideas regarding farm visits on your survey responses. Some of them are not feasible for us, but many of them are, including better signage, maps, beautification, and more animals that can be visited. All things that I have wanted to do for years, but haven't made them priorities. I'm looking forward to having the winter to work on these projects.

It's looking like we probably won't have our nanny next summer, which sends me into a panic, while at the same time opens up a lot of possibilities. The kids and I can keep up on the flower patch and cleanup, welcome subscribers, and give farm tours. Our kids LOVE showing visitors their farm and their animals. They may have the opportunity next summer. This will also mean that I won't be doing much farm work. We will need very independent, hard-working help who I can allow to manage the farm for me.

We hope to work toward our idea of supplying only our own farm fertility, and acquiring our herd of cows has brought us amazingly close to that goal. This winter we will graze the cows on cover crops of rye and peas, and that ground will gain twice—from the increased organic matter of both the cover crop and the incredible fertility of the cow manure. And we will gain in milk and meat. If we can work this plan into the entire farm, we will not need to purchase fertilizer. We may include pastured chickens into the same goal during the summer, in which case we will have fryers for sale again. We will see.

Operating a small, family farm is an exercise in evolution and education. There is always more to learn, and there are always things to improve. But there are some things we can't improve without your input, so thank you to those who answered the survey.

We look forward to an amazing year in 2007, and we hope you will join us again. Thank you for your constant support!



WHISTLING TRAIN Farmletter

SUMMER WEEK 20 • OCT. 24, 2006

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ANOTHER SEASON HAS COME &

gone. We feel like we've had a great year. Of course, there are always things we could have done better or differently. It would have been nice to have planted our tomatoes and peppers earlier and harvested them for a longer period. It would have been nice if the pumpkin patch worked out, but alas, we missed a key watering period. We did eventually harvest corn, so that wasn't a loss, and we harvested salad greens and carrots longer this year than in years past. But it would always be nicer to have them every week. We did improve our planting and cultivation methods, so we can simplify our labor needs next year.

We haven't done a subscriber survey in a couple of years, so I was hesitant to do it this fall. But it is important to know how everyone feels about their experience so we know how to improve things for the coming years.

It came as a shock to me that so many (50%) of you felt like you didn't get enough produce. Anyone who picks up at a farmers market or at the farm is welcome to take more if they need it and we are pretty generous that way. Granted, at times there was no one at the farm stand to ask, but if we were there we always said yes. If you were unhappy, I wish that you had said something earlier. Someone commented that there were no flowers, but I know that several subscribers picked lovely bouquets for at least 10 weeks. We still have some flowers now!

We've worked at developing our CSA program for nearly 10 years now, and over the years have worked toward keeping 100 families happy throughout the course of a growing season—not an easy task. We've learned that if we give everyone too much produce, as a rule, they will not be happy if they have to throw things away. That's why we try to come up with an average quantity, which we printed in our promotional flyer, attached to the application that you sent in with your payment. If a subscriber needs more produce, one only needs to ask.

I admit that we can make it easier for you. If we make sure that

THIS WEEK'S MENU:

Mixed Potatoes
Sugar Pie Pumpkin
Sweet Corn
Baby Beets with Greens
Lacinata Kale
Mizuna
"Pan di Zucchero"
Radicchio
Baby Leeks
Recipes on the back!

**THIS IS THE LAST
WEEK OF OUR
SUMMER SEASON!**