

Tips & Tricks for Farm Membership Success

**A BEGINNER'S GUIDE FOR
OXEN HILL FARM CSA MEMBERS**



EFFICIENCY STRATEGIES

**HOW TO HANDLE
EXCESS PRODUCE &
AVOID FOOD WASTE**

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

**HELPFUL KITCHEN
TOOLS THAT WILL
SET YOU UP FOR
SUCCESS**

STORAGE TIPS

**HOW TO MAXIMIZE
SHELF LIFE &
MEAL PLAN**

Farm share membership can sometimes feel overwhelming, but it doesn't have to.

If you are a first time CSA member or early in your journey, you may have some questions, and we have answers!

Community supported agriculture (CSA) is incredibly fun and rewarding, but cooking with fresh food and bringing vegetables into your home each week, or even every other week can be daunting at times. Some members say it took them about 2 years to feel like they got into a groove, but we can break it down for you and keep it simple!

What you *really* need is a guide that helps explain how to efficiently deal with the bounty so you can feel great about shopping at your local farm and feeding your family.

Throughout this e-book you will learn tips and tricks gleaned from our CSA members to help you shorten the learning curve. Armed with this knowledge, you'll better understand how to prioritize your menu plan, deal with any overwhelm, and put any excess produce away for long-term storage -- so you can feel confident this CSA season!

Ready?... Let's dive in.





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Picking up your share

When beginning with your farm share, the first thing is knowing how to pack your veggies for the way home. You'll get to the pick up site and will see a whole lot of veggies!

Oxen Hill Farm is set up for you to pack your share from your pre-selected list. We do our best to display items in the same order as on your list, so you can load everything into your own reusable bags, beginning with the heaviest items and ending with the most delicate.

Leaving veggies in a hot car will make them spoil faster, so consider bringing a small cooler (or 1-2 ice packs) for the more sensitive items. If you have a flower share, they love to travel home in a cup of cold water.





Storing things properly

Proper storage of vegetables is essential. If you store things correctly they last longer, and you don't have to rush to use them. Many vegetables can last 1-3 weeks (some root veggies will last even longer!) based on the quality of storage. And that means more value for you and less food waste.

Storage Tips

WASH AND DRY YOUR GREENS AND BAG THEM UP

Some things from the farm will be rinsed, but all items will need a thorough washing before using them at home. Make sure you use a salad spinner or gently dry on clean towels before storing in a loosely sealed bag or container in the fridge. Creating an air vent to the container and adding a dry paper towel helps release unnecessary gases and absorb the moisture that can cause produce to lose crispness and get soggy.

Storing vegetables loose in the fridge seems easy and can use less plastic, but isn't great for long-term storage, especially for greens. You can wash your bags and re-use them to reduce waste.

CUT EDIBLE GREENS FROM THINGS LIKE CARROTS, BEETS, KOHLRABI, AND RADISHES

You may want to save these greens, but if you store them together they will drain moisture from the roots. Remove the greens and store separately.

REMOVE ANY BANDS OR TWIST TIES FOR BETTER AIR CIRCULATION

READ YOUR NEWSLETTER AND USE IT TO HELP SET PRIORITIES

Our weekly emails will help you make the most of your produce and keep you updated on what's going on at the farm. We include plenty of storage tips and preparation ideas in the item descriptions on the customization dashboard each week! And check out our Pinterest pages for even more!

STORE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES SEPARATELY

We won't be giving you much fruit, but that doesn't mean there isn't any in your fridge already. The ethylene gas given off by fruit can cause your vegetables to spoil faster.



Use a cheat sheet!

PRINT A STORAGE GUIDE FOR THE SIDE OF YOUR FRIDGE

Though our newsletter is a great resource, you won't always want to go look it up. Having a one-page quick guide like this one below posted somewhere easy to see will save you time.

	USE ASAP! (2-5 DAYS)	USE SOON (5-7 DAYS)	NO HURRY (1-2 WEEKS+)
REFRIGERATE	ARUGULA BABY BOK CHOY/BOK CHOY BROCCOLI CALLALOO CAULIFLOWER CHARD CHIVES DANDELION GREENS LETTUCE OKRA SWEET CORN ZUCCHINI/SUMMER SQUASH	BRUSSELS SPROUTS CELERY COLLARDS CUCUMBERS FENNEL KALE LEEKs PEPPERS RADISH SPINACH STRING BEANS	BEETS CABBAGE CARROTS EDAMAME GARLIC SCAPES KOHLRABI RUTABAGA TURNIP
SHADED COUNTERTOP	ASIAN EGGPLANT HEIRLOOM TOMATOES	BASIL (STEMS TRIMMED IN COOL WATER) EGGPLANT MELONS - WHOLE TOMATOES	GARLIC SWEET POTATOES
COOL DARK PLACE	 OXEN HILL FARM COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE Suffield, Connecticut www.oxenhillfarm.com	ONIONS POTATOES (BUT DON'T STORE IN SAME CONTAINER)	WINTER SQUASH (ACORN, BUTTERNUT, DELICATA, HONEYNUT, HUBBARD, SPAGHETTI)



Practice micro- prepping on CSA day & throughout the week

Many CSA members begin prepping veggies right away the night they bring home their CSA box. They find that certain techniques like peeling and/or cutting the carrots, slicing the celery, cucumbers, or bell peppers right away not only makes life easier, but also leads to their families grabbing veggies as snacks throughout the week.

We call these "micro-prep" moments and they are a great way to stay on top of your produce and not get bogged down by the knife work inherent in cooking with lots of veggies.



Tools of the trade

Like any activity, cooking requires the proper equipment. Here is a list of the kitchen items we use most for cooking up our veggies.

A GOOD KNIFE (PREFERABLY A CHEF'S KNIFE THAT IS KEPT SHARPENED)

Food prep is much faster and safer when you have a high quality knife. To find the best knife for you, it's best to go to a kitchen store and try them out by hand. It's all about how it feels in your hand.

SHEET PANS OR BAKING SHEETS

When you join a CSA, one of the strategies you learn about is "the Sheet Pan Meal." This allows you to throw your entire meal (protein, veggie, starch) onto one sheet pan, and prep a meal in 30-45 minutes in one place.

The sheet pan should have a lip and be large enough to handle large portions of food. Make sure it can fit in your freezer so you can quickly and easily freeze clumps of blanched greens or string beans.

A CAST IRON SKILLET OR ANY PAN THAT CAN GO FROM STOVE TO OVEN

A SALAD SPINNER

A salad spinner is a fast and thorough way to get your greens as clean and dry as possible.

REUSABLE FRIDGE/FREEZER BAGS

Reusable bags can be a real life saver. They are used by many members to help them store, organize, and lengthen the life of their veggies.

A VEGETABLE PEELER

This is a multi-purpose tool every home cook should have- consider paying a bit extra to get one that has a nice handle that feels comfortable in your hand. You can use this not only to peel veggies, but also to shave vegetables for salads.

A MANDOLINE OR VEGETABLE SLICER

The easiest way to thinly slice a bunch of vegetables for salad for the week is definitely with a mandolin. They're also great for matchsticking vegetables as well as making chips or fries. However it's important to make sure that you are comfortable with how sharp these can be! A "cut-resistant" glove can help avoid accidents.

SPLURGE ITEMS: A FOOD PROCESSOR AND/OR VITAMIX BLENDER

These are the highest priced items and may not be something to invest in your first year, but over time, many CSA members wind up getting one or both. They use them for making salsa, pesto, pizza dough, smoothies and pureeing items like soups and sauces. A processor can be a great tool for shredding carrots or making sweet potato or cauliflower "rice".



Learn how to identify your veggies



It can be hard to unpack things properly or store it correctly if you have no idea what the heck it is.

Each item on your customization dashboard will have a photo as well as a little blurb you can click with additional storage tips and recipe ideas, so you can easily know what you are dealing with. Be sure to check the newsletter each week, so you can learn your veggies by season's end! Don't forget that you can always ask our friendly and knowledgeable farm family at pick up,

Box Items

Vegetables



cabbage, purple OR green ●
1 head at \$3.50

-

1

+

Cabbage is wonderful added to sautés and stir fries. It tastes great alongside peppers, onions, etc. Large cabbage leaves can replace a tortilla for light and summery wrap sandwiches.



rainbow chard ●
1 bunch at \$4.00

-

1

+

Place chard in a plastic storage bag and wrap the bag tightly around the chard, squeezing out as much of the air from the bag as possible. Place in refrigerator where it will keep fresh for up to 5 days.



swiss chard ●
1 bunch at \$4.00

-

1

+

Do not wash Swiss chard before storing as the exposure to water encourages spoilage.



broccoli - just broccoli heads ●
1 half-gallon at \$6.75

-

2

+

Forgo the plastic bag and loosely wrap your broccoli in a damp paper towel before storing it in the refrigerator. This provides a healthy and moist (but breathable) environment for your broccoli.

Get (and stay) inspired

One of the most rewarding (and fun!) parts of being in a CSA is trying out new vegetables and new recipes! CSA is a great excuse to experiment with new techniques, as well as getting more variety into your diet!

So don't just stick to old stand by recipes when there's a whole world of cooking to explore! Stay inspired throughout the CSA season by looking outside your own ideas or the cookbooks you've used for years. Instead, we suggest you:

**CHECK OUT OUR CSA
PINTEREST PAGES AND
FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK
AND INSTAGRAM FOR RECIPES
THROUGHOUT THE SEASON**

**FIND A COUPLE OF FAVORITE
BLOGS WHICH USE A LOT OF
FRESH, SEASONAL PRODUCE
AND CONTINUALLY HEAD
THERE FOR INSPIRATION**

**TREAT YOURSELF TO A NEW
COOKBOOK OR TWO EVERY
CSA SEASON.**



Our favorite cookbooks & food blogs

COOKBOOKS

Six Seasons by Joshua McFadden

Bounty from the Box by Mi Ae Lipe

The Vegetable Butcher by Cara Mangini

How to Cook Everything by Mark Bittman

From Asparagus to Zucchini by FairShare
CSA Coalition

BLOGS

101 Cookbooks

Alexandra's Kitchen

Dishing up the Dirt

Half Baked Harvest

Minimalist Baker

Naturally Ella

Smitten Kitchen

The Leek & The Carrot





Trying new things

One of the best things about being a part of a CSA is the opportunity to try new vegetables and experiment with different combinations of food and flavors. Keep things extra interesting by choosing recipes that aren't the kind of thing you usually would make.

Some of our more experienced CSA members like to intentionally select recipes that are outside their "standard wheelhouse" or that use a common vegetable in a different way. For example, instead of just roasting or grilling summer squash every week, opt for something unique like a squash pie.

Take inventory & set priorities before the next CSA pick up

CSA membership can feel overwhelming when the vegetables just keep coming. Sometimes veggies may pile up!

Before the next week's share, it's important to take stock of what you still have laying around and try to eat, wash, prep or even freeze those things that you know you likely won't eat within the "fresh window." The following techniques will help you feel less overwhelmed when the next pick up day arrives.





Learn some tried & true strategies for the 11th hour

No matter how adept you are at enjoying your CSA share, staying inspired and using up your produce each week, there will be weeks where you feel like you just can't possibly keep up in the kitchen.

This is the time for an "11th hour" strategy: quick, go-to methods to use up produce fast so you can prepare for the next batch of bounty! We share our favorite 11th hour strategies on the next few pages.



Our favorite strategies for the 11th hour

WHIPPING UP A STIR FRY IS A GREAT WAY TO USE UP ODDS & ENDS BEFORE THE NEXT BOX ARRIVES

If you add a little lean protein, a flavorful sauce, and serve your stir-fry over steamed brown rice, you've got a well-balanced meal.

ROAST IT! EVEN BETTER, EXPLORE THE ART OF THE SHEET PAN MEAL!

If you ever don't know what to do with the last few vegetables in your fridge or pantry, give roasting a try. Roasting unlocks the delicious flavor potential in virtually every vegetable, and turning it into a sheet pan meal is a serious game changer! There are many great ideas online, just search for “sheet pan meals.”

BLEND UP SOME PESTO

You can make pesto out of pretty much any green you receive from the farm (basil, kale, collards, spinach, green garlic, scallions, etc) And if you make too much, it freezes up great!

TRY MAKING GREEN CUBES

At our farm we love green cubes! Take a bunch of blanched greens and puree them together, then put them into ice cube trays. Add them to sauces or soups as you please.

JUST GRILL IT!

When you aren't sure what to make, or short on time, toss in some olive oil, salt, and pepper and grill it. Works great for MOST veggies (even some of the more unique ones). Plus who doesn't love the simplicity of a summer dinner alfresco?

PLAY AROUND WITH MEALS THAT CAN BE ADAPTED TO USE UP MANY VEGGIES

Think quiche, pizza, pasta, chili, tacos, soups, frittatas, spring rolls, scrambled eggs, Buddha bowls, etc.

IF ALL ELSE FAILS, THROW IT IN THE FREEZER

One of the absolute best ways to deal with produce you don't think you'll get to is to just freeze it! Often prior to freezing, vegetables are blanched by dunking in boiling water to partially cook them and then immediately transferred to cold water to stop the cooking process. If you're pressed for time, hearty veggies like broccoli, carrots, corn, and summer or winter squash can be frozen without blanching. You may want to use unblanched veggies up more quickly than blanched frozen veggies. All veggies should go into in labeled freezer bags or freezer-proof containers.

If you're feeling ambitious and you have too much produce you can take things a bit further. Chop it up and freeze or prep sauces for freezing so you can lessen your waste!





Preserving the harvest

Another great way to make the most of your CSA experience and lessen the amount of food waste is to learn some preservation techniques. We listed freezing as one of our exit strategies because it is one of the quickest and easiest ways to deal with excess produce. But that is not the only method of preservation! On the next page you will find a few of other CSA favorite preservation techniques.

Member-tested Preservation Tips

SAVE YOUR SCRAPS FOR VEGGIE STOCK

Don't toss your scraps! Put them in a gallon-sized bag in the freezer and keep adding until full. Then in the fall or winter, add the veggies to a full pot of water, bring to a boil and let simmer at least 45 minutes and strain. Keep the liquid, toss the solids, and then you have delicious homemade vegetable stock for soups which you can freeze!

PLAY WITH OTHER SIMPLE TECHNIQUES LIKE FRIDGE PICKLES OR SALSA

EXPERIMENT WITH KIMCHI, KRAUTS AND OTHER FERMENTED PRODUCTS

A lot of our CSA members swear by fermentation. One of our favorite recipes is on the next page!

BATCH COOK AND FREEZE HALF

Take advantage of the abundance by making double batches of things and freezing half. It's so nice to have those meals prepped and ready for a busy night.

AS YOUR CONFIDENCE GROWS, BEGIN TO EXPERIMENT WITH VARIOUS CANNING METHODS



Hillside Kimchi recipe

ADAPTED FROM FERMENTED
VEGETABLES BY SHOCKEY &
SHOCKEY

From the CSA share or lonely corner of the
crisper drawer:

- 1 head of any firm leafy thing (calls for cabbage, bok choy worked great)
- 1/4-1/2 cup shredded or thinly sliced root veg (calls for daikon, every other radish worked)
- 1/4-1/2 cup some other root veg, shredded or thinly sliced (calls for carrot, can use parsnip or whatever)
- 1 handful coarsely sliced green shoots (calls for scallions, we used leeks and shallots)

From the kitchen:

- 1/2 gallon pure-ish water (well water was no issue, avoid city water)
- 1/2 cup salt (calls for unrefined sea salt, kosher will do)
- 1/4 cup red pepper flakes (calls for gochugaru, regular kind works too)
- 2 1-quart, large mouth mason jars (clean but pristine, no antibacterial soap or bleach residue. I just carefully swirl boiling water in them.)
- 2 baby jars with lids that fit inside the momma jars (1-1.5 cup mason jars work great)



Hillside Kimchi recipe (cont.)

From the green grocer:

- Cloves from 1/2 head of garlic, minced
- 1" ginger root, minced

1. Mix the salt and water in a large mixing bowl ... POOF: it's brine!
2. Clean, rinse, and trim, discarding dirty outer leaves, reserving 2 clean outer leaves, then halve or quarter the remaining head (remove core if cabbage)
3. Submerge in brine, weigh down with a water filled Ziploc, soak for for 6-8 hours
4. Drain, reserving at least 1 cup of the brine and setting aside the 2 whole leaves
5. Roughly chop, and toss back into the empty mixing bowl
6. Mix well the roots, shoots, ginger, garlic, and pepper flakes
7. Dump the mixture onto the leaf pile, massage together thoroughly until vibrantly pink (nitrile gloves are a good idea)
8. Pack into the mason jars, pressing out air pockets as you go, and adding brine if necessary to submerge (leave 2-3 inches open at the top, or it will bubble over)
9. Cover with the reserved whole leaves, and weight down with smaller, water-filled jars
10. Set in a cool dark place for about 10 days, checking every few days that it stays submerged (add brine if not) and that it's not making a huge mess.





Know the risks & rewards



No “**Beginner’s Guide to CSA**” would be complete without bringing up the handshake agreement between farmer and member.

When you become a part of our farm CSA membership, it is an agreement to stand beside us through the thick and thin of each farm season. You financially commit your dollars to our operation and, in return, we commit that we will do our very best to make good on that investment.

As your farmers, we at Oxen Hill Farm set out to grow the best organic produce possible. We plan out what we hope will be available in your box each week. We seed, plant and cultivate the crops and do our best to get them to harvest during the expected time.

But Mother Nature is fickle. She can send too much rain, flea beetle infestations, or overly high temperatures that cause plants to bolt and go to seed. Seed may not germinate at the proper percentage, leaving us just shy of our harvest goals.

As farmers, we do our part to minimize the risks. We know how important it is to keep the soil healthy. When we tend to our soil, healthy plants follow -- leading to better disease resistance, better yields and better taste.

But every year, there can be something that goes off course. As a member of a CSA farm, you ride this risk alongside the farmer.

When the fields are bountiful, you benefit in a share of that bounty. When the fields suffer due to circumstances out of our control, you take it in stride and stand by your farmer.

To have the very best experience with CSA membership, be sure you are 100% behind your farmer no matter what happens.

**Thank you for
supporting our local
organic family farm!**

