



# High Ground Organics Community Supported Agriculture

Winter 4, January 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017

## Organic Seed, by Steve Pedersen

Just as people resolve to make major changes in their lives at this time of year, these winter months give us the perspective to step back and think about the changes we want to make as a farm.

Perhaps one of the biggest changes that we have resolved to make this year is to use 100 percent organically grown seed. Current regulations allow for the use of untreated conventionally grown seed when organic isn't available for the variety you wish to use. Although the percentage of organic seed that we use has steadily increased over the years, we have had a hard time finding it for many of the disease resistant hybrids that we rely on. One of the drawbacks to being located in an intensive agricultural area within the fog belt is that there is always lots of disease inoculum floating about. Outside of spraying fungicides, one of the only ways to successfully produce certain crops—especially lettuce and spinach—is by choosing resistant varieties. These are constantly being bred to stay ahead of the ever evolving disease organisms. Until recently organic seed for these varieties wasn't available, but that is starting to change. Enza Zaden, a Dutch seed company with a very progressive breeding program, founded a separate company a number of years ago—Vitalis—that provides 100 percent organic, and often resistant, varieties. We have been using these successfully for several years now. Other companies like High Mowing Seeds in Vermont are dedicated to providing a complete line of organic vegetable seeds.

Although the availability of organic seed has increased over the years it feels to us as though the organic seed industry has yet to live up to its potential, and it occurred to us that the crutch of farmers being able to use conventional seed is part of what is holding it back. Just as individual consumers help shape their world by how they spend their dollars, farms are consumers too, and can do the same. Organic agriculture has matured enough that it should now be possible to leave the crutch behind.

The reasons for growing seed organically are numerous. As the folks at High Mowing point out, because seed crops are not consumed, they are not regulated the same as food crops and can be sprayed at higher rates—exposing workers, neighbors, and the environment to dangerous chemicals. The volume of chemicals used is also greater because seed crops

## Winter Schedule:

*Next Deliveries will be February 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>.*

are grown to full maturity and are thus exposed to pests and diseases over a longer period of time. For me, another big reason to support organic seed production is that in a truly organic breeding program, varieties are chosen that perform well in the fertility, pest, and disease conditions that are found only in organic systems. The end result will be varieties that are better suited for organic farms.

Organic seed can cost up to twice as much as conventional, and it will be a challenge to replace certain varieties of crops that we rely on—like broccoli and cauliflower. But, because we are currently using so many organic varieties, getting to 100 percent shouldn't be too difficult. In fact we are looking forward to the challenge. For those vegetables for which we haven't yet found suitable organic seed, we'll be ordering small quantities of lots of different varieties and doing trials here to find out which varieties perform best here on our farm. This is part of what keeps farming interesting and new every year!

## Veggie Notes, by Molly Jacobsen

Always rinse produce before use. Everything should be refrigerated except **winter squash**, **tomatoes**, and **lemons**.

In the box this week you will receive either traditional **white cauliflower** or the striking green **romanesco**. Closely related, these two items can be prepared in very similar ways, and could be substituted for one another in most recipes. The tight, fractal pattern of the **romanesco** creates a slightly denser flesh, so test for doneness as these take a little longer to cook than their white **cauliflower** counterparts. Both are delicious roasted, so be sure to try out our super simple recipe for Basic Roasted

Romanesco or Cauliflower. You can also saute or steam these puppies.

The incredibly versatile **butternut squash** will also be in your box this week. I often peel and cut the squash into cubes and roast (400 degrees, turning every 10 minutes until tender) and then keep them in the fridge for an easy addition to hearty winter salads, rice or grain dishes, or to use as a breakfast hash with fried eggs! The creamy texture of **butternut squash** also lends itself well to an assortment of soups and sauces, or can

## In The Box

Cauliflower OR Romanesco

Rainbow OR Red Chard

Butternut Squash

Red Beets

Fennel

Tomatoes and Corno di Toro

Peppers OR Satsuma

Mandarins\*

Leeks\*

Meyer Lemons\*

*All produce is certified organic.  
Leeks are from Phil Foster Ranches.  
Lemons are from Marsalisi Farm.  
Satsumas are from Coke Farm. All  
other vegetables and fruit were  
grown by High Ground Organics.  
Note: last minute substitutions may  
be made.*

be used as a tasty secret ingredient in macaroni and cheese that removes a little bit of the guilt.

**Red beets** and either **Red** or **Rainbow Chard** are a natural combination, as these two plants are very closely related! Use the chard as a substitute for the beet greens in our Rosemary Honey Glazed Beets with Garlic and Beet Greens recipe. Our basic Roast Beets recipe is also a great way to enjoy beets, which can then be added to salads or a variety of dishes.

One head of **fennel** will be rounding out your boxes this week. Another good item to roast in the oven, cooked fennel results in a sweet and caramelized treat. Try our recipe for Roast Fennel- the key here is to give it enough time to get the maximum caramelized sweetness. I also love adding shaved raw **fennel** to salads for a crunchy texture and bright, anise flavor. This is particularly good paired with a soft butter lettuce, a sweet winter citrus like **satsuma mandarins**, and a light vinaigrette.

Just when you thought we were deep into winter, we're throwing you a curve ball with **Corno di Toro peppers** and **tomatoes**! These guys have been hanging on through the cold weather thanks to our hoop houses, and will provide a little hint of summer to get you through this cold, wet winter. Not quite enough for everyone, though, so we'll fill out the remainder of the shares with **Satsumas** from Coke Farm.

Use your **leeks** any way that you would an onion, and squeeze those **lemons** on everything! I love to squeeze a half a lemon into a mug of hot water with a teaspoon of honey in the morning.

Enjoy your veggies!

## Chef's Notes, by Andrew Cohen

*To peel butternut squash:* Do not bother with a peeler, just cut off the globular bottom of the squash, the top of the cylinder and base of the globe. Stand the cylinder on the cut base and use a large chef's knife to cut the skin away from the squash by cutting down the side of the squash, turning the squash after each stroke. For the base, do the same, just follow the curve. Split the globe and scoop out the seeds, then trim the halves to best get the size cubes you need.

Try quick-blanching florets of either **cauliflower** or **romanesco** and then dropping them into a very peppery vinaigrette made with white balsamic and a touch of Kimes Apiary honey. These can be served warm or cold as a topping for a salad, or as a salad-y sort of thing on their own. Toss some beans in and toss with cabbage for a hearty healthy winter salad.

Looking for a new way to use **beets**? Check the internet for Red Velvet cake using **beets**. The beets add moisture as well as natural sweetness to the cake.

## Chicken, Beet, Butternut Hash, from Chef Andrew E. Cohen

Have this for breakfast or dinner. Substance, flavor, and color are all here. Enrich the dish with a poached or fried egg, top with béchamel or a Hollandaise or Maltaise sauce.

2 boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into ¼ inch dice (if you have left over rotisserie chicken breast it will work great)	2 medium yellow or white onions, cut into ¼ inch dice
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2 cups roast beets (see recipe on site) tossed with white balsamic vinegar cut into ¼ inch dice	2-3 cups (1 medium-large) butternut squash, cut into ¼ inch dice
½ + ½ cup dry white wine	2 cloves garlic, minced
½ tsp. fresh thyme leaves, chopped	½ tsp. fresh oregano leaves, chopped
Salt and pepper to taste	Neutral flavored or light buttery flavored olive oil as needed
1-2 TBS butter for flavor if desired	-Optional- Béchamel (see recipe on site) as desired
-Optional-4-8 poached or fried eggs	

Heat a very large skillet over medium-high heat. While skillet heats, toss chicken with oil to coat all over, then season all over with salt and pepper and some of the herbs. In a separate bowl, (after washing hands well) do the same to the butternut squash. Be sure to have herbs left over so you can season the whole dish.

When the skillet is hot, film with oil. When oil is hot, add the chicken. Do not crowd the pan. If needed cook the chicken in 2 batches. Sear the chicken so it colors all over, getting it crisp at the edges and on some of the sides as well. Add a ½ cup of wine and cook, stirring, until the wine has evaporated and the chicken is just cooked through. If cooking chicken in batches, color the first batch without the wine, then color the second and when colored, add the first batch in and then the wine. Cook to brown up and crisp the chicken. Remove to a clean bowl with a slotted spoon, leaving the liquid and any oil behind.

Add the onions to the pan, adding a little oil if the pan is dry. Toss and season with salt and pepper and some herbs. Cook until the onions turn translucent. Make a well in the onions and add the minced garlic. Sauté until the garlic is fragrant and softening. Do not allow to brown or color. When fragrant, add the second ½ cup wine and toss to coat onions in wine, scraping the pan bottom to scrape up the fond from the chicken left in the pan. Sauté until wine reduces 100% and onions are clear and tender but not browned at all. Transfer to bowl with chicken.

Coat the pan floor evenly with oil and get hot. The oil should be shivering on the surface and little wisps of steam should be just visible leaving the surface of the oil. Carefully add the squash cubes to the pan, but do not crowd them. Do in 2 batches if necessary. Cook without disturbing the squash cubes for 2-4 minutes without disturbing, or until the bottom of the cubes are browning. Toss and cook until the squash is golden and crisp along the edges. Transfer with a slotted spoon to the rest of the cooked vegetables.

Add the beets to pan, oiling if necessary, season, and cook, tossing as needed to prevent scorching, to crisp and lightly color the beets, and heat through.

Add the butter if you wish and allow to cook until nutty smelling and a little brown. Add all the cooked vegetables and chicken to the pan, leaving any accumulated juices behind. Toss to coat. Season with the remaining herbs, and toss to combine. Taste to see if you need any more salt and/or pepper, and add if you do. Cook until everything is hot through, and there are crispy edges on everything. Serve piping hot. Top with one or two eggs and then béchamel if desired.

Serves: 4