

TIPS & TRICKS FOR CSA SUCCESS

A GUIDE FOR CSA MEMBERS



VEGGIE EXIT STRATEGIES

HOW TO HANDLE
YOUR EXCESS
PRODUCE & AVOID
FOOD WASTE

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

ESSENTIAL
KITCHEN TOOLS
THAT WILL SET YOU
UP FOR SUCCESS

STORAGE TIPS

HOW TO MAXIMIZE
SHELF LIFE &
PRIORITIZE YOUR
MEAL PLANNING

Let's do CSA the right way.

If you are a first-time CSA Farm Share member or early in your CSA tenure, you might not realize just what you have gotten yourself into. We look at it as an adventure, and we want you to have fun with it, too.

Participating in CSA and supporting local farms is incredibly fun and rewarding, and we know cooking with fresh food and bringing a constant supply of fresh vegetables into your home every week can be overwhelming at times.

This guide can help you understand how to efficiently deal with the bounty.

Throughout this e-book you will learn tips, tricks and strategies to help you understand how to prioritize, deal with excess veggies and enjoy eating with the seasons.





Table of Contents

- 3. RECEIVE & TRANSPORT YOUR SHARE CORRECTLY
- 4. STORE VEGGIES LIKE A PRO
- 7. PRACTICE MICRO-PREPPING ON CSA DAY
- 8. INVEST IN THE RIGHT TOOLS
- 10. SET YOURSELF UP FOR SUCCESS
- 11. GET (& STAY) INSPIRED
- 12. TRY OUR FAVORITE COOKBOOKS & BLOGS
- 13. TAKE INVENTORY & SET PRIORITIES
- 14. LEARN TRIED & TRUE EXIT STRATEGIES
- 17. PRESERVE THE HARVEST
- 20. LEARN A VERSATILE RECIPE
- 22. READ A MESSAGE FROM YOUR FARMERS



Receive & Transport Your Share Correctly

Your veggie selection will change each week, but share pickup and transport is pretty consistent. Follow the instructions we emailed to you at the start of the season that confirms your pickup location and procedure.

- 1 Bags are arranged in an alphabetical order. Check the label, and make sure you have your share with your name.
- 2 We put the heaviest, hardest to damage stuff on the bottom, followed by light-weight bagged goodies and finally the most delicate things on top (herbs, greens, tomatoes, etc).
- 3 Sometimes, we pack large orders in more than one bag. Check the label to see if it says 1 of 2 or 2 of 2.
- 4 If you order meats, be sure to look for an additional insulated bag that contains frozen items.
- 5 It's smart to go straight home and not run errands after pickup. Leaving your veggies in a hot car will make them spoil faster.



Store Veggies Like a Pro

We talk a lot about storage throughout the course of the CSA. It will be on the front page of every newsletter, and we hope it will be the first thing you think of once you get your share home.

There's a reason for this. Proper storage of vegetables is essential. If you store things properly, they last longer, and you don't have to rush to use them. Many vegetables can last one to three weeks based on the quality of storage. And that means less food waste.

Some vegetables have specific storage needs that we will share with you as they arrive. The following are general storage tips that you can reference throughout the season.



Storage Tips

1

READ YOUR NEWSLETTER!
USE IT TO SET PRIORITIES.

Our CSA newsletter will tell you everything you need to know about where to store things (fridge versus pantry versus freezer) as well as whether it wants to be stored in a bag (or not).

You'll receive a link to the CSA newsletter with your reminder text and email each week, and you can opt to receive a printed copy with your share.

2

CUT THE EDIBLE GREENS FROM
ROOT VEGGIES LIKE CARROTS,
BEETS, KOHLRABI & RADISHES.

You will likely want to save these edible greens, but when you store them together, the greens will drain moisture from the roots. Vegetables transpire—they lose moisture—through their greens. Remove the greens and store separately from the roots. Both the roots and the greens will last longer.

3

STORE FRUITS &
VEGETABLES SEPARATELY.

You won't receive a lot of fruit in your CSA because fruit is hard to grow organically in Kentucky. But that doesn't mean you won't have fruit in your fridge already. The ethylene gas given off by fruit can cause vegetables to spoil.

4

WASH & PREP YOUR GREENS.

The biggest time-saving storage tip we have is to wash and chop your leafy greens when you get home. They'll take up less refrigerator space, and you're more likely to eat them throughout the week when they're grab and go. Most other veggies—especially tomatoes, cabbage, broccoli and green beans—should not be washed until you're ready to eat them.

5

REMOVE RUBBER BANDS FOR BETTER CIRCULATION.

6

BAG IT UP!

Storing vegetables loose in the fridge is easy and uses less plastic, but isn't actually great for long-term storage. Store most of your veggies (especially your greens!) in their perforated plastic bags in the fridge after you get home. Wash the bags and re-use them. You might buy Debbie Meyer Green Bags for this. You also might use glass or other plastic containers with lids.

7

POST THESE STORAGE TIPS ON THE SIDE OF YOUR FRIDGE.

A few veggie storage reminders posted somewhere easy to see will save you time during busy weeks.





Practice Micro- Prepping on CSA Day & Throughout the Week

A lot of CSA members begin prepping veggies right away the night they bring home their CSA share. They find that certain techniques—like cutting the carrots and 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. There's also the greens-prep tip we offer on page 6.

We call these techniques "micro-prepping," and they are a huge way to stay on top of your produce.



Invest in the Right Kitchen Tools

Like any activity, cooking is much more enjoyable with the proper equipment. Here is a list of our favorite items for cooking up our veggies.

1

A GOOD, SHARP CHEF'S KNIFE

Food prep is 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. It's all about how it feels in your hand.

2

SHEET PANS OR BAKING SHEETS

When you join a CSA, one of the "exit strategies" you learn about is the Sheet Pan Meal. (More on this to come.) This allows you to throw your entire meal—meat, veggie, starch—onto one sheet pan and prep a meal in 30 to 45 minutes.

The sheet pan also comes in handy to help you freeze clumps of blanched greens or berries. You also use it as a "lid" for large skillets on the stove.

The sheet pan should have a lip and be large enough to handle large portions of food. Also get one that can fit in your freezer.



3 A CAST-IRON SKILLET THAT CAN GO FROM STOVETOP TO OVEN

4 A STOCK POT

This is a must-have item if you're wanting to make the most out of your CSA share! Soups are your friend. Also, making veggie stock with your veggie scraps, water and some herbs is simple.

5 A VEGETABLE PEELER

This is a multi-purpose tool every home cook should have—and spend the extra \$5 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.

6 A SALAD SPINNER

This one may seem a bit trivial, but when you eat your greens every day, you'll be glad to have it.

Salad spinners can also be used to wash and dry herbs, rinse and drain beans, spin excess water out of pasta, and wash berries.

7 SPLURGE ITEM: A FOOD PROCESSOR OR BLENDER

Now, these are the highest-ticket items on the list and may not be something you invest in your first year, but over time, many CSA members wind up getting one, or both. They can be used nearly interchangeably in a pinch to make salsa, pesto, and hummus, and to purée soups and sauces. An immersion blender is a lighter-duty tool here.





Set Yourself Up for Success

PANTRY

Keep your pantry stocked with basic items that can make pulling together a meal quick and easy. Our go-to pantry essentials include cooking oils, vinegars, versatile spices, a few grains—such as pasta, rice and quinoa—canned or dried beans, nut butters, condiments (e.g., soy sauce, mustard, hot sauce), honey or maple syrup, and basic sauce ingredients, including canned tomatoes, garlic and storage onions.

FRIDGE

Similar to your pantry, you'll want to keep your fridge stocked with some essentials, as well. This requires a bit more planning, as items stored in a fridge are usually perishable. Considering the items that we use regularly, we recommend eggs, dairy products—including butter, cheese and plain yogurt—broth or stock, dips—like pesto, hummus and salsa—and citrus, especially limes and lemons.

Get (& Stay) Inspired

One of the most rewarding (and fun!) parts of being in a CSA is trying new recipes and being adventurous with our vegetables! CSA is a great excuse to experiment with new techniques and the best way to get more variety into your diet.

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.

A few suggestions:

- 1 CHECK OUT YOUR CSA NEWSLETTER FOR RECIPES.
- 2 FIND A FEW FAVORITE FOOD BLOGS WITH A FRESH, SEASONAL APPROACH TO PRODUCE, & CONTINUALLY HEAD THERE FOR INSPIRATION.
- 3 TREAT YOURSELF TO A NEW COOKBOOK OR TWO EVERY CSA SEASON.
- 4 LOOK TO THE ELMWOOD STOCK FARM CSA MEMBER FACEBOOK GROUP TO SHARE YOUR FAVORITE RECIPES & LEARN FROM OTHERS.



Try our Favorite Cookbooks & Food Blogs

COOKBOOKS

Kentucky Fresh Cookbook by Maggie Green

Six Seasons by Joshua McFadden

Bounty from the Box by Mi Ae Lipe

The Vegetable Butcher by Cara Mangini

Vegetable Literacy by Deborah Madison

BLOGS

Alexandra's Kitchen

Dishing up the Dirt

Heartbeet Kitchen

Smitten Kitchen

Supper with Michelle

Sweet Potato Soul

The Hungry Hutch

PINTEREST

Pinterest.com/ElmwoodStockFar/



Take Inventory & Set Priorities Before the Next CSA Delivery

Throughout the CSA season, the vegetables just keep coming. When you're receiving a share week after week, it's important to stay on top of your veggies.

Before the next week's share arrives, take stock of the veggies you still have, and try to eat, wash, prep or even freeze those things you likely won't eat within the "fresh window." Use the techniques on the following pages to help you feel less overwhelmed when the next share arrives.





Learn Some Tried & True Exit Strategies

No matter how much you enjoy your CSA share, 21 weeks is a marathon, not a sprint, and there may be weeks where you feel like you can't keep up in the kitchen.

This is the time for an "exit strategy": quick, go-to methods to use up produce fast so you can prepare for the next batch of bounty!

Our favorite exit strategies



1

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

2

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

Whenever you don't know what to do with the last two vegetables left in your fridge, we urge you to give roasting a try. There is hardly a vegetable that doesn't taste amazing roasted, and if you can turn it into a sheet pan meal, all the better! Turn to your favorite food blogs or our Pinterest page to learn more about the sheet pan meal.

3

WHIP UP SOME PESTO OR A DIP.

Kale, arugula, herbs of all kinds and even microgreens can be blended in a food processor with garlic, oil, salt, and seeds or nuts to make a delicious pesto. Pesto is a great spread for grilled-veggie sandwiches, a pasta sauce for a roasted-veggies pasta dish or a base for homemade salad dressing. Pesto also freezes beautifully, allowing you to enjoy it year round!

Skip the oil and the food processor, and make a dip instead. Finely chop any combination of herbs, and mix them with sour cream, yogurt or softened cream cheese.

4

JUST GRILL IT!

When you aren't sure what to make with something or are short on time, toss in some olive oil, salt and pepper, and grill it. This works great for MOST veggies (even some of the leafy ones). Plus, who doesn't love the simplicity of a summer dinner al fresco?

5

IF ALL ELSE FAILS, FREEZE IT.

One of the absolute best ways to deal with produce you don't think you'll get to is to put it in the freezer. You would be surprised how many vegetables can go straight into the freezer (no blanching or prep required): tomatoes, peppers, beets, onions, shredded zucchini. Other vegetables—leafy greens, green beans, peas, corn, etc.—just need a quick blanch before freezing. Toss them in freezer bags or freezer-proof containers, and pull them from the freezer this winter.

If you're feeling ambitious, you can take things a bit further: Freeze or prep sauces and soups so you can eat this well all year!

6

PLAY AROUND WITH MEALS THAT CAN FIT MANY VEGGIES.

Think quiche, pizza, pasta, chili, tacos, spring rolls, scrambled eggs, etc.

If you're feeling stuck, check out the Meal Plan Template on the [CSA Member Resources web page](#) for some inspiration!





Preserve the Harvest

Another great way to make the most of your CSA experience is to learn some preservation techniques. Freezing is 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 other favorite CSA preservation techniques.

CSA preservation tips

1

SAVE YOUR SCRAPS FOR VEGGIE STOCK.

Don't toss your scraps! Put them in a gallon-sized bag in the freezer, and keep adding to the bag 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. Strain the liquid, toss the solids, and then you have delicious homemade vegetable stock that you can freeze or use right away!

2

TRY YOUR HAND AT DRYING.

Tomatoes and fresh herbs are some of our favorites to dry. Use a dehydrator or the oven, or hang your herbs in a bundle in a well-ventilated place away from direct sunlight. When they crumble to the touch, pack them into a jar.

3

EXPERIMENT WITH FERMENTATION.

Lacto-fermenting foods could be the most fun preservation method, as the flavor combinations are endless! Sauerkraut and pickles are the most obvious, and beets, carrots, green beans, radishes and turnips are also great starter ferments to try! It's amazing how their taste changes as they age.

As far as tools, you just need a mason jar, salt, water, and a lid fashioned from a cloth and a rubber band.





4

PLAY WITH OTHER SIMPLE TECHNIQUES, LIKE FRIDGE PICKLES.

Cucumbers are the first vegetable we think of for pickling. Summer squash, okra, green beans, peppers, beets, carrots and onions are also great candidates. Add garlic, spices and fresh herbs, and your condiments will never be the same.

Make pickles in large quantities and can them (follow [National Center for Home Food Preservation](#) recipes when canning), or make small quantities to keep in your fridge.

5

BATCH COOK, & 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.

Stock up on freezer-safe bags and jars for your soups and on containers for your veggie-rice medleys and quiches.

6

EXPERIMENT WITH VARIOUS CANNING METHODS.

Tomatoes, beans and corn are the first to come to mind for simple canning projects. More advanced projects include salsa, tomato sauces, relishes, soups and other prepared foods.

Of the preservation methods, canning is probably the most complex and requires the most attention to food safety. Your county cooperative extension office may offer virtual training.

A close-up photograph of a white ceramic bowl filled with fried rice. The rice is mixed with various vegetables, including green beans, red bell peppers, and leafy greens. There are also pieces of meat, possibly chicken or pork, visible. The bowl is placed on a white plate with a subtle geometric pattern. A silver fork is visible in the background, resting on a white napkin. The lighting is warm and natural, highlighting the textures of the food.

Learn a Versatile Recipe: Favorite Fried Rice

This recipe is adaptable to whatever vegetables and meats you have on hand. It's an excellent way to use up leftover roasted vegetables and meat from a Sunday supper, too. We especially like using root vegetables in the fried rice, as each has its own flavor that contributes to the dish.

- 3 T. grass-fed butter or coconut oil
- 2 eggs
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 bunch salad radishes, greens removed, roots chopped small
- 1 medium daikon radish, chopped small
- 1/2 bunch hakurei turnips, greens removed, roots chopped small
- 1 large purple-top turnip, chopped small
- 2 medium sweet potatoes, chopped small
- 3 c. day-old cooked rice
- 2 c. shredded or sliced leftover chicken, steak or pork chops (optional)
- 1 bunch kale, leaves torn, or 1/2 small Napa cabbage, sliced very thin
- 3 T. soy sauce or coconut aminos
- 2 tsp. fish sauce (optional)
- 1/4 tsp. black pepper
- sesame oil for serving
- pea shoots for serving

Favorite Fried Rice Recipe (cont.)

1. In a large frying pan, melt 1 tablespoon of butter over medium heat, and pan-scramble the eggs until cooked through. Set eggs aside.

2. In the same pan, melt remaining 2 tablespoons of butter over medium heat, and add garlic and all vegetables. If vegetables are already cooked, you're just reheating those and sautéing the garlic. If all are raw, cook 15 to 20 minutes, depending on their size, and stir occasionally until vegetables can be pierced with a fork.

3. Add rice, optional meat, and kale or cabbage, and cook, stirring occasionally, for another 10 to 15 minutes.

4. Return eggs to the pan, and season all with soy sauce, optional fish sauce and black pepper. Adjust seasoning, as needed.

5. Divide into serving bowls, and top with a drizzle of sesame oil and a bit of pea shoots.





A Message From Your Farmers



No “Tips & Tricks for CSA Success” would be complete without bringing up the understood “contract” between farmer and shareholder.

When you join a CSA, you are shaking our farmers' hands and giving your word that you will stand behind them through thick and thin that season. You financially commit your dollars to our family farm.

In return, your farmers will grow the best vegetables they can to make good on that investment. As your farmers, we set out with a plan to offer a selection of vegetables. We seed the crops and do our best to get them to harvest in the allotted time.

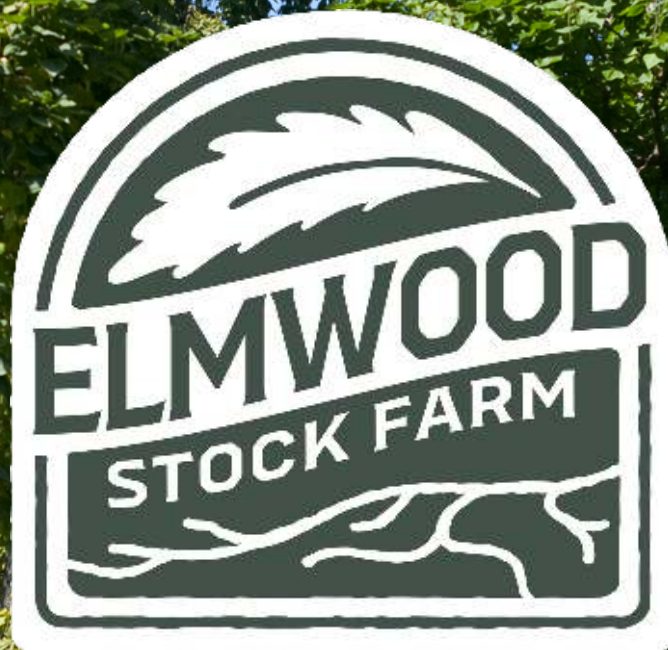
But Mother Nature is fickle. She can send too much rain, flea beetle infestations, or overly high temperatures that cause plants to bolt and go to seed. Seed may not germinate at the proper percentage, leaving us just shy of our harvest goals.

We have been growing vegetables for nearly 30 years, and we do our part to minimize the risks. We know how important it is to keep the soil healthy, and we've been dedicated to doing so since our USDA Organic certification in 2000. When we tend to our soil, healthy plants follow—leading to better disease resistance, better yields and better taste. But every year, there is something that goes off course. As a member of a CSA Farm Share, you ride this risk with 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, we communicate with you about the status of the crops and what to expect.

We are delighted to have you as an Elmwood Stock Farm CSA Farm Share member and look forward to sharing many wholesome meals with you this year. —Ann, Mac & John





Contact us!

WEBSITE: ELMWOODSTOCKFARM.COM

EMAIL: ELMWOODORDERS@GMAIL.COM

PHONE: 859-621-0755