

Two Onion Farm

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Week of August 22, 2010

We pack your vegetable boxes on Tuesday and Friday mornings, immediately prior to delivering them. All of the perishable vegetables in your boxes are harvested and washed on the previous day and stored overnight in our walk-in coolers. Harvest days are sometimes frenzied, with a must-get-it-done-despite-heat-or-rain-or-flat-tractor-tires atmosphere. Packing mornings, by contrast, are generally serene and rewarding.

We begin at 7:30 when our employees Yvonne and Julie arrive. The daily packing checklist guides them and Chris through cleaning up the packing shed from the previous days harvest and preparing it for packing. We arrange the day's produce on several long tables placed end to end; the different vegetables are lined up in the order in which each item will be placed in your boxes. After an hour Juli and our kids come outside and we begin packing your vegetable boxes, two at a time. Each of us places a pair of empty boxes on a stocking cart and pushes the cart alongside the tables of produce. As we pass each vegetable, we pack the appropriate amount into your box: 1 squash, 1 onion, 1 garlic, 1 pint of cherry tomatoes, etc. Packed boxes are stacked on pallets and wheeled into a cooler for the last few hours before we load our van for delivery. One worker typically weighs out portions of beans, peas, spinach, or potatoes, depending on the week.

Ideally, the kids play tranquilly in the driveway outside the door of the shed. We chat: about favorite recipes, the beauty of eggplant, how many more boxes of lettuce need to be taken out from the cooler, or what percentage of the delivery season has elapsed (55% at the end of this week). Sometimes we contemplate beautiful organic vegetables in silence. It is rewarding to pack a red tomato into a box when you were one of those who sowed the tomato seeds in April, raced the clock to transplant the tomato seedlings on an unseasonably hot and humid Saturday morning in late May, spread hundreds of bales of straw mulch between the tomato rows in June, and trained the plants on their trellises on a tranquil foggy July morning. After several hours of pride, delight, and amazement, we finish packing our boxes by around 11 AM. Chris and Yvonne load the full boxes into our delivery van, while Julie, the delivery driver, eats a quick lunch and prepares to depart. By 11:30 we are re-entering the field to sow, plant, weed, and till.

In this week's box:

Vegetable	Refrigerate?	Store In Plastic Bag To Retain Moisture?	Approx. Storage Life	Comments
Basil	No	No	<1 wk	Store in vase with base of stem in water and upside down plastic bag over basil and vase
Beans, green or Romano	Yes	Yes	1 wk	Romano beans have wide, flat pods. Not in all boxes
Beets	Yes	Yes	2+ wks	
Cucumber	Yes	Yes	1 wk	
Eggplant	Yes	Yes	1 wk	
Garlic	No	No	4+ wks	Cured; store at room temperature
Lettuce	Yes	Yes	1 wk	Summercrisp
Onions	No	No	2+ wks	Cured; store at room temperature or in fridge
Parsley	Yes	Yes	1 wk	
Pepper	Yes	Yes	1 wk	White or red peppers, all are sweet, not hot
Squash, acorn	No	No	1-2 wks	
Squash, summer	Yes	Yes	1 wk	Zucchini
Tomatoes	No	No	1 wk	

Acorn Squash. This is the first of our winter squash. We plan to include several varieties in your boxes this fall.

The simplest way to prepare Acorn, or any other squash is baking (or roasting). Baking condenses and conserves flavor and yields a tastier squash than boiling or steaming. To bake: wash the squash and cut it in half from top to bottom. Then scoop out the seeds and stringy pulp from the center of the squash. Try to scrape out all traces of the stringy pulp because in some squash it has an unpleasant flavor. Place the squash halves face down on a dish or tray and cook in a microwave or 350 degree oven until the flesh is very tender but not dried or charred. If baking in an oven, you can pour a little water in the bottom of the dish to keep the squash from drying out. Baked squash can be eaten straight from the shell with a fork.

Squash should be stored in a dry place outside the refrigerator. The ideal temperature for squash storage is 50-55 degrees. However, room temperature is okay. Acorn squash only stores well for short periods; this is especially true for squash (such as those in this week's box) which ripen in late summer. We suggest you eat it in the next week or two.

Roasted Beet Salad Dressing

A member submitted this recipe and said, "I don't love beets but this was by far the best beet salad I have made."

Roast your beets whole at 350 degrees, covered or wrapped in aluminum foil, until they are tender, usually over an hour. Steaming or boiling is faster; but roasting yields a better tasting beet. Once roasted, the beets can be easily peeled, then sliced and cooled and served with this dressing:

2 Tbsp olive oil
 2 garlic cloves
 1 lemon, juiced
 1-2 Tbsp sugar
 1-2 pinches salt
 1-2 pinches black pepper

Heat oil in a small pan and sauté garlic 1-2 minutes over medium heat; do not brown. Scoop out half of garlic. Add lemon, sugar, salt, and pepper. Whisk. Cool slightly and mix with beets. Optionally, serve with feta cheese.