

July 29, 2010



Vermont Valley Community Farm

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Corn Boil

It's a picnic! Bring your family out to the farm for our 16th annual sweet corn celebration. Come meet your farmers & much of the wonderful CSA community. See your vegetables growing; take a walk through the fields, around the farm and down to the stream; feed corn cobs to the goat.

When: Saturday, August 7th

(No rain date.) The date is earlier than the originally scheduled date because the corn has matured ahead of schedule!!

**Time: 3:00 to 3:30 for corn picking
4:00 (or so) the potluck begins**

Who: You, your family & friends (Please leave your dogs at home; true for all farm events).

What to bring: A large dish to share for the potluck meal, your own beverages, plates, cups & utensils, lawn chair or blanket, a smile & a great hunger for mouth-watering freshly picked sweet corn.

The Corn Pick: The big happening at the Corn Boil is of course harvesting sweet corn. All of the corn we pick will be boiled in kettles and eaten as you sit on the lawn and gaze over the beautiful valley (this is not a U-pick; no corn goes home with you). The corn field is a short walk from our yard where the eating takes place. If you want to be part of the corn pick, come no later than 3:30. If you've never harvested sweet corn, don't come too late; it is the highlight of the day.

What to bring home: Everything that you bring. We ask that you bring home your trash and recycling. Corn cobs stay with the goat.

Parking Your Car: Our neighbor has given us a place for cars to park, immediately across the highway from our farm; there will be a sign directing you where to go. As an option, drop off your stuff and then park the car. If you choose to park on the side of the road instead, please pull your car entirely off the road. It is a County Highway with wide shoulders in almost all spots. Have someone get out of the car and direct the driver. Thanks for paying attention to how you park.



Jesse (our son) and Jonnah were married last Saturday. Here they are arriving on the farm (note their 'limo') for a grand celebration, including amazing Vermont Valley food

Directions to the Farm

- From Madison take Highway 14 (University Avenue) to Black Earth. Turn left onto County F/ Highway 78 (this is at the stop-light on highway 14, at the Shoe Box shoe store).
- Stay on County F for five miles to the intersection with County FF (Cty F turns right in Black Earth, then turns left 1 mile outside of Black Earth).
- The farm is at the intersection of F & FF. A map is on our website at www.vermontvalley.com.

Organic Sweet Corn

Now is most certainly the height of the sweet corn season in Wisconsin. The imposture corn you see at the supermarkets year round has met its match with all the local sweet corn roadside stands. We take particular pleasure in giving you organic sweet corn that is second to none in flavor and texture. Sweet corn is a bit of a signature crop for us; I know of no other CSA that delivers the amount of sweet corn we do for our members.

For the chemical farmer, sweet corn is relatively easy to grow. It is planted with the corn planter; a fungicide on the seed keeps it from rotting in the ground. It is sprayed to kill the weeds, and possibly sprayed for insects. The big growers harvest by machine; small growers usually hand harvest.

Growing organic sweet corn is a huge effort compared to chemical farming. We grow a type of corn called Supersweet. Supersweets taste the best and hold their sweetness and flavor while waiting in your fridge. This type of corn is very difficult to germinate without fungicides. For this reason, we transplant all of our sweet corn. This means that every seed is hand planted into greenhouse flats, grown in the greenhouse for about 3 weeks and then transplanted into the field. Sweet corn takes up the most greenhouse space (broccoli being a close second). Transplanting the corn takes a lot of work and time. We have transplanted over 100,000 sweet corn plants this year. The last sweet corn transplanting is sort of a milestone each year for the transplanting crew; a big sigh of relief.

Weeding is usually accomplished with the tractor cultivator, rarely do we have to do hand weeding with transplanted sweet corn. So you could say weeding is the easy part of growing organic sweet corn. If needed, a bacterium is sprayed onto the sweet corn silks to fight off the green worms that can show up in your corn. The silks are the “hairy” strings on the corn that you try to take off before eating. They carry the pollen from the corn tassel (the top of the plant) to fertilize what you would call the kernels of corn. If the silk does not do its job, there are no kernels to eat. Sometimes, beetles eat off the silks, robbing you of your tasty kernels. None of the corn has yet been sprayed, but we will if needed; so an occasional worm may appear in your corn. The corn is monitored for the presence of a gray moth that lays the eggs on the green silks, the eggs become the green worms in the corn. The presence of the moths tell us if we should spray.

We always are required to donate corn to the wildlife before you get yours. They always get first crack at the corn. We lose the most in the earlier plantings; seems the raccoons, deer and sandhill cranes must get their fill early on. We plan on losing about 20 percent of what we plant to the various predators. This loss also includes “cultivator blight”; a disease associated with tired tractor drivers.

All of the corn is harvested by hand. We use a machine called a vege-veyer that assists the harvest. Harvesting corn can be a pretty hot job. Plus you often get soaked from the dew on the corn, an occasional tassel raking your eyes, and sometimes a cut on your fingers from the sharp corn leaves. Oh, and corn is heavy, so a bit of back labor is required. The corn is then cooled down in the cooler, and delivered to you.



This year we are hosting a couple of organic sweet corn trails being conducted by the University of Wisconsin Department of Agronomy. One trial is testing supersweet varieties for germination effectiveness. The goal being to identify a tasty supersweet variety that will germinate well. The other trial is looking at the best planting density for transplanted sweet corn. The results of these trials promise to be very useful to us since we transplant so much corn.

Organic sweet corn is a lot of work, but well worth it. Enjoy!