

Community Supported Agriculture



Background

Community Supported Agriculture is an economic model that encourages customers to buy directly from their farmers. They pay up front at the beginning of the season, which allows the farmers to plan their crops in advance. In return, customers receive a 'share' of vegetables harvested each week.

Not only does this help support farmers, but it allows customers access to fresh and seasonal produce throughout the term of the share.

CSA's originated to give farmers a stable stream of revenue from season to season and year to year. If there was a particularly bad harvest members would receive less and vice versa; if there was a good harvest members would receive more. This gave farmers resilience during difficult weather events and even bad seasons. In modern times this is still true but we are typically better able to moderate volume so that CSA members receive a consistent stream of farm produce.

Frequently Asked Questions

Vegetable Shares

→ How much will come in my share?

- ◆ This varies from week to week and as the season progresses. We build each share based on the value of the produce, as opposed to weight.

Some example shares from the 2022 summer season:

- Week 2 **small** share (early June): 1 bunch garlic scapes, 1 bunch basil, 1 bunch kale, 2 heads lettuce, ½ lb bag mesclun, 1 bunch radishes, 1 bunch turnips
- Week 8 **large** share (late July): 1 bunch carrots, 2 heads celery, 1 lb cucumbers, 1 head endive, 2 bunches mint, 1 bunch collard greens, 1 bunch leeks, 2 heads lettuce, 1 lb onions, 1 head rutabaga, 1 lb slicing tomatoes, 1 pint cherry tomatoes
- Week 13 **small** share (late August): 1 lb eggplant, 2 bunches garlic, 1 bunch basil, ½ bag lettuce mix, 1 lb onions, 1 lb bell peppers, 2

hot peppers, 1 bunch swiss chard, 1 lb slicing tomato, 1 pint cherry tomato.

- ◆ You can expect to see a lot of greens in the early part of the summer season and then a mix of different vegetables as the season progresses. The Fall vegetable share will be similar to the late summer weeks.
- When will my share begin?
 - ◆ We begin our shares based on the growing season, although we expect the summer shares to begin around the end of May or early June, and the Fall shares around late September. We will email all CSA customers the week before pickups begin.
- When do I pick up my share?
 - ◆ We will have the shares packed and ready by 3 PM on the designated pickup days. As we harvest the vegetables fresh that morning and then have to wash them all, we ask for this much time before they are ready. You can pick your share up anytime after 3 PM and before sunset on your designated day.
- What if I cannot get to my share before sunset?
 - ◆ If you know in advance that you won't be able to pick up your share on your designated day, please try to find a friend to pick up for you. If the Farmers arrive the next day to find shares not picked up, they may put the vegetables out on the market stand for sale. Occasionally, it is possible to adjust your pickup day. Please email vegetables@natickfarm.org with questions.

Flower Shares

- What will I get in my share?
 - ◆ Our CSA shares are a great opportunity to experience all that the growing season has to offer. We prepare our bouquets seasonally based on what is available each week. You can expect a large bouquet each week with instructions on how to lengthen the vase life of your flowers.
- When does my share begin?
 - ◆ We begin our shares based on the growing season, although we expect the spring share to begin around mid-April, summer shares to begin around the end of May or early June, and the dahlia shares around mid August. We will email all CSA customers the week before pickups begin.
- How do I pick up my share?
 - ◆ On your designated pickup day, you will be able to pick up your bouquet share any time after 3 PM in the flower workshop.

Meat Shares

- What will I get in my share?
 - ◆ We pack each share based on value as opposed to weight. This means that you may receive a wide variety of cuts at different points throughout your share season. However, for the most part, small shares will contain about 2-4 lbs of meat each week, medium shares 5-7 lbs and large shares 8-10 lbs.
- What if there is meat I do not/cannot eat?
 - ◆ We will be sending out a survey before your shares begin, asking for any restrictions we should be aware of. We will also see if you are interested in bones and/or organ meat.
- How do I pick up my share?
 - ◆ Meat shares will be packed and stored in our freezer in the farmhouse. Customers can swing by the Farm to pick up their share any time during their pick up weeks from Monday-Friday, 8AM - 4PM. We are also happy to accommodate if you need to pick up during weekends; you will just need to give us a heads up if that is the case.