



These two are a sight for sore backs! Debra Jo and Ellie harvesting winter greens pretend it's summer as they cut through the bed of arugula. Hand harvesting at any time of the year requires strong abdominal muscles in order to support one's upper body in this awkward position for long periods of time. Fortunately at this time of the year harvesting is all being done inside our greenhouses where daytime temperatures can be 30 to 40 degrees higher than the outside ambient temperature.

Greetings everyone!

With the unseasonably warm temperatures we've had in February it's had us hopeful and imagining that we'll have an early start to our growing season. Knowing that March and April have a greater reputation for more unpleasantly cold weather we've learned not to get too overly excited when we get some days during the winter with above normal temperatures. So in the meantime we're holding onto our senses and proceeding as usual by looking more so at the calendar and not by the mirage of a summerlike warm and sunny day outside our window.

What's been happening with CSA in and around our locale, and also on the national scene of small family farms? Well the reality of free enterprise and innovation has us continuing to go head to head with commercial scale food aggregators using the CSA model to market their products and services. All of the food products incorporated into these services are not produced by the individual businesses but rather purchased from multiple sources repackaged, and then shipped literally across the entire country. The manufacturing of packaged food products has become a multi-billion dollar industry. Those of us who have always preferred to sell our vegetables and fruits direct to our customers are finding it's not quite as easy as it used to be when the CSA concept of a farmer to consumer relationship was brand new. We along with several other farms who serve

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the Milwaukee area are now feeling a stronger need to raise consumer awareness about our farms, how our farms maintain their sustainability, and to reemphasize the benefits of buying true locally grown farm direct produce.

So in concert with other local farmers, and with farms across the country a national charter is being drafted to give a more clear definition to CSA. Our objective with endorsing this accord is to give a greater testament to the importance of having access to and supporting local farms. In its design the intention of the charters guidelines will be to preserve and uphold the relationship between the farmer and our customers. This new national charter will launch on February 24, 2017 which by the way is "National CSA sign-up day" and will serve as a way to attract greater public attention to, and hopefully inspire many new people to join CSAs. We will be making our own endorsement to this new charter and the logo shown below will be displayed on our own website showing our support. We want to keep CSA and buying farm direct a viable and available option for you.

If you are somewhat new to the CSA concept, or even if you're a veteran CSA supporter please take the time to read this article by clicking on this link. We openly invite anyone to send a quick email to give us your response to this movement. Thank you for standing along with us on such a very important issue.

CSA Charter Initiative <http://csaday.info/csa-charter-introduction-and-resources-page/>

[Give us your feedback on the CSA Charter by clicking here:](#)



The content of the new charter encompasses these guidelines for both us as farmers and you as share holders of your CSA farm to agree and pledge with you becoming a member:

1. Farm members buy directly from the farm or group of farms. There is no middleman.
2. The farm provides member families with high quality, healthy, nutrient-dense, fresh and preserved, local and low fossil-fuel food or fiber, filling the share primarily with products grown on the farm or, if purchased from other farms, clearly identified as to origin.
3. Farm members commit to the CSA, sharing the risks and rewards of farming by signing an agreement with the CSA and paying some part in advance, even as little as two weeks for those on Food Stamps.
4. The farm nurtures biodiversity through healthy production that is adapted to the rhythm of the seasons and is respectful of the natural environment, of cultural heritage, and that builds healthy soils, restores soil carbon, conserves water and minimizes pollution of soil, air and water.
5. Farmers and members commit to good faith efforts for continuous development of mutual trust and understanding, and to solidarity and responsibility for one another as co-producers.
6. Farm members respect the connection with the land upon which the CSA grows their food and strive to learn more and to understand the nature of growing food in their locale.
7. Farmers practice safe-handling procedures to ensure that the produce is safe to eat and at its freshest, tastiest, and most nutritious
8. CSA prices reflect a fair balance between the farmers' needs to cover costs of production and pay living wages to themselves and all farm workers so that they can live in a dignified manner, and members' needs for food that is accessible and affordable.
9. Farmers consult with members, take their preferences into account when deciding what crops to grow and communicate regularly about the realities of the farm.
10. Farm members commit to cooperation with the community of members and to fulfill their commitments to the CSA.
11. Farmers commit to using locally adapted seeds and breeds to the greatest extent possible.
12. The CSA seeks paths to social inclusiveness to enable the less well-off to access high quality food and commits to growing the CSA movement through increasing the number of CSAs and collaboration among them.