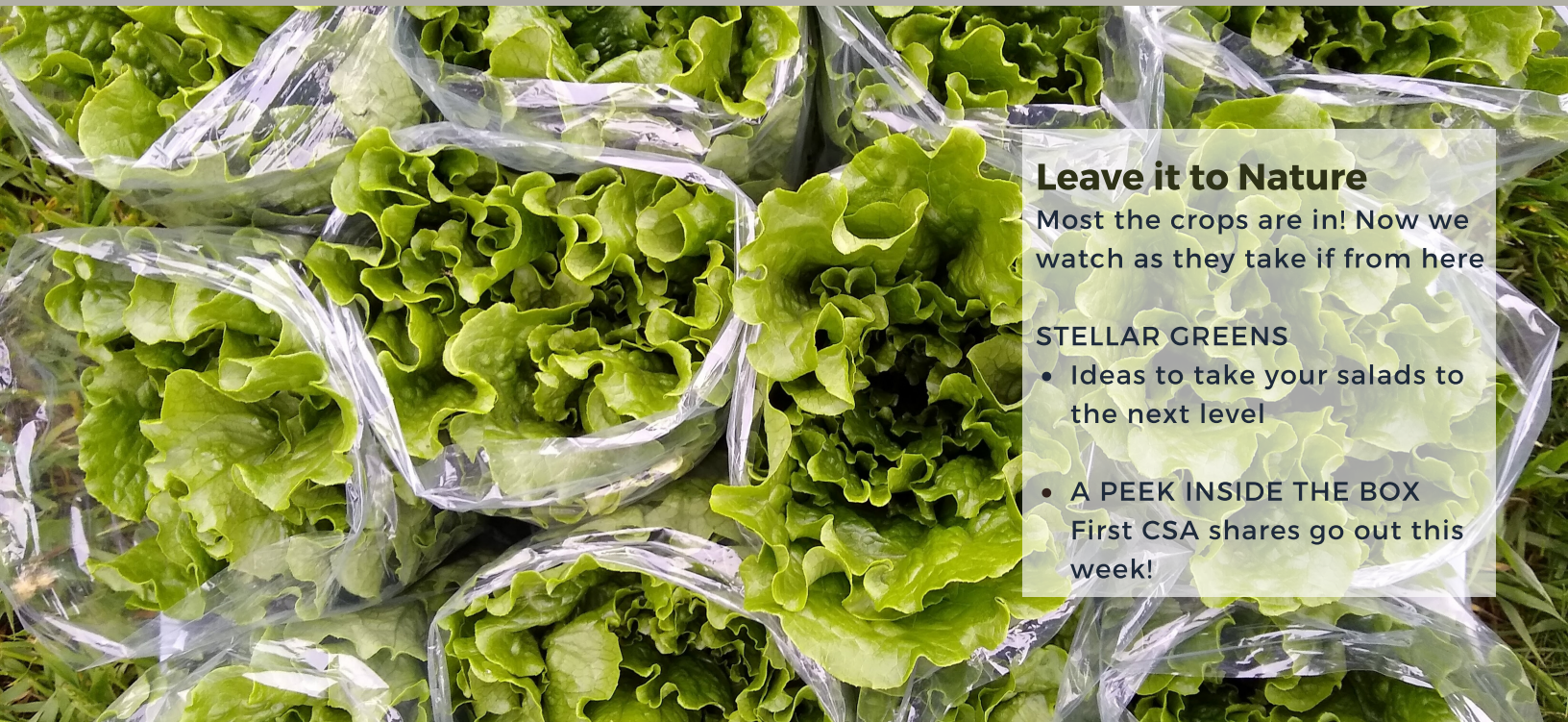


MAY 2020

# THE RHETORICAL ROOT

A monthly farm newsletter



## Leave it to Nature

Most the crops are in! Now we watch as they take if from here

### STELLAR GREENS

- Ideas to take your salads to the next level
- A PEEK INSIDE THE BOX  
First CSA shares go out this week!

Dear Friends,

Last night as we ate another rush-job supper in a stupor of exhaustion, Andre noticed that it was still light out at 9:15. Could it be that the summer solstice is less than a month away now? We work and work to lay irrigation, staple down landscape fabric, string up trellises and drag out every tool in the shed, and by the time the garden is producing in earnest, we are on the other side of summer. Frost looms near once again. It's good a reminder to appreciate everything in its time, though it's hard to enjoy the true miracle that is strawberry season to the fullest when it slips by in a two-week blur. Still, the little seasonal joys of life deserve and demand our utmost attention. This practice of noticing births gratitude.

This month marked the transition of our caterpillar tunnels from early greens to tomatoes and Asian greens. In my eagerness to start tomatoes, I always forget we don't actually have a greenhouse and can't plant as early as I'd like. So when overgrown tomato starts needed some real estate ASAP, instead of pulling out a good crop of spinach, we seeded it directly into the bed of spinach and radish. By now the spinach is out and the tomatoes can have their space. We are learning to be flexible, bending the traditional rules of till, plant, till, plant. We've found that taking the tiller out of the equation between plantings leads to nimbler, quicker transitions, with the added bonus of keeping the soil layers intact and conserving soil organic matter.







## Classic Caesar Salad Dressing

from **Bon Appétit**

### INGREDIENTS

- 3 oil-packed anchovy fillets, chopped
- 1 large garlic clove, chopped
- ¾ teaspoon (or more) kosher salt
- 1 large egg yolk
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- ¾ teaspoon Dijon mustard
- ¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 3 tablespoons Parmesan, finely grated

Mash to a paste the anchovies, garlic, and salt with a mortar and pestle, or with the side of a knife on a cutting board.

Whisk egg yolk, lemon juice, and mustard in a medium bowl. Place a kitchen towel in a medium saucepan, then place bowl in pan. (This holds the bowl in place while you whisk with one hand and pour oil with the other.)

Adding drop by drop to start and whisking constantly, drizzle a few drops of oil into yolk mixture. Continue, going slowly, until mixture looks slightly thickened and glossy. Continue to whisk, gradually adding oil in a slow, steady stream until all oil has been used and mixture looks like mayonnaise. Add a dash of water and whisk, adjusting with more water if needed, until dressing is the consistency of heavy cream. Add anchovy mixture and Parmesan and whisk until smooth. Taste and adjust seasoning with salt, if needed.

Serve on a bed of crunchy greens with homemade croutons, avocado, hard boiled egg, and shaved parmesan

## STELLAR SALADS

### Taking your greens to the next level

Salad. It's the cornerstone of farm-to-table meals in May and June. But somehow the thrown together salad I make at home doesn't compete with the beautifully crafted leafy creations found on restaurant menus or fancy dinner parties. Here are some tips (taken from Bon Appetit) for even better salads that we hope will provide inspiration for using up CSA greens! I also attached a caesar dressing recipe. We have been enjoying a great crop of romaine and caesar is my newest obsession.

- **Soften up with salt.** A good sprinkle of salt is what transforms something like raw cabbage into a soft base. Massage a bit into tougher raw greens like kale and collard salads as well.
- **Add substance by treating raw veggies.** Roasting, grilling, or pickling vegetables for salads will make them more dynamic and filling. Roasted mushrooms, turnips, or broccoli adds caramelization and sweetness.
- **Every ingredient should bring a contrast in flavor or texture**--crunchy & soft, sweet & salty, rich balanced with some acidity. For that crunchy topping, think beyond croutons to breadcrumbs, seedy bits, fried shallots, etc.
- **The mandolin is your friend.** Use it for raw veggies (kohlrabi, beets, radish) and dress them like you would leafy greens.
- **Always make your own dressing.** It's ALWAYS worth the effort & a great way to use up all those fresh herbs. For vinaigrette, use 2 parts oil to one part acid.



# LEARNING TO TAKE THE GOOD WITH THE BAD



After 3 years of growing veggies, we have learned a lot, but one thing that sends us for a loop every year is those forces of nature out of our control. Or we take steps to control them, and an unforeseen backlash ends up becoming the real problem. Pictured is flea beetle damage on bok choy. They chew shotgun holes in nearly every cole crop (mustard family). Organic interventions like row covers, neem oil, and diatomaceous earth have helped a bit, but not solved the problem. We also ended up cooking two beds of cauliflower after putting row cover on that was intended to prevent deer and cabbage worm damage. Don't expect cauliflower any time soon! Every year, we learn.

## CHICKENS MOVE TO GRASS



A few weeks back, we drug out the homemade chicken tractors and carted the chicks out onto grass. This move always comes with fear and trembling. We have lost chicks to feral cats and raccoons, cannibalism and cold. So far, so good this year! The chickens are learning to move when the tractor moves, searching for bugs and tender pieces of clover. It's been a cold May, so they're growth rate slowed. But they will be good to go later in June, and we can't wait to share them with customers!

## MANAGING THE MANY MARKETS



Our radish is always first to sell out at Yankton!

We have been enjoying a (comparatively) leisurely May, selling our salad greens to Jamboree and at the Yankton Market. We've met lots of great new folks down in Yankton and are slowly but surely spreading the word of Prairie Roots Produce. Things will get drastically more complicated once June hits, though, adding 3 CSA delivery days and one more market. Knowing what produce to designate to which outlet can be a constant challenge, but our general rule is that CSA comes first, store second, and market produce is just icing on the cake



# A PEEK INSIDE THE BOX

While we can't say for sure what you will find in your first box next week, we can give you an idea what you might find. The first few weeks to a month will be very heavy on the greens until fruiting crops come along. We suspect some people will be just fine with that and others won't be quite sure how to use it all. We will be sure to include recipes and preparation ideas to get your ideas flowing.

These boxes might not only be light due to greens but also light on value. We will easily be able to make up for this during tomato season!

If you did not buy a CSA plus account, you may still do so at any time. This will get you access to a weekly list of extra farm goods, like more veggies, eggs, flowers, whole chickens, and soap. This list will also be small at the beginning of the season but should grow over time. If you want more info on how to get these "extras" just ask!



## We NEED Diversity

Ecology is all about the relationships organisms have with each other and their surroundings. As farmers, we strive to create a healthy ecology. That means considering not just the plants we grow for profit, but the microorganisms in the soil, the birds in the nearby trees, and the insects living in and among the plants. This year we have also been trying a lot of inter-cropping--planting two or more different crops in the same bed at the same, like basil along tomatoes and radish right next to peas. This not only saves space, but allows for sharing of resources and can even reduce susceptibility of disease.

All this is to say that diversity is beautiful and necessary, not just in the garden, but in life. We are saddened and outraged by the death of George Floyd, among so many others. We stand with our brothers and sisters of color, praying for justice and a world that sees the equal value of all. #blacklivesmatter



## *It's wedding week!*

This lovely sister of mine is tying the knot this Saturday, topping off a busy first week of CSA deliveries and Freeman Farmers Market. It's been difficult for them to navigate their big day in the wake of the coronavirus. This weekend will be a small ceremony with a bigger reception to come this fall. Once she is settled in to her new home this summer, she has promised to help in the garden, which we will be very grateful for!