

Just Local News

News and views from the Just Local Food Cooperative – Mid May 2005

New additions

We have a few new products to tell you about this week. You'll notice we are starting to carry some seasonal items. These items are generally subject to availability, but we will only list items that farmers have committed a certain amount to us for. We appreciate your patience, and your willingness to support new farms that we bring into our service.

Kale, Toscano and Winterbor varieties, certified organic from Sunbow Farm. Available by the bunch, about 12 ounces each. \$3.25 Kale is virtually loaded with calcium, potassium, indoles (cancer-fighting substances), beta-carotenes, and other antioxidants. I like simple steamed kale with some butter, nutritional yeast and salt. A versatile cooking green.



Chives, fresh green, certified organic from Coon Creek Family Farm. By the bunch, \$3.00. Order these fresh chives and get your kitchen scissors out (clean fiskars ok too). Fresh chives add a little spunk and color – salads, soups, garnish. I had some in my popcorn last night.

Order these two fresh items along with the regular selections in our product catalog. We will care for these items to your door – if they are to be left out, some ice in a cooler will help them stay fresher longer (if they last past your Friday night meal, that is!).

We're in final logistical plans with several other new vendors – lot's of cheese and bread coming soon!

Gratitude

We have a unique relationship with our insurance agent, Mark Wise. He made sure we were covered for everything in our truck and warehouse – that's pretty normal. But a few months ago, he also sold us his car to be used as our next delivery vehicle – an ol' Ford Escort diesel that he converted to run on waste vegetable oil from restaurants. We have now driven that car for almost two months of deliveries, and all of the fuel has been provided by Mr. Wise. It's a great feeling knowing our car runs on a local, renewable resource. Even better that it's free! I want to thank Mark for providing us with the car and fuel, and for his help in keeping our coop business on the road to success.

Shake it up

The milk we sell naturally separates. The bigger, lighter (tastier) fat rises to the top as the milk is left to rest. If the milk sits long enough without agitation, these fat particles can get together pretty good. This is normal, and a sign of a fresh natural product. When it comes time to drink it, you might find these guys hard to break apart. I have a few tips for you. First off, make sure you are always drinking your oldest milk first – that way a bottle doesn't sit any longer than it needs to (giving more time for separation). Next is to check the temperature of your refrigerator. The milk lasts longer the closer it is to 32 degrees. I'm not suggesting you turn your fridge down to 32 (it's so close to freezing it might freeze tender greens or have frozen zones – yep I've tried it!). However you could find the coldest spot of your fridge and put your milk there – sometimes there is a vent from the freezer to the fridge that is a real cold spot, generally

in the back. Before you drink it though, a good shake is in order. Always keep a thumb or finger over the cap start by inverting back and forth and then give it a good shake. The chocolate milk can be a real pain sometimes, but I think you'll all agree that it's worth a few shakes to drink that sweet nectar of the cows down at Troy's farm. Drop in at our farmers market booth on Saturday and give one of those cute little chocolate milk pints a shake, and enjoy as you stroll through.

Farmers market update

The Downtown Farmers market got off to a good start May 7 with over twenty vendors and hundreds of customers. There were already a few new vendors this year – including a wide variety of bedding plants and starters. I picked up a few annual flowers for our raised flower bed. And we stopped at another vendor for some tomatoes, including one that already had some green fruits on it. And like last year there was a variety of meat, baked goods, and some early season greens. If you can't make it to the market don't fret, though. Just Local Food works with many of the downtown Farmers Market vendors to bring the market to your door every Friday.

Pricing

We sometimes get comments that our prices are too high. And well, yeah, I guess if you are comparing a half gallon of commercial milk at a megastore with a half gallon of fresh milk from a local farm, the price on the bottle is higher. There's all sorts of clichés that can be used – you get what you pay for, the best things aren't cheap, you are what you eat... We're not that interested in clichés though. We want the farmers we work with to be in business a few years from now, working in a sustainable operation that feeds their families as well as our customers. And we want our customers to be around a few years from now – which in part means keeping our food fresh, wholesome, nutritious and life-giving. No preservatives or chemicals that lead to premature health problems.

I know it's hard to justify spending more money on food that is similar. I try hard not to spend too much time in these newsletters telling you about the dark side of the food industry, even though it's tempting. I've been to factories where cows are lined up, the huge industrial facilities where millions (yes millions) of chickens are kept before their untimely deaths. While these methods produce “food” that is edible and available at the supermarket, there are costs that don't ring up at the register. The long term effects of eating food from animal (and vegetable) factories is clear – health problems, environmental cleanup and runoff issues, and family farms going out of business are a few of them.

Which brings me back to pricing. Our prices are honest and fair. I know that some families, including my own, can't afford to eat all local and organic food all of the time. But I also know that every little thing I do to support local farms makes a big difference in the lives of the farmers, and ultimately in my own life. While I wish there wasn't industrial food clouding our image of what humans should really be eating, I recognize it is there, and it only inspires me educate myself and others about the importance of supporting local farms and eating healthy food. And once we're educated, we need to put that knowledge to work in any way we can.

All articles within written by Aaron Ellringer. Just Local Food Cooperative is a worker owned cooperative dedicated to bringing fresh, local and fair trade food to people in and around Eau Claire. For more information please see our website justlocalfood.com or call 577-5564 to get more information or a catalog. Thanks for your support! Pictured at left are happy chickens out at Coon Creek Family Farm, taken on my last visit to see baby goats...

