



Veggies on Wheels



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"Veggies on Wheels" (edited by Wolfgang W.) appears about once/month. Biweekly or irregular customers may receive the latest issue at a later date.

Dear Pfenning's Food Box Community,

About 2 weeks ago – the weather was simply too gorgeous to resist any longer – field work on the Pfenning's Farm officially began. Someone had spotted last year's remnant Cilantro crop boldly growing out, steadfastly taking on the challenge of overtaking the early advances of the ever-present weeds. Ah, but this time the cavalry did make its entry – in the form of our sun-hungry Farm colleagues, eager to go into battle against the bothersome weeds, and finally get busy outdoors.

In the meantime, the Farm is well on its way to becoming the bustling haven of farming activities which defines it during the growing season. Some Spinach that survived the winter is being harvested and bunched, and the same may soon be happening with Green Kale. **Transplanting** has been going on since last week, just when the first group of **Jamaican migrant workers** came back, ready for action, with some more to come in the following weeks. Seedlings have already been sitting on the Pfenning's Farm in their "greenhouses" for several weeks. The greenhouses are actually the carrot washing and bunching stations, situated in hoop houses just next to the main warehouse, warmed up very nicely by the sun's increasing intensity. From there, a constant stream of seedlings is brought out to the fields to be transplanted, even now as I am writing these lines.



One could say that local production cannot come too soon. You will have noticed that the produce boxes have not been including **lettuce** very much lately, the reason being that lettuce prices have simply been astronomically high in recent weeks. As Almut had mentioned for her readers in her weekly **Store News and Specials Newsletter** (you can subscribe here, <http://pfenningsorganic.ca/newsletters/subscribe.cfm>, if interested), the weather in California, where lettuce and many other leafy greens are grown in our winter months, was wet and cool. Lettuce crops were either hard to harvest, did not grow as expected, or were even decimated by the intemperate conditions. So, in an effort to ride out the pricey lettuce period, Almut has been planning other greens into the Baskets – kale, chard, baby spinach, collards, some of which were coming from the Pfenning's partnering farm down in Florida and Georgia, where winter growing conditions were much more favourable. **Fruit** as well has been quite copiously priced, making it difficult to plan appealing Fruit Baskets including more than just citrus fruits, avocados, pears and a dwindling availability of apples.

Wild Garlic

So, needless to say, we are all very much looking forward to the upcoming local production. May this week's **Wild Garlic** in the Large Local Baskets be considered a prelude to the burgeoning local season. In case you do not know how to deal with it, Wild Garlic – one of the first wild greens to come up in the spring in wooded, natural settings – is extremely tasty and full of springy energy. You can chop it up and add it to salads, or sprinkle it on sandwiches, soups and stews. Almut's favourite application is to make **Wild Garlic Pesto** with it. Just take any Pesto recipe (here is one on our site: <http://tinyurl.com/lz28onv>) and replace the Basil with Wild Garlic. Hmmmmm, is all I can say.

Irradiation

Following several customers' inquiries, we are making a brief mention of a recent development coming from a realm which is inherently foreign to **organic production**: the world of **Irradiation**. Renewed interest in this radiant topic was sparked off several weeks back when a newscast informed us that the federal government has approved the sale of ground beef that has been treated with radiant energy similar to X-rays. According to **Health Canada**, irradiation is said to reduce levels of harmful bacteria such as E. coli and salmonella that could be in the meat and to possibly prevent premature spoilage of fresh and frozen raw ground beef. A thorough investigation supposedly preceded the decision and concluded that irradiation is a safe and effective treatment to reduce harmful bacteria in ground beef. Irradiated ground beef products must be labelled as such and include the international symbol on packaging – you can see it to the right. This practice, pushed for by Canada's beef cattle industry and already common in our country to treat potatoes, onions, wheat, flour, spices and some seasonings, has been used in the United States since 1999. **Remember though that there is no irradiation in organics.**



So much for the official side. With a little effort, you can find ample information pointing out reasons to oppose this practice. For one, why does the organic standard not allow for irradiation? According to the **Organic Consumers' Association**, irradiated fruits and vegetables **benefit the packer and grocer** (*by preventing spoilage and increasing shelf life*), not the farmer or consumer (<http://tinyurl.com/lztp7qy>). The consumer receives **an inferior product** that appears fresh, but has depleted vitamins and enzymes. Why would irradiated food be inferior? Possibly because it is subjected to the burst of rays estimated to be the equivalent of up to **30 million chest X-rays**, according to several alternative voices. Irradiation, also called "cold pasteurization," claims to make food safe with this procedure. Making our food 'safe' by subjecting it to further harm does not appear as the most effective solution – not to mention the fact that irradiating foods may actually be spawning radiation-resistant forms of bacteria along with many other potential risks. Irradiation not only kills harmful, but also friendly bacteria, and can cover up spoiled food by eliminating bacteria indicating with their bad smell that food has gone bad. It **kills irradiation-sensitive nutrition**, such as vitamins and enzymes, thus further depleting its nutritive value. While food-borne illness is a problem, it has been suggested that irradiation contributes to masking the actual problem of **poor hygiene** in the mass food industry (see for example <http://tinyurl.com/3cv86fk>). It has also been indicated that the structure of our food supply, where

three or four massive companies are responsible for 80% of what we find in the supermarket, may well be contributing to widespread contamination and recalls. The **centralization of our food system** is a big part of the problem, leading to yet another reason to know your farmer and shop as locally as you can. Finally, it has actually not been proven that irradiation makes food safe for human consumption. For a good summary on this as well as many of the other arguments offered here, visit Meghan Telpner's Blog:

<https://www.meghantelpner.com/blog/food-irradiation-5-things-you-need-to-know/>.

**Hope you all enjoy the lovely month of May,
Wolfgang – and some of us at the Farm**

