

FARM NEWS

By: S. MARGARET MAHER, OSF

The 23rd of May was the opening day of the 2017 CSA for Michaela Farm. CSA stands for **Community Supported Agriculture** and it is a wonderful way to learn personally where your food comes from and who grows it for you. The subscriber makes a financial investment in the financial resources of the farm by selecting a share size that fits their needs. In return the subscriber gets a share of produce once a week. An egg and beef add on can also be selected for an additional financial investment. It is a situation in which food passes directly from the farm to your plate with only your kitchen in between.

By joining the CSA subscribers receive produce that is grown with no synthetic or chemical fertilizers. Our practices help us care for Earth at the same time as we provide a chemically free product. All produce, eggs and beef are produced here at Michaela Farm. Nothing is transported in and then distributed to subscribers. Therefore subscribers can only receive produce that is in season during the growing period. Subscriber shares help support local food, local businesses and the mission and work of the Sisters of St. Francis.

The produce comes directly out of our fields into the barn where it is cleaned and prepared for pick up. As with any produce purchased from any store, we suggest subscribers rewash it in their own kitchens. Our employees are trained in food safety standards and we follow the Health and Safety Manual that lists all of the ways and means that we use to keep Michaela Farm as safe as possible. Every year, every employee and regular volunteer is updated on these practices.

In a regular share of produce, subscribers can expect between 6 and 10 different products per week. The amount will depend on what is available for harvest at that time. Usually the amount is a little lighter at the beginning of the growing season and gets progressively larger as we move into summer. A smaller share is available which will provide about 2/3 of the regular share. Everyone will also receive at least two recipes that use the produce in the share each week. Some of our subscribers find it helpful to get these, especially if it is some product that they aren't used to using. Some of the recipes are old standards, like Grandma's Green Beans and some are a little unusual, like Red Beet Chocolate Cake.

Tuesday pick-ups are always a fun night. Since most of our subscribers come on that night, we set up a mini produce center. The vegetables are out in labeled baskets and the subscribers come through and pick up their share. They can ask questions about the produce, share ideas with each other and the workers and meet friends who are also coming in for their shares. Friday pick-ups are pre-packed by our gardeners and stored in coolers until their owners arrive.

The CSA has proven to be a good experience for us. As one of our subscribers said: it is like trick or treat for adults. You come in with an empty bag and go out with a full one and there is no check-out lane.

If you are not a subscriber to the CSA there is plenty of produce, eggs and beef available for you to buy in the Farm Store. We are open from about 8:00 am to about 7:00 pm every day. The Farm Store is self-serve, so feel free to stop by anytime...you are always welcome.

We are off to a good start but it is long way to the end of September, so we ask your prayers for a successful summer season.