

Supplying local produce and supporting local farmers for 20 years.

## Food for Thought

### The Key to Preventing Moldy Berries? Vinegar!

Food Lush has this advice for keeping berries fresh. "A friend of mine shared this tip with me a few weeks ago, and it really works. When you get your berries home, prepare a mixture of one part vinegar (white or apple cider probably work best) and ten parts water. Dump the berries into the mixture and swirl around. Drain, rinse if you want (though the mixture is so diluted I find you can't taste the vinegar,) and pop in the fridge. The vinegar kills any mold spores and other bacteria that might be on the surface of the fruit, and voila! Raspberries will last a week or more, and I've had strawberries go almost two weeks without getting moldy and soft. So go forth and stock up on those pricey little gems, knowing they'll stay fresh as long as it takes you to eat them." For more information visit their blog at <http://bit.ly/OqLJnu>.

### An Abundance of Herbs? No Problem, Store them in Oil.

Long time FDC member Susan DameGreene has this excellent tip for preserving herbs from the herb share. "Puree the herbs in the blender with olive oil and use them in cooking. They last nicely for several days in the fridge this way. The mix can also be frozen in an ice cube tray, then popped out and put in a zip top bag in the freezer. It lasts for a few months to use as you like. One more suggestion is to put one or more herb cubes in quinoa or rice water when cooking, Yummy!"

### Place Bulk Orders NOW!

Seeking pints of blueberries or local pie crusts? See our website order forms at <http://blog.farmdirectcoop.org/category/forms/>. Is there something you want that's not on the form? Send Julie an email, if it's available she will be happy to order it for you. Email Julie at [julie@farmdirectcoop.org](mailto:julie@farmdirectcoop.org).

### Vacation Swaps

Going to miss your FDC goodies? Email [newsletter@farmdirectcoop.org](mailto:newsletter@farmdirectcoop.org) with your depot, the day you will be away, contact details and share. We'll run an ad to see if anyone wants to swap. You can also ask for a swap on the very active FDC Facebook group.

Corinne, a Tuesday Melrose member is looking to swap October 9th and October 16th. She has a Small Vegetable and Small Fruit Share. Email Corinne at [clshea@gmail.com](mailto:clshea@gmail.com).

## FDC Fresh Ideas

By Julie Pottier-Brown, Operations Manager

The sugar snap peas are plentiful and well worth their high price of \$5.25 per pound. Fresh onions are the other new item this week. The season is in full swing now, with summer squash, greens and beans (which we received last week) coming off the farm in bushels full. Just around the corner are peaches, sweet corn and field tomatoes.



Onions in the field at Riverland.

We are all getting another taste of high tunnel tomatoes from cider hill farm today. Again, a pricey option, but if this weather keeps up, our western growers will be picking soon enough. A word about tomatoes in your share: everyone has a different take on these. As often as I hear "I want more tomatoes." I hear "Do I have to take these, I have a ton from my garden right now." Couple that with the price - about \$3 to \$4.50 a pound (organically grown or not) and I have to be very careful to not over spend on these summer beauties. The majority of you order a small share and the retail value of that is \$11 a week. If I were to order a pound and a half of tomatoes per week, that would be half of your share, and the remaining balance would just buy two or three other items, lettuce, and a few ears of corn. For that reason, I am considering keeping the option this year for members to buy extra tomatoes at each depot whenever tomatoes are part of the share. Small vegetable shares may get one or 1.25 pounds, and then we would have another 25 pounds available per depot at the retail price.

For large shares, amounts tend to be between 1.75 and 2.5 pounds, but you are also welcome to buy extra. Cash is not necessary, these items will be added to your statement. If the fields produce many tomatoes, once again we will have the tomato bulk order for as long as tomatoes are available. Opinions are always welcome on this policy of course. When the tomato bulk order happens, we will email a link to the online order form.

There is a little Asian fruit fly in our midst causing problems in our area. So far, the fly hasn't been seen in MA but is in CT. Luckily, our suppliers haven't had to increase their use of insecticides yet. Raspberry season came on so quickly, it may be too late for a bulk order. If you absolutely want to order raspberries, red or black, gooseberries, or currants, please let me know. There are no guarantees.

If you know you are going to want an item in bulk that we generally get only one time per year, or there is not enough interest to generate a form, please email me directly. I love helping people put by their winter provisions, but can't help without enough notice.

*Julie*

## Creamy Broccoli Pesto Sauce

By Danielle Shea Tan, Marblehead Depot



Photo by Danielle Shea Tan

In a food processor (or blender), blend completely: 2 heaping handfuls of basil (parsley, spinach or arugula can also be used), 3-4 cloves garlic (or 4-6 garlic scapes), 3-4 TBS pine nuts or walnuts, 1 ripe avocado, 2 crowns of steamed broccoli (about 2 cups), 2-3 TBS lemon juice, ¼- ½ cup olive oil, salt & pepper to taste. Toss over hot pasta. My favorite is brown rice or quinoa penne.

## The Amazing Benefits of Basil

By Danielle Shea Tan, Marblehead Depot



Photo by Danielle Shea Tan

It has reached that time of year when my basil plants are bountiful! But this didn't happen without struggle. I started growing potted organic herbs about four years ago. Since my Italian heritage dominates my kitchen, it was a no brainer for me to start with basil. The problem: I had never grown anything green in my life. You could say my thumb was stark white at this point. So, as you might expect, the first year I tackled growing basil was a complete flop and my dream of making red sauce galore for the winter months went down the drain.

Being the fighter that I am, I didn't give up and the next summer I jumped right back on the basil horse (which would be a beautifully smelling horse, huh). My luck changed for the better when I learned an amazing trick from our friends at HERB FARMacy. To encourage basil to grow big and beautiful, I had to regularly pinch off the center two leaves at the top of each stalk. Before long, my dreams of pesto, red sauce and delicious salads packed with nutrient-rich, fragrant basil reappeared as my basil plant was bursting at the seams in just a matter of weeks (seriously this baby was like a small bush)!

Since that year, basil is my favorite herb to grow and I often have multiple containers of this healthy herb in our ever-expanding herb garden. Over the years, I've learned that basil is more than meets the eye. It goes beyond just being a pretty little plant with tasty qualities, but is actually a powerhouse of strength and nutrition. (If you knew me well, you'd understand my kinship with basil). Some of basil's amazing properties include:

**Anti-bacterial:** lab studies show the effectiveness of basil in restricting growth of numerous bacteria; Basil Essential Oil is a well-known herbal remedy for loads of ailments.

**Anti-inflammatory:** like traditional anti-inflammatory meds (e.g., ibuprofen), basil blocks the activity of an enzyme called cyclooxygenase which is present at sites of inflammation and pain.

**High Vitamin K:** only 2tsp provides 27% of your daily dose, a vitamin essential for effective blood clotting and bone health.

**High magnesium:** is critical in promoting normal blood pressure and nerve function (that must be why this hot-headed, basil-loving Italian has such low blood pressure!)

To enjoy your basil this summer, try the nutrient-packed, dairy free, *Creamy Broccoli Pesto* recipe above from Crazy Simple Wellness. Kids call it "Green Mac-n-Cheese." Adults call it just plain decadent!

*Danielle Shea Tan is a holistic health and wellness coach and owner of Crazy Simple Wellness, a local business focused on helping busy people make small, gradual changes so they can look, feel and perform their best everyday! You can learn more about her work at [www.crazysimplewellness.com](http://www.crazysimplewellness.com).*

## Confessions of a Coop Newbie

By Marta Brill, Salem Depot

There are a few tried and true ways to get fresh, local, organic, in-season produce. You could attend your local farmer's market, you could plant a garden, or you could raid your neighbor's garden in the dead of night. Or, you could do what I decided to do this year – join the coop!

I found out about Farm Direct Coop on a cold, drizzling day in April. I had just finished an Earth Day 5K run in record slow time, and with post-race bagel and banana in hand, I wandered over to the exhibitor tables. I picked up a brochure on the coop and stuck it in my pocket. The very next day, I went to the website to sign up.

I had considered participating in a CSA before, mostly for the tomatoes. I wanted great tomatoes. No more tasteless, paste-like orange-red orbs for me! I wanted something juicy and bursting with earthy sweetness that has been bred to be eaten, not bred to travel hundreds of miles. In my pursuit of this excellent fruit, last summer I tried to grow my own. Lacking a proper yard, I lined the patio with terra cotta pots bearing seedlings. I nurtured them with fish byproduct and watched them grow straight up, but thin and scraggly. They never produced more than a handful of cherry tomatoes.

With the bitter taste of garden failure still in my mouth, I happily joined the FDC. This way, I knew I would get my fresh, ripe tomatoes alongside a broad array of locally grown, organic or IPM fruits and vegetables. I was motivated by the promise of healthier, better tasting meals, and the idea of supporting local farmers and taking part in the slow food movement. I signed up for a small veggie and small fruit share, plus a local bread and cheese share.

At the start of the season, I was not sure what to expect. I approached the coop's white tents clutching my reusable bags. I tentatively followed the instructions on the chalkboard – take this, choose between those, weigh this – and walked away with a head of lettuce, a crown of broccoli, radishes, spinach, strawberries, and rhubarb. The next week brought more spinach and strawberries, plus beets, kohlrabi, feta cheese, a loaf of sourdough bread, garlic scapes, and two tomatoes! I didn't have to wait long for my tomatoes after all.

But the most fun part of membership has been the mysterious, unknown vegetables. I grated my kohlrabi and mixed it in a salad with apples, walnuts, and an olive oil-lemon dressing. On the animated FDC Facebook group, I saw that others were making purees, French fries, and eating it raw, sliced thin with a bit of salt. Week three brought two culinary stumpers, hakurei turnips and napa cabbage, as well as garlic scapes, green onions, strawberries, rhubarb, and a baguette. But, most things are tasty when sautéed in butter; the turnips proved to be no exception. The napa cabbage morphed into four meals: sautéed cabbage with garlic scapes and sesame oil served over rice, stuffed cabbage baked in the oven, leaves of crunchy, raw cabbage rolled around meatballs, and shredded cabbage mixed with white beans, feta, and cauliflower and tossed in a lemon-olive oil dressing.

So, bring on the kale! Pile on the rhubarb! I will prove that I "cook" enough to handle swiss chard! Just remember to throw in a few tomatoes too.

*Marta Brill picks up her share at Salem Depot, and is loving it! She works in international education and writes for Connect Shore ([www.connectshore.com](http://www.connectshore.com)) a blog about books, food, family, and life's connections on the North Shore.*