

An Overview of Easy Pickin's CSA Program for 2017

CSA stands for “**Community Supported Agriculture.**” A local farmer offers customers the opportunity to become **members** of the farm's CSA program. Customers pay the farmer in advance; this entitles them to a “**share**” of the farm's harvest during the season. This up-front payment helps the farmer with expenses at the beginning of the growing season. The CSA member then receives a weekly assortment of fresh produce -- picked, packed and ready for pick-up -- throughout the growing season.

A variety of fruits and vegetables are picked at optimum ripeness and boxed for you on pick-up day. The amount and type of each vegetable and fruit vary with the season and the weather. You, the CSA member, pick up your produce at the farm each week on a designated day.

If you're already a customer of Easy Pickin's, you know we grow a wide variety of vegetables, herbs, fruits and berries. Each week your share box will reflect this mix of fresh, tasty produce ! Your vegetable selection includes whatever is in season and available: tomatoes, peppers, squash, beans, carrots, turnips, onions, salad fixings and more. Fruits may include strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, plums, peaches, apples and Asian pears. Our wide variety of high quality fruit is a bonus which many CSAs are unable to offer their members. Check the “**What We Grow**” page of our website for more info about our produce, and the “**2016 Season**” links on the “**CSA Program**” page of our website to see what our most recent season looked like, week by week.

Our **CSA season** runs approximately **20 weeks**, starting in mid-June and running through October.

- * A **full share** is priced at **\$555.00**, so your cost averages out to about **\$27.75** per week. A full share is a good-sized portion for a medium-sized family.
- * We also offer **half-shares**: *same variety of items in your box for the 20-week season, but 1/2 the quantity.* Half-shares are priced at **\$325.00** for the **20 weeks** -- they're a good size for individuals, or folks who want to try out the idea of CSA on a smaller scale.
- * Another good option can be “**sharing a share**” -- a group of friends, or an extended family, buys a full share and divides the contents among the group each week when they pick up.

To reserve a share, you can make a **down payment of \$100** any time after **Jan. 1**. **Full payment** must be received by **May 1** to confirm your share. Shares are sold on a first-come, first-served basis. A limited number of shares is available for this CSA season, so don't delay.

Please click on the link at the top of this page to print out the **CSA Membership Form**, fill it in, and mail it with your payment to:

Easy Pickin's Orchard
46 Bailey Road
Enfield, CT 06082

Make your check payable to **Easy Pickin's Orchard**.

You must select a **weekly pick-up day** for the season. Currently, the choices are:

***at the farm*:**

___ **Tuesday**, 4pm-6:30pm // ___ **Thursday**, 4pm-6:30pm // ___ **Saturday**, 9am-noon

OR ***at Coventry Regional Farmers' Market*** ___ **Sunday**, 11am-2pm

To contact us:

e-mail: farmerb@easypickinsorchard.com

website: www.easypickinsorchard.com

CSA at Easy Pickin's - Benefits and Opportunities

Supporting Local Farming and Quality Food Production

When you join a CSA, you support a local farmer, and you help preserve farmland in your community. When you buy local instead of getting produce that is shipped in from great distances, it's much better for the environment; you're also strengthening your local economy. You meet and know the people who grow your food. You know the land is worked with care, to support production and to ensure the future of local farming for generations to come.

One more plus: local, freshly-picked fruits and vegetables have more vitamins and much better flavor than produce that has been in the commercial food system for days or weeks. It's delicious, healthy eating !

A Good Value for Your Grocery Budget

CSA is a good value for you as well as for us. First, \$555 for a **20-week full share** is about \$27.75 per week, and should be plenty of produce for a family of 4 (*we also have a 1/2-share option -- see above*). The value of the produce is based on retail prices at farm stands and farmers' markets. This fluctuates with the supply of produce from week to week. In the early and late seasons when variety is more limited, the value of the box may be slightly less, so we don't inundate you with heaps of radishes and lettuce mix ! During peak season, we are able to add a bit more to the box, to take advantage of the wider varieties of fruits and vegetables available at that time.

Your Share in the Adventure of Farming: Pests, Weather, and Expecting the Unexpected

Of course, farming is a risky business. At Easy Pickin's we do everything possible to mitigate this risk. Our frost fan helps protect our fruit from early season frosts. Our fencing keeps deer out of our fields. We supply our fruit orchard and berry patches with irrigation, and we have a flexible system for irrigating the beds in our vegetable fields. Our big "high tunnels" (plastic-sided, solar-heated greenhouses) extend our harvest season to colder weather (we can grow greens in the winter !); we also use them for staging young plants before putting them directly in the ground in late spring. And we use these metal-framed "high tunnels" to grow some vegetables -- especially tomatoes & cucumbers -- all the way to harvest, which makes these sun-ripened favorites available early, before the field crop is ready to pick.

Yet unexpected things do happen. Weather -- heat, cold, drought, downpours -- is the most significant factor affecting growing conditions and our harvest. Harsh or fluctuating conditions put stress on all crops (and on the farmer !); many crops are also susceptible to a variety of pests (insects, fungi, etc.). In particular, tree fruit production is very sensitive to weather. In recent years, orchards throughout New England and nationwide have experienced diminished harvests due to unusual and changing climate conditions: overall milder winters with sudden freezes, and late (post-bloom) spring frosts. CSA members share in these varying risks from year to year. We can't guarantee how many pounds of a particular item of produce will be available each year, but by growing a wide variety of fruits and vegetables we do our best to provide each member with high value for their share.

What's So Good About Joining a CSA ? Plenty !

Consider these benefits of joining a CSA:

- **Savings:** Over the course of the season, farm stand prices are competitive with supermarket prices. And quality and freshness make local farm produce a better bargain for your grocery budget.
- **Health:** We provide a large variety of fruits and vegetables, freshly-picked at optimum ripeness. More variety, quality and flavor, and more vitamins: better nutrition for you.
- **Convenience:** A generous box of produce, ready-&-waiting for you every week, June through October.
- **Community Strength:** You support your local farmer with early season funds. The farmer employs local help, and supports other local businesses as well as the local food pantry.
- **Environmental Quality:** Your support helps provide long-term stability and sustainability to your local farm. Agricultural lands farmed with environmentally sound methods, and the surrounding open space, protect air and water quality. Your local farm is also a habitat for a beautiful variety of birds and butterflies. And by buying local produce instead of what arrives at the supermarket by plane or truck, you reduce fuel consumption and other environmental costs of food, for our whole planet.

Other Questions You Might Have About CSA at Easy Pickin's

Below are some **additional questions -- and answers** -- about our CSA.

- 1. *Is the produce "organic" ?*** Many early CSAs began on "organic" farms. Vegetables are somewhat suited to organic production, but fruits are more difficult to grow with this method. At our farm, we choose an **Integrated Pest Management (IPM)** approach. With IPM, we use some of the best organic methods and limit our use of conventional pesticides, to grow the highest quality and safest produce we can. We are enrolled in an up-to-date IPM program with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); scientists from the University of Connecticut come to our farm on a regular basis, to test our crops and to instruct us on the latest techniques to maintain sustainable, safe food production.
- 2. *What kind of produce will I get ?*** You receive a mixed sample of the produce ripening each week throughout the season; produce varies with the season & weather. Check our "**What We Grow**" & "**What's Growing On**" pages to see possibilities, & "**2016 Season**" links under "**CSA Program**."
- 3. *Can I order specific produce for my share ?*** No. To make our system practical and affordable, we pack identical shares for everyone. Expand your food horizons by trying something new and exciting !
- 4. *What if I would like more of some items ?*** If our pick-your-own area is open when you come for your share, you can pick-&-pay-for more produce that way. And when some fruits and vegetables are in plentiful supply, we offer them for pre-order -- to pick up with your share for an additional charge.
- 5. *Can I pick up on a different day ?*** No. Sorry, but we ask that you select a specific pick-up day so that we can pack the needed number of shares for that day.
- 6. *What if I miss my pick-up ?*** We can't promise to save your weekly share or give you a "make-up." Produce is very perishable, so if you're not available on your pick-up day we encourage you to arrange with a friend or family member to pick up your share that week. We can be a bit flexible when you go on vacation -- just ask us in advance; if something unexpected happens, contact us ASAP. Shares not picked up at the designated time will be donated to our local food pantry. There are no refunds for missed pick-ups.

If there's anything we haven't covered here, feel free to e-mail us and ask.
You can reach us at: farmerb@easypickinsorchard.com .

Thanks !