

April 6, 2005

Welcome to Prairieland Community Supported Agriculture for the 2005 Season

Please remember to pickup your share in Urbana at 714 W Iowa and in Champaign at 701 W Washington between 4 and 7 pm today. Your share will be in the garage. Please use the tasteful green service door (Urbana) or obnoxious turquoise service door (Champaign - I can say it, it's my house) to access the garages. There is a checkoff sheet at each location. Please check the box by your name when you pick up your share. If you cannot pick up your share, you are welcome to designate someone else to do so. Any shares left behind will be donated to charity. Note: Some shareholders have preordered eggs to be delivered in conjunction with their shares. The eggs are not part of the regular shares. Please do not take them unless you ordered them. See "Eggs and More" below for ordering details. Copies of the newsletter will be at pickup for those without email. You also can access the newsletter from www.prairielandcsa.org

You Are the Best

As you may have noticed from the long list of names yesterday, we made our goal of 125 shareholders for 2005. Because we received next to no help from local media this year, we had to depend primarily on word of mouth from PCSA's shareholders. Thank you, thank you, thank you, for spreading the word to your friends and neighbors. Thanks to Community United Church of Christ for once again purchasing three shares for its local mission work. Thanks to those who helped to fund our two sponsored shares. And thanks to PCSA treasurer, Mary McKillip, for her extra work keeping track of it all. I am pleased to report that today when you pick up your share, you will be one of 141 households participating in the 3rd largest CSA in the state of Illinois. But more importantly, with this many shareholders, we should have no problem making our goal of 150 shares for next year. Wes WILL get to remain on the farm! You are all simply the best.

On the Farm

Despite the Moores having planted earlier than they did for last year's pre-season shares, the weather this spring has not been very cooperative. In addition to record cool temperatures, there were only four complete days of sunshine during the month of March, unfortunately all falling at the end of the month. This has meant that even cold-tolerant crops like radishes were late to germinate. To speed the beets along, the Moores actually seeded them into flats and then transplanted them--a first for the farm. Though it isn't here just yet, the produce is coming, says Diann who brought pictures taken last week. Unfortunately, as you will see in the photos, the greens weren't growing as fast as Wes and Aaron this spring. (Wes is now 6'5" and Aaron 6'3") But, "don't be alarmed at the size of the greens in the pictures," says Diann as they can grow inches in just a few days when the weather is as warm as it has been lately. "The racks in the back of the pictures show the more than 2,700 pounds of seed potatoes we will plant in the coming weeks. The picture of the empty looking seedbed is fully green now. There will be plenty for everyone, it is simply taking a little bit longer than usual," she says. Look for lettuce and mixed baby greens to be coming first. Any shortages in produce this week will be more than made up for in the coming weeks. So that you don't go home empty handed, the Moores have milled chemical free whole wheat flour with their stone mill for you this week. This is a great all-purpose flour that is good for bread, muffins, biscuits, pancakes, and cookies. See recipe suggestions below.

Totebag Update

If you want a PCSA totebag, be sure to let us know. Weiskamp Graphics has offered us an additional discount this year, so we only need 9 more bags instead of 19 to be able to buy them at the \$13.50 price. Look for the flyer at pickup. If you want a bag and have not already reserved one, email info@prairielandcsa.org or call (217) 355-6279. We will send you payment details when we place the order.

Cookbooks

Cookbooks were delayed by the distributor and should arrive by mid month. Pages for All Ages has graciously allowed us to purchase them below the list price. They will be waiting for you at your pickup location when they come in. There is a sample copy at each pickup location today. If you decide that you want a cookbook and want one, please email info@prairielandcsa.org or call (217) 355-6279 ASAP so that you can receive a discounted book.

Eggs and More

In addition to produce, the Moores stone mill chemical-free wheat and organic corn and raise a wide variety of animals, including free-range laying hens. (See brochures at pickup. Pictures available online. Use the "Tour the Farm" link at www.prairielandcsa.org) The hens are raised free-range on intensively managed pasture. Their diet is supplemented with a small amount of corn and key minerals, however, the bulk of their nutrition is supplied by the pasture and the insects and worms living in the pasture. You can purchase eggs to be delivered in conjunction with your share. They are \$2.50 per dozen. You can order them in any quantity of one half dozen or more to be delivered weekly, or bi-monthly, or on whatever schedule works for you. Please call the farm directly to make arrangements for delivery and payment, at (815) 432-6238.

Recipe and Storage Suggestions

If you aren't going to use your flour right away, you can freeze it to keep the bran stable and prevent any off taste from developing during long-term storage. You don't need to bring the flour to room temperature prior using it unless you are baking with yeast.

Better Baking Powder

If you have done any baking in recent years, you know that most brands of baking powder now have an increasingly metallic taste. Rumsford is one of the few brands that doesn't have this taste. You can find it at Strawberry Fields in Urbana. You also can make your own baking powder by combining 1/4 c cream of tartar, 2 T baking soda, and 1 T cornstarch and sifting three times to remove any lumps.

Tall, Flaky Biscuits

special equipment is optional with these biscuits

5 c flour

1 T plus 1/2 t baking powder

1 T kosher or sea salt

1/2 c cold vegetable shortening, margarine, butter, or lard or combination

1 1/4 c buttermilk, thinned plain yogurt, plain soymilk, or cow's milk with 1 T fresh lemon juice added to curdle it

3 T melted butter or margarine (brush on after baking)

Preheat oven to 500 degrees F. Combine dry ingredients. Working quickly, coat solid fat in flour and rub between your finger tips until about half is finely blended and the other half remains in large pieces about 1/2" in size. Add milk and stir quickly until the dough is blended and begins to mass together. Turn onto a well-floured surface. With floured hands, knead gently 8 to 10 times until dough becomes cohesive. Using floured hands, gently flatten dough into an even disk that you can then use a well floured rolling pin to roll to 1/2" thick. If you don't have a rolling pin, continue to gently pat out the dough evenly with your hands until it reaches the proper thickness. Using a fork, pierce dough completely through at 1/2" intervals. Flour a 2 1/2" to 3" biscuit cutter (in a pinch use a straight sided glass). Cut biscuits as close together as you can. (You can re-roll scraps but they will not be as pretty as the original biscuits) Transfer biscuits to an ungreased baking sheet, use parchment if you have it to line. Bake in center of oven for 10 to 12 minutes. Check halfway through and turn sheet if necessary for even color. When golden brown, remove from oven and brush with butter or margarine.

Fluffy Pancakes

1 1/4 c flour
3 t baking powder
1 T sugar or less to taste
1/2 t salt
1 beaten egg
1 c milk or soymilk
2 T vegetable oil or melted butter

Stir dry ingredients together. Combine wet ingredients. Stir into dry until just moistened. Small lumps are okay. Heat skillet or griddle on moderate heat. Brush with additional oil. Drop by 1/4 c onto pan. Wait until bubbles appear and then disappear to flip. Makes eight, 4-inch pancakes.

If batter is too thick, add up to 2 T milk.

For buttermilk pancakes, use buttermilk or milk soured with 1 T lemon juice for milk, reduce baking powder to 2 t and add 1/2 baking soda.

A Better Way to Pack Lunches

If you want to get away from disposable plastic containers, plastic bags, and non-reusable water bottles, Obentec makes a great solution. Its "Laptop Lunch" containers have an optional insulated cover and a reusable snap top water bottle. There is a 10 percent discount this month in honor of Earth Day. Use code ed906 to get the discount when you order online at www.laptoplunches.com The discount is good only during April.