

Published May 11th, 2011

Community-Supported Agriculture in Lafayette

By Sophie Braccini



Photo provided

"My family and I get two large baskets a week, because we eat so much fresh produce," says Klein. Baskets cost \$20-\$30 a week depending on the size.

For Klein and Weiss, organic food is more than food. It is a celebration of the people who grow it with care, the recognition of the quality of what the earth can produce, and the importance of creating a community where people share and grow. "At the beginning people just stayed for a few minutes and picked up their vegetables," says Klein, "Now we all know each other and people stay much longer, talk and exchange thoughts about all sorts of things, from food to religious traditions. I discovered that people were even more hungry for community than they were for food."

Farmers are included in the community, depending on the season and the type of produce, the CSA works with a few organic, small or mid-size farms. Klein first met them at the Walnut Creek farmers' market. "Our first two partners last summer were the Terra Bella Family farm in Pleasanton and Shooting Star in Fairfield," she said, "then for the winter we worked with Javier Ledesma Farms, which operates different locations that have different climates from ocean to inland and is able to provide us with incredible variety, even in the thick of winter." Klein says that at the end of the season, Ledesma told her that he was thinking about investing in a greenhouse. "The CSA gives him more predictability and it is less tiring than working 30 farmers' markets," she says.

Weiss' recipes are another key component of the CSA's success. An engineer with a passion for food and a long family tradition of cooking, she has a weekly blog containing recipes for the food that comes to the CSA. "It is about changing habits and making it doable for people who have very busy lives," says Weiss, the mother of two young children, "we provide an easily accessible source of great food and ways to eat it that people will discuss the following week."

To sign up for the summer season or request more information, email ti.ccjds.csa@gmail.com.

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Two Lafayette women have made a big difference in the lives of more than a hundred local families, and a few local farmers. A year ago, Rebecca Calahan Klein and Janna Lipman Weiss started a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) group at Lafayette's Temple Isaiah with 35 families. They just closed their winter/spring season with more than 100 families. The system not only brings these families local, affordable, organic vegetables and fruits every week, it provides recipes to make the most of what's in season and helps members discover new food. As an added bonus, the CSA provides local farmers with a predictable income that allows them to better plan their investments in a sustainable way.

The summer season of the CSA will start on May 31 - now is the time to sign up. There are a few options available. Once a week on Tuesdays, the farmers bring their harvest to Temple Isaiah. One can either get a pre-packaged box that will contain 8-10 servings of whatever's in season, or decide to operate farmers' market style and choose one's servings from the produce brought in that day.

Members sign up for a whole season and choose a type and size of produce basket that meets their needs. It can be a small, all-fruit basket, a large mixed basket (vegetables and fruit), or all vegetables.