Too Much Veg in One Basket? How to Spread Your Veggies and Make Your Farm Share Work.  
by Eliza Hobert

Have you ever felt completely overwhelmed by the abundance of vegetables that come with your share? You are not alone. I have been a CSA (community supported agriculture) member since 2003. Other members have been talking to me at the farms for years. The most common topic of conversation is that there is just too much food to consume. It is not very surprising; fruit and vegetable consumption of Americans is considerably lower than what is recommended in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans (1). A University of Massachusetts Farm Share offers a wonderful opportunity to get your five fruits and vegetables per day. Each week’s pick up depends on the harvest times of the various vegetables. There are steps that can make utilizing the share a simple task.

Veggies included in your University of Massachusetts Farm Share:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beets</th>
<th>Bok choy</th>
<th>Leeks</th>
<th>Winter squash</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carrots</td>
<td>Braising mix</td>
<td>Onions</td>
<td>Tomato</td>
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<td>Storade turnips</td>
<td>Brussels sprouts</td>
<td>Fennel</td>
<td>Peppers</td>
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<td>Parsnips</td>
<td>Kale</td>
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<td>Eggplant</td>
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<td>Daikon raddish</td>
<td>Spinach</td>
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<td>Potato</td>
<td>Head lettuce</td>
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<td>Popcorn</td>
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<td>Sweet potato</td>
<td>Cabbage</td>
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<td>Broccoli</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chard</td>
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<td>Cauliflower</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Salad mix</td>
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Does daily food preparation ever feel like a burden that leaves you less than enthused about your share? There is no need to let preparation deter you. Some initial work can ensure easy meals during the week. The first step is to organize. You can do this by planning your meals ahead. Choose foods that perish quickly to eat first. Keep an inventory of which vegetables that you have left and cross them off the list as you use them, which helps with any last minute planning. Preparing your fruits and veggies in advance makes your share manageable. When you get home, wash all of your produce. You may want to allow vegetables
such as a lettuce mix to strain in a colander. This should prevent premature rotting. Cut off
unwanted parts, such as tops and discard or compost them. You can precut vegetables and
place them in reusable storage bags or plastic zipper bags. Mesh and cloth storage bags tend to
keep vegetables fresh for longer durations. You could even group vegetables for a planned meal
together to save additional time for later cooking. One of my favorite time saving measures is
to spend a day or two cooking and freezing individual meals for future days. Chili, soups, stews
and even pasta dishes are good freezing choices. These steps might seem like a lot of work, but
they will make your week easy. They can also help you to decide what to eat with your
vegetables so that you can make shopping lists ahead of time.

Another way to utilize the share is to freeze or can some of your produce. Canning is an
excellent way to preserve your produce for those upcoming winter months. It is extremely
important to practice safety when canning to prevent botulism, which is a nerve toxin that can
cause paralysis and death \(^{(2)}\). Low acid content foods are more risky. Some of the foods that are
of concern for botulism include asparagus, green beans, beets and corn. According to the CDC
some foods that have a higher acid content can be risky too. Some examples are chili peppers,
tomatoes, and carrot juice \(^{(2)}\). It is essential to use a pressure canner that is specifically made for
canning. The canner must be in good working order and canning materials such as rubber
gaskets should be in good shape. The boiling method is not effective enough at killing the
bacteria that produce the nerve toxin \(^{(3)}\). The USDA offers this guide that includes all

Freezing fruits and vegetables is an easy and quick way to keep them for up to 10 months.
Oregon State University has this guide that provides information on freezing methods for

This guide includes instructions for blanching, packing, freezer preparation and refreezing
foods. Blanching involves placing the vegetables in boiling water for 3 to five minutes
depending on the vegetable. Vegetables such as beets are cooked for about thirty minutes
before freezing. If these suggestions do not solve any issues that you may have, there are a
couple more options.
Do you still feel like there is just too much produce for you? You can always split a share with a friend, housemates, or family member. If there are certain foods that you do not like, perhaps your share partner will trade. You can enjoy a fun trip to the farm together every week or you may alternate weeks. You could even enjoy the preparation process of the produce with your share partner. This is a great option for people who are single or students who share residency. Housemates can make and share dishes together or alternate cooking days. The University of Massachusetts Student Farm share has fed a family of five or a single person. The eating habits of the individual make a huge difference when determining how many people a share will feed.

Is there a vegetable or two that you have tried to enjoy, but you just do not like? You may be able to still enjoy that vegetable! Chili and pasta sauce are just two dishes that can help you disguise flavors that you might not like. Kale, spinach, carrots, broccoli or just about any vegetable can be added to make delicious chili. Vegetables can be pureed into tomato sauces. With a little bit of internet research you can find ways to hide those veggies that you cannot get over. You may even acquire a taste for them. People who do not like eggplant in soups, might like it fried or as a dip. If you have not tried a food since childhood, you might want to give it another try. My mother served canned beets to me when I was growing up. I did not know that I like them until I tried fresh ones as an adult. If these tips do not help, you could always give that unfavorable vegetable away.

Fruits and vegetables have different vitamins, minerals and antioxidants depending on the vegetable. It is important to eat a variety of them. Eating fruits and vegetables can help prevent obesity, cancer, eye diseases, dementia (mental confusion), osteoporosis (weak bones), and type 2 diabetes \(^{(4,5)}\). Edamame is an excellent source of protein, which is needed for repairing and keeping our bodies healthy \(^{(6)}\). Kale, broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, and onions are all excellent cancer fighters. Carrots, sweet potatoes, and winter squash are good sources of vitamin A, which is important for eye health. Spinach, broccoli, and kale are great sources of calcium, which is essential for preventing osteoporosis; a disease that makes bones brittle and easy to break. Peppers, broccoli, and tomatoes contain vitamin C, a cancer preventative \(^{(7)}\). Being a farm shareholder is an excellent way to get all of those health
benefits and to become creative in the kitchen. Visiting the farm is a wonderful way to have a better understanding of where your food comes from and what kind of work is involved. Visits to the farm can be relaxing and pleasant. Please enjoy your farm share.

References: