

# Four Friends' CSA News

## The Bean Pole

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2009 Season

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**Dear Shareholders and Friends,**

This week's harvest contains; Green beans, sweet potatoes, pak choi, peppers, and lettuce mix.

### Roasted Sweet Potatoes with Scallion Butter

\*Several pounds of sweet potatoes

\*1 and ½ sticks of softened unsalted butter, or extra virgin olive oil

\*3 tablespoons of finely chopped scallion

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Prick potatoes several times with a fork, and bake on a cast iron skillet, or foil lined pan till the potatoes are soft when squeezed. It will probably take 45 minutes to an hour. While the potatoes are cooking, whisk together the scallions with either the butter or olive oil, (Olive oil is a healthy alternative.). Slit the cooked sweet potatoes, and serve with the scallion butter or the scallion infused olive oil. Yum!

### **Veggie of Week:**

### **Bok Choy (Pak Choi)**

This graceful vegetable with Chinese origins has spread throughout Asia and beyond, developing a wide range of varieties. The most typical Pak Choi features dark green leaves atop white spoon-shaped upright stems. Stems vary considerably in thickness and shape, and in some varieties they are green. One variety produces a rosette of dark green leaves close to the ground. There are specialty pak chois that have frilly leaves to light yellow-green color. The slight mustardy flavor of Pak Choi makes it a delightful addition to stir-fries, soups, noodle and meat dishes, and salads, if the young

leaves are used. In China, the coarser leaves are often pickled. Some Chinese cooks also dip the leaves in boiling water and hang them out to dry in the sun for several days. Drying enables this highly perishable vegetable to be stored for winter months. Asian cooks use the entire plant at many stages of development.

## Roasted Pak Choi

INGREDIENTS: 6 heads pak choi (can substitute 3 heads baby bok choi, halved) Olive Oil Coarse sea salt Ground black pepper

DIRECTIONS: 1. Preheat oven to 450 degrees. 2. Wash pak choi. Place on baking sheet, drizzle with olive oil, salt and pepper. Toss to coat. 3. Roast pak choi for 7-8 minutes, or until leaves are wilted and caramelized and the bulbs are cooked, but still have some crunch (mine were perfectly done at 8 minutes, but my oven may not have been fully preheated when I put them in).

Serves 2-3 as a side dish.

**SOME INTERESTING STATISTICS ABOUT RI AGRICULTURE!! THANKS TO YOU ALL, THE NUMBER OF FARMS IN RI HAS INCREASED!!**

### **RI [2007 Census of Agriculture](#) Highlights!**

On February 4<sup>th</sup> the USDA released the [2007 Census of Agriculture](#) (last conducted in 2002). The hard copy will be available in July. On a national basis, the number of farms in the US since World War II has been increasing, with a four (4) percent increase from 2002 to 2007 for a total of 2.205 million farms. Nationally, the total amount of land in farms was down two (2) percent to 922.1 million acres. Within New England, the number of farms increased from 28,254 to 33,112 and land in farms increased from

3,996,503 acres to 4,044,104 acres. However, the average farm size decreased from 142 acres to 122 acres.

**Rhode Island saw a sharp increase, the highest in New England and likely the U.S.,** in the number of farms and total land in farms. Farms grossing less than \$50,000.00 in sales make up the majority of the increase however, the number of farms grossing more than \$50,000 in sales also rose - from 168 in 2002 to 173 in 2007.

**Nationally, RI ranked third in direct marketing sales on a per farm basis, and Providence County is the 50th highest county.** Statistics not shown here, demonstrate a shift within categories of production and sales. For example, the green industry (i.e. nursery, horticulture and turf) accounted for 60 percent of market sales in 2007 compared to 67 percent in 2002. Fruits, vegetables and livestock have concurrently increased.

It is important to note the **USDA figures for the market value of production do not include value added sales** (i.e. making pies and apple cider from fruits grown on the farm) **nor do they account for other economic multiplier effects of local agriculture**, as in relation to tourism. In addition, high input costs such as fuels, fertilizers and real estate values have had a negative impact, especially in the recent year.

#### **2007 Census of Agriculture - RI Highlights:**

The number of RI farms was 1,219, up 42 percent from 2002.

Land in farms totaled 67,819, up 11 percent from 2002.

Market value of production totaled \$65.9 million, up 19 percent from 2002.

Direct market sales totaled \$6.292 million, up from \$3.697 million in 2002. 249 farms (20 percent) reported direct market sales.

Organic value of sales totaled \$1.2 million, up from \$270,000 in 2002.

Agritourism income totaled \$689,000 on 43 farms, up from \$23,000 and six (6) farms in 2002.

Total value of farmland and building was \$1,141,263,000.00. This averages out to \$16,828.00 per acre - the highest in the nation.

#### **Demographics of RI's principal farm operators:**

49 percent reported a primary occupation other than farming, compared to 48 percent in 2002.

24 percent are women, a seven (7) percent increase from 2002.

Average age is 56.3 years, compared to 54.3 years in 2002.

For more info, go to:

<http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bnatres/agricult/index.htm>