

Easy Pickin's CSA: Community ****Supported**** Agriculture

An Overview of the CSA Program for 2021

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 receives a weekly assortment of fresh produce -- picked, packed & ready for pick-up -- throughout the growing season.

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

At **Easy Pickin's** we grow a wide variety of vegetables, herbs, fruits & berries, so your weekly share will reflect this mix of produce ! Vegetables include whatever is in season & available: tomatoes, peppers, squash, beans, carrots, turnips, salad & cooking greens, cabbages, broccoli & more. Fruits may include strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, peaches, apples & Asian pears. Our wide variety of fruit is a bonus that many CSAs are unable to offer. See the "[What We Grow](#)" page of our website to learn more about our produce, and "**2020 Season**" links above to see what our most recent season looked like, week by week.

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

A **FULL SHARE** is priced at **\$590**, so your cost averages out to **\$29.50 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 share for the 20-week season, but 1/2 the quantity. Half-shares are **\$345**, so **\$17.25 per week** -- they're a good size for individuals, or folks who want to try out CSA on a smaller scale. Another option is "sharing a share." A group of friends, or extended family, buys a FULL share, and divides the contents among the group each week when they pick up.

To reserve a share, you make a **down payment of \$100** when you sign up. **Full payment** is due by **May 1st**, to confirm your share. Shares are sold on a first-come, first-served basis. A limited number of shares is available for this our 12th season of CSA, so don't delay!

See the *link at the top of our website's CSA page* for the **online CSA Membership Form**. Complete that, then make your **\$100 deposit** -- either **online** (use the *other link on the CSA page*), or by **sending a check** to us at:

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

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

When you sign up, you must **choose a weekly pick-up day for the season** and specify that on the **Membership Form**. Currently, the choices are:

- **At our farm:**

Tuesday 4pm-6:30pm *or* Thursday 4pm-6:30pm *or* Saturday 9am-12noon

CSA - Benefits & 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 a distance, it's better for the environment, and you strengthen your local economy. You get to 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 & vegetables have more vitamins & 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 *and* for us. **\$590** for a **20-week FULL share** is **\$29.50** per week, and should be enough produce for a family of 4 (we also have **HALF-shares** -- see above). The value of the produce is based on retail prices at farm stands & farmers' markets. This fluctuates with the supply of produce from week to week. Early & late in the season when variety is more limited, the value of the weekly share may be slightly less, so we don't swamp you with heaps of lettuce, kale & green onions ! During peak season, we can add a bit more to the share, to take advantage of the wider varieties of produce available at that time.

* **Your Share in the Adventure of Farming: Pests, Weather, & Expect the Unexpected**

Farming is a risky business. At **Easy Pickin's** we do everything we can to mitigate this risk. Our frost fan helps protect our fruit from early season frosts. Our fencing keeps deer out of our fields. We have irrigation systems to supply water to our fruit orchard, berry patches, and 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. We also 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, rain -- is the most significant factor affecting growing conditions and our harvest. Harsh or fluctuating conditions put stress on all crops (& on the farmer !); crops are also susceptible to a variety of pests (insects, fungi, etc.). Tree fruit production is especially sensitive to weather. In recent years, orchards throughout New England & nationwide have experienced diminished harvests due to unusual & 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 & 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 season, farm stand prices are competitive with supermarket prices. And quality & freshness make local farm produce a better bargain for your grocery budget.
- * **Health:** We provide a large variety of fruits & vegetables, freshly-picked at optimum ripeness. More variety, quality & flavor, and more vitamins: better nutrition for you.
- * **Convenience:** A generous share of produce, ready for you to pick up, weekly, June through October.
- * **Community Strength:** You support your local farmer with early season funds. The farmer employs local workers, and supports other local businesses as well as the food shelf & soup kitchen.
- * **Environmental Quality:** Your support helps provide long-term stability & sustainability to your local farm. Agricultural lands farmed with environmentally sound methods, and the surrounding open space, protect both air & water quality. Your local farm is also a habitat for a beautiful variety of birds & butterflies. And by buying local produce instead of what arrives at the supermarket by plane or truck, you reduce fuel consumption & other environmental costs of your 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 mix of the produce ripening each week throughout the season. Produce varies with the season, and availability is dependent week-to-week (& day-to-day) on the weather for both growing & harvesting, and year-to-year on climate patterns for crop viability. This is particularly true of our fruit crops (see above under "**the Adventure of Farming**"). Check our website's "[What We Grow](#)" & "[What's Growing On](#)" pages to see the possibilities, and see the weekly share listings & photos from prior seasons above.

3. Can I order specific produce for my share?

No. To make our system practical & affordable, we pack identical shares for everyone. Expand your food horizons by trying something new & 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 fruits & vegetables are in plentiful supply, we offer the extras for pre-order -- to pick up with your share for an additional charge.

5. Can I pick up on different days?

No. Sorry, but we ask that you select a specific weekly pick-up day so 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 & ask**. You can reach us at: farmerb@easypickinsorchard.com THANKS!