

# Share

The weekly newsletter of Stone's Throw CSA  
September 15, 2009 [stonethrowcsa.org](http://stonethrowcsa.org)

## Hug a farmer...

Farmers across the Bay State have experienced crop losses from 30-100% this year due to the excessive rain, hail damage, and shockingly cool temperatures. This combination has invited nasty visitors like slugs and a fungus we know better as late blight that arrived early. Tobacco has been the hardest hit crop but edible crops such as corn and tomatoes were devastated.

As we head into apple season, we will notice some local damage to the apple crop. The heavy rains and cool weather help to make the apples extra large and juicy, but the hail reduced the number of apples and pitted the skins of many of the remaining fruit.

Governor Deval Patrick has requested aid for farmers from the US Department of Agriculture to help farmers recover from the worst growing season in nearly a century. Governor Patrick has been a vocal supporter and consumer of local farms. The aid would allow farmers with 30% losses to receive assistance with removal and replanting of damaged crops.

Farmers who are part of CSAs like Stone's Throw, have weathered the bad weather better than many others. Both the financial support and emotional support have helped to even out the extremes of this dark, soggy summer.

## Farm updates

### Silvermine Farm

#### How has the weather this year affected your farm?

Some people may not realize it, but soil needs to breathe just like we do. Soil breathes in and out once in a 24 hour cycle, inhaling oxygen in the early hours of the day and exhaling carbon dioxide in the evening. This oxygen and carbon dioxide exchange allows the micro-organisms in the soil to have access to the oxygen they need to live, which in turn allows plants to harvest the minerals and nutrients they need from the soil.

The constant rain of June not only made for wet mucky work in the fields, but it filled the spaces in the soil where oxygen and carbon dioxide would have been during the soil's breathing cycle. Plants were restricted to setting roots in the top inch or so of soil where the oxygen could reach. This limit to root



*Late blight on tomatoes.*

development, as well as the constant water movement washing away important plant nutrients left crops malnourished and underfed. Crops that didn't rot during that period were often damaged and undersized. Sometimes an entire planting was lost, other times you could look down a row and see yellowed plants that dipped in size to tiny little plants, the result of a spot that suffered from more water than another.

The cooler than normal temperatures joined forces with the dampness and created a wonderful incubator for a series of mildews and fungi to grow. The early onset of these diseases caused total failure of some crops and a slow death to others.

True to form, in New England if you don't like the weather, just wait a minute. The drought and heat wave of August hit at the time of fall planting of lettuces and spinach, causing poor germination and early bolting.

So, this year my crops suffered a decrease in production overall and a complete death in others. The corn is finally rising to its full height, but with the spotty germination and yellowed leaves the stand isn't enough to make good ear development. Pumpkins and winter squash were initially retarded in their growth only to be weakened and susceptible to powdery mildew. I took a day this week to attend a workshop on soil remineralization and biological farming. I will be trying a few different techniques over the next couple of weeks to try

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# Recipes

## Green Quiche

The Washington Post, July 1, 2009

Serve with a big green salad.

4 generous servings

1 medium onion

1 pound baby Yukon Gold potatoes

2 medium zucchini

1 large clove garlic

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1 teaspoon sea salt

1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Leaves from 2 or 3 sprigs tarragon or oregano

2 ounces organic Monterey Jack cheese (optional; 1/4 cup grated or shredded)

6 large organic eggs

Finely chop the onion. Scrub the potatoes and zucchini, then cut them into paper-thin slices (trimming off and discarding the zucchini ends).

Mince the garlic.

Use the oil to coat the bottom of a 2-quart, microwave-safe dish (a 9-by-13-inch Pyrex baking dish works well, if your microwave can accommodate it). Add the onion and stir to coat, then cover with parchment paper. Microwave on HIGH for 2 to 3 minutes.

Add the potatoes, zucchini and garlic, stirring to combine; cover and microwave on HIGH for 4 minutes; stir once, then cover and microwave on HIGH for 4 minutes. Let the mixture sit in the microwave for about 5 minutes of "carryover cooking," after which the vegetables should be tender; if not, cover again and microwave on HIGH for 2 minutes. Add 1/2 teaspoon of the salt and 1/8 teaspoon of the pepper; mix well.

While the vegetables are cooking, finely chop the tarragon or oregano. Grate the cheese, if using.

Whisk together the eggs, the tarragon or oregano and the remaining

salt and pepper in a large liquid measuring cup, then stir gently into the microwaved vegetable mixture. Sprinkle with cheese, if using. Cover and microwave on HIGH for about 5 minutes, or until the eggs are just set; rotate the dish once during cooking as needed.

Let the quiche sit for 3 to 5 minutes in the microwave, covered, until completely set. If desired, use a small hand-held kitchen torch (the kind used for creme brulee) to brown the top of the quiche.

Divide into 4 equal portions and serve hot.

Recipe Source: Adapted from "Big Green Cookbook," by Jackie Newgent (Wiley, 2009).

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and strengthen the carrot, chard, squash and pumpkin crops to overcome a series of diseases they are all exhibiting and prolong the harvest. I will even try a method of resurrecting broccoli which may give us a second crop from the original roots which would be a blessing.

The tomatoes are dying more rapidly with each passing day. No sun warmed tomatoes and they never begged to be eaten off of the vine this summer, to say the least!

I want to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you shareholders for your support during this remarkably difficult growing year. It was easy to become discouraged this summer and I have to admit that I gave in to feelings of despair on more than one occasion. But then I would stop and consider what this summer would have looked like financially without the support of Stone's Throw CSA and all of you who make up Stone's Throw. It would have been far, far worse if I had borne the burden alone. Thank you for choosing to shouldering your part of the load. I only wish I could feed each and every one of you more this year to show my thanks, since it is all about feeding people for me. But I hope you take the time to feel good about what you have done for all of the growers, for helping to keep our farms open and undeveloped, for preserving a local safe food source and for keeping us in the game to return next year.

## Food Preservation Day

This fall as the local harvest peaks and thoughts shift toward winter eating, NOFA/Mass presents our first annual statewide Fall Food Preservation Day. On September 19, 2009, there will be food preservation workshops spread throughout the state including here in central Massachusetts. Preserving food we grow or purchase locally at the height of its freshness and flavor can save money, lessen our dependence on the global corporate food chain, and provide wonderful flavor and real food all year round. Isn't now a good time to learn skills to do this? See <http://www.nofamass.org/programs/extensionevents/preservation.php#> for locations and further information.