

# Fair Fields News

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## On the Farm

We have been having some more seasonal weather lately and are very happy for it. The tomatoes are finally ready in the greenhouse and we are seeing colour on our field tomatoes. Our peppers are beginning to change colour and the melons' flesh is sweetening. As with previous years we simply need to be patient and remember that the summer usually comes around and our fruits ripen with it...

Having summer finally here, we are none the less already thinking of fall. We have caught up on weeding and tilling under old crops in the garden. The last tray of lettuce is being seeded

in the greenhouse this week and we are direct seeding and transplanting our fall greens in the field (spinach, arugula, salad mix, chard, cabbage and kale).

Our fall covercrop of oats and peas will be seeded later this month, over most of the garden area for next year and some of this year's garden as well. Oats and peas winter-kill, meaning they naturally die off over winter. This will provide a good fall and winter soil cover that allows us to incorporate the residues next spring. This will make it easier to control weeds and prepare ground for early plantings. The peas also

help fix nitrogen, one of the most important nutrients for plants.

We've had problems with one of our hives this year. The queen is not very productive and the workers are looking to replace her by building queen cells and feeding royal jelly to the larvae. We moved several queen cells to a third hive, along with some worker brood. If all goes well, we'll have a strong new hive for next year, but we won't be able to collect honey from these hives this season. We will have some honey from our one strong hive in a few weeks time.

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## This Week's Harvest

- ◆ **Beets**
- ◆ **Beans**
- ◆ **Carrots**
- ◆ **Cucumber**
- ◆ **Eggplant**
- ◆ **Flowers**
- ◆ **Garlic**
- ◆ **Herbs**
- ◆ **Lettuce**
- ◆ **Onions**
- ◆ **Potatoes**
- ◆ **Radicchio?**
- ◆ **Salad Mix**
- ◆ **Tomatoes**
- ◆ **Zucchini**

## Fried Eggplant with Tomatoes and Chickpeas

With the first tomatoes coming out of the garden and some nice, if small, eggplants, I felt inspired to cook this simple but delicious dish for lunch this week. It is enjoyable in both summer and winter.

### Ingredients

- 2-3 medium eggplants cut into 3/4" cubes
- 1 small onion diced
- 4 large garlic cloves coarsely chopped
- 1 jalapeño or other medium/mild chili, finely chopped

- 4-5 medium/large tomatoes, diced
- 2 cups cooked (or canned) chickpeas
- 1/2 Cup cilantro chopped
- 1/4 Cup olive oil
- salt and pepper to taste

### Directions

Sprinkle the eggplant with some salt and allow to 'sweat' for 10 minutes. Drain the liquid and gently squeeze the eggplant to get more out. Rinse, pat dry and fry the eggplant at high heat till it goes a light brown on

the edges then set aside. I fry the eggplant in a deep fryer, but it would work just as well in batches in a pan with a 1/4" or more of oil in the bottom.

In a large pan on medium heat fry the onion, garlic and chili in the olive oil till the onions and garlic soften. Add the tomatoes and simmer to reduce the liquid. Mix in the chickpeas, eggplant and cilantro and season to taste. Serve with rice or flat-bread.

# Food from the Down the Road

Many of you have already seen and tried the mushrooms we have been selling at our pick-ups. Moving forward, we hope to start to supply a variety of food products from farmers in the area. We are lucky to live on a road with 5 farms all practicing sustainable agriculture and producing different food items. It is our hope that we can continue to co-market our products, helping each other's businesses to grow and providing a wider range of local foods for our members and customers.

As we offer new products we will try to highlight them at the pick-ups and provide information on where and by whom they are grown. We might as well start with the mushies...

The mushrooms we are selling are shiitakes, native to Japan, Korea and China, where they have been grown since prehistoric times. China is now the biggest exporter of shiitake mushrooms, so if you buy them at a supermarket, there's a good chance that's where they are from.

Our shiitakes are grown by **Ahren Hughes of Blackshire Gardens**. Ahren began his agricultural ventures in 2004 and was able to purchase a farm down the road in 2011. Blackshire Gardens is a small-scale diversified operation that grows shiitake mushrooms, beans, grains and asparagus. Like Fair Fields, Blackshire Gardens follows organic and sustainable production practices, though it is not certified organic. In keeping with this philosophy, the shiitakes are grown in hardwood logs in the shade of a woodlot at the back of the property.

We love the shiitakes grilled or lightly sautéed, but they are also nice raw (overcooking doesn't do them justice...).

We hope to provide beans from Blackshire Gardens as they become available this fall. If all goes to plan, we will also be offering asparagus next spring. If you live in Guelph you can also find Ahren's products at the Saturday Guelph Farmers' Market and at the Stone Store. In Grey Bruce you can look for mushrooms and

asparagus, when in season, at Chicory Common in Durham. For more information on the farm, the farmer and the goods visit: [www.blackshiregardens.com](http://www.blackshiregardens.com).



**Ahren checking fruiting logs**

On-farm members may also have noticed eggs for sale the last couple of weeks. The eggs are from **Don Foerster and Tammy Boss**, our neighbours across the road. They have a surplus that should continue through the season. Not free range or organic, the eggs are nevertheless very fresh and the feed contains no growth hormones or antibiotics and has alfalfa meal added to it to provide more complete nutrition. Don hopes to work towards a free range set up for next year, time and money permitting...

Don and Tammy have sheep, goats, pigs, chickens and even a few geese, though some of these are raised more for friends and family. They also sharecrop with a neighbour, cut hay and grow other grain and forage crops. Since we took possession of the farm, Don has been using the extra land we are not yet farming. In exchange he has helped me with custom work, lent me equipment, kept my freezer full of pork and even helped me out of a ditch! He and Tammy have one of the few true mixed farms left in the area and we are happy to have them across the road.