

## Never Summer Sugarbush - Our Sweet Counterpart! (continued...)

been so much worse. This was a common percentage for producers throughout our region, though a few locally fared worse, and it appears that statewide, only sugarmakers around the Cities fared better. We finished the season having 16 boils over a three week span, collecting 9,280 gallons of sap from 2,300 trees, and making 220 gallons of syrup.

We did experience a few bright spots this season!

1) We were able to make some amazing syrup on the days nature allowed. We made the lightest amber syrup since our mentor passed away (the last few seasons haven't produced any), and dare we say, some of the best dark amber we've ever had. 2) The *MN Maple Syrup Producers Association* held their spring conference in Two Harbors, visiting our sugarbush for the annual tour. During the tour, we were able to ask questions and listen to advice from a group of very experienced sugarmakers (pictured above). It was an excellent opportunity for us to learn, and to showcase our rugged sugarbush (the steep and remote climb did impress!). 3) We feel more confident then ever that sugaring is an enterprise we'd like to scale and focus more time on. And 4) Despite a great deal of stress we experienced this spring, we had a lovely season of kindness, laughter and lightness with one another. We could hardly ask for more.



### Orecchiette Pasta With Mustard Greens and Sausage

*While the recipe calls for stemming the mustard greens, these stems are really tender (we'd skip that step!)*

1 lb sweet Italian sausage 2 cloves garlic, chopped lots of mustard greens, stemmed, coarsely chopped

2 T oil 1/4 tsp salt 1/4 tsp black pepper 1/4 tsp crushed red pepper

1 pound cooked orecchiette pasta (or favorite pasta) Toasted bread crumbs and grated Parmesan

Cook the sausage in olive oil in a large skillet over medium until browned. Add garlic, mustard greens, salt, black pepper, and crushed red pepper. Cook until the greens are wilted, about 2 minutes.

Add orecchiette and toss to combine. Serve topped with bread crumbs and Parmesan.

**Know Your Farmers! Cree & Jason Bradley, Joe Holtz, Ruby Mountain, Gunnison & the Chickens!**

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Travel northeast on Hwy 61 past Two Harbors to Hwy 3 (just past Betty's Pies).

Turn left on Hwy 3. Travel 8 miles to the farm at address #2955 (farm) and #2995 (house).



### Basil Vinaigrette



1 tsp Dijon mustard 1 tsp sugar

1 shallot, chopped 1/2 tsp salt

1/2 cup roughly chopped basil

1/4 cup white wine vinegar

3/4 cup olive oil

Place salt, sugar, mustard, shallot and basil in a blender.

Pulse several times to combine.

Scrape the sides of the blender.

Add the vinegar and pulse again.

Turn on low. Slowly pour in oil.

When mixed, turn off and scrape the sides.

Cover, purée for 1-2 minutes.

Store in fridge 1 week.



### Harvest Week 3 - What's In Your Basket!

Please be sure to wash your produce before enjoying it. Thanks!

- Chinese Cabbage: Joi Choi bok choi (use stalks and greens fresh or cooked, Joi Choi stalks are really juicy and good!).
- Radish: Mix of Cherry Belle and French Breakfast.
- Onions: Green-top white onions (use bulbs and stems).
- Salad: Ruby Red lettuce.
- Mustard: Giant Indian (the red greens are often described as spicy and a little pungent. They are delicious fresh or cooked (we like them cooked)).
- Basil: Genovese and Sweet.

*Photo: Part of the joy of living on a farm is interacting with nature and wildlife. We've enjoyed the robin chicks this season, momma has hatched two broods so far!*





## Notes from Jason and Cree...



The field grows beautifully, a healthy happy mix of crops. When we walk the field, admiration in our observations, we anticipate and grow excited by the prospect of a good summer's harvest from much that is growing strong. At the same time, we find ourselves paradoxically saying, "If only it wasn't the end of July!" The diversity of summer should be ramping up by now, and yet we see the land lagging behind. No surprises really, we anticipated this when we planted; a wet and cold, and consequently, late start. But it always feels harder to comprehend how late (and short!) our summer can be, when summer is technically here in its prime. We grow impatient when removed from the field. But then we walk it, work the land, and realize, it's all there, healthy in form, true to its nature, we realize that patience is the never ending virtue this farm keeps teaching us. Despite the overall good health of the field, we do have a few crops that are confounding to our sensibilities. Why are the tomatoes, a heat loving crop, thriving amidst the cool summer conditions? And why are the peas, a cool weather crop, not? We know it has to do with timing (*continued...*)

*Top photo: A couple rows of beets, happily weeded by CSA member Katya Gordon and her sister Mary who spent their personal time while Mary was in town on vacation in pursuit of some hard farm work which is to all of our great benefit. You can see the difference between the 2 beet rows that are weeded versus the next row that is not yet done. Thank you! Bottom photos, left to right: One of the small transplant sized cucumber plants with baby cukes growing off the flowers. Lisa Forsell who thankfully helped with the harvest again this week. And some indigo tomatoes, not yet ripe but coming!*



## Notes from Jason and Cree... (*continued*)

of the pea seed germination during cool, wet conditions, versus the strong health of our tomato transplants when they went into the ground. But still, the irony is yet felt. Cucumbers are perhaps the most confusing crop of the year. The seeds took weeks to germinate. Every time we thought they flooded out or rotted, a few more would pop from the ground (making us not want to disturb the area and replant, losing even more time). The plants themselves are yet very small (as if we planted 2-3 weeks ago and not in early June), yet on these small and seemingly healthy flowering plants, are tiny cucumbers. This sounds like welcome news, but the plants are hardly big enough to support real growth. We have seen this happen on stressed, dying plants, but on healthy plants? We just aren't sure what to expect from the crop. Perhaps this is payback from last season's plethora of cucumbers! We take it week by week, happy to have a full crate of vegetables this week, even if mostly greens yet, and truly hopeful by the bounty that we see coming in the field. Farmers...keepers of the faith.

## Never Summer Sugarbush ~ Our Sweet Counterpart!

**This week, we are passing out our 100% pure maple syrup to those of you who ordered shares. For everyone else, we are including a small sample bottle of our syrup for you to try. Please enjoy!**

This year, the "sugaring" season was thrust upon us. Record breaking temperatures in February marked the beginning of most sugaring seasons throughout Minnesota and Wisconsin. Our maple trees weren't quite ready to run that early, but the extreme warm up claimed half of our snowpack and set the stage for above average temperatures throughout the sap collection season. Our biggest concern was the warmer than normal nighttime lows. For maple sap to run best, you need freezing at night and thawing during the day. Ideally, and what has been a traditional spring for decades in northern Minnesota, low 40's during the day and low 20's at night. Unfortunately, during our sap run, we saw too many nights where it barely froze, if it froze at all, and the trees weren't able to fully 'recharge' for optimum sap flow. Then, when it simply stopped freezing at night in mid-April, the season ended as abruptly as it started.

Overall our production was about 75% of average, a rate we will feel financially, but also acknowledge that it could have (*continued...*)

*Photo collage: Just a few fun photos that have come out of our sugarbush work over the years.*

