

Getting Hooked On Cooking With CSA



by Katherine Deumling of [Cook With What You Have](#)

A CSA share offers a plethora of produce every week and with it varieties we may have never seen before, let alone cooked—a delight and a bit of a challenge, for sure.

Fresh, delicious vegetables chosen for me week after week is my idea of heaven. It hasn't always been but I get more hooked every year. I'm hooked on the deliciousness, on not having to make any decisions about what vegetables to purchase, and on the creativity it inspires.

So, how does one get hooked?

Stock your Pantry, Two Ways:

Shop mostly to restock rather than for specific dishes. You'll spend less time (and money) running to the store for last minute items and can instead spend your time cooking, eating, and creatively using what you already have.

This is a basic list but you certainly don't need everything listed to cook many dishes. And, your pantry will reflect your particular taste. This is just a loose guide.

Purchased Goods for Pantry, Fridge and Freezer:

- Lentils; French green, red, brown
- Beans: black, pinto, white, chickpeas
- Grains: brown and white rice, barley, farro, cornmeal/polenta, quinoa, pasta, couscous, bulgur
- Seeds & nuts: sunflower, pumpkin, hazelnuts, walnuts, peanuts, almonds, etc.
- Spices: cumin, coriander, mustard seeds, dried chilies, turmeric, caraway, paprika, cardamom
- Herbs: thyme, oregano
- Vinegars: cider, rice and red wine
- Oils: olive, sunflower, coconut, sesame
- Hot sauce, soy sauce, fish sauce
- Dairy products
- Eggs
- Lemons and limes
- Meat and fish in freezer: sausages, bacon, chicken, etc.

Semi-prepared Items:

When you have a little spare time you can add semi-prepared items to your fridge/ pantry that will make life much easier and tastier when you don't have those extra few minutes to get a meal on the table.

- Make a jar of vinaigrette and keep it in the fridge. Dress lettuces and greens as well as roasted vegetables or plain chickpeas/beans with the same vinaigrette, adding some chopped herbs and toasted seeds. Be creative!

- Cook a good quantity of beans. Put beans out to soak before you go to work in the morning. Cook them that evening while you're in the kitchen cooking something else for dinner anyway and have them ready for the next day or freeze half.
- Cook twice as much rice, barley or farro as you need for any given meal and freeze half of it to make fried rice, rice and beans or a soup the following week on a particularly busy night when you need the head start.
- Toast a cup of sunflower or pumpkin seeds and keep in a jar. Your salads will be better for them; your soups will have added crunch; your snacks will be cheaper and more nutritious!
- Use a whole bunch of parsley or cilantro to make a quick, savory sauce with garlic, olive oil, lemon juice or vinegar. Stir in some thick yogurt for a creamy version. Having a flavorful component like this on hand means a plain bowl of rice or beans or a fried egg turns into a meal in no time.
- Make chicken or any other meat, fish or vegetable stock and freeze.

Free Yourself from Strictly Following a Recipe & Learn to Improvise and Substitute.

The more you cook—and you will be cooking (!)—the easier and more fun it is to substitute and adapt as you go. Families of vegetables such as brassicas and alliums have certain common characteristics that in many cases let you substitute one for another. However, there is no real shortcut to learning how to do this so experiment as much as you can—you'll have plenty of opportunity. Here are a few general guidelines to get you started.

Root vegetables love to be roasted as do brassicas like kohlrabi, cauliflower, romanesco, Brussels sprouts and broccoli. Cut up, tossed with a little oil and salt and roasted in a single layer, they are delicious as is or can serve as the foundation for soups, mashes, salads, etc.

Onions, like their allium compatriots, shallots, scallions, leeks and garlic, are pungent raw and quite sweet cooked. If you don't have an onion by all means use a leek, though leeks are sweeter and you might add a little acidity to balance it out and leeks are not so good raw. Scallions (green onions) and shallots can be substituted for onions and vice versa in many recipes, raw or cooked.

Sweet potatoes, potatoes, celery root, rutabagas and turnips and sometimes winter squash can often stand in for one another in mashes, gratins, soups and stews.

Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, spring rabe and romanesco, all brassicas, have similar flavors and behave similarly in many dishes, though certainly not all. Mashed cauliflower is delicious but I would not mash Brussel sprouts.

Leafy greens are eminently substitutable. Chards, beet greens, kale and collards, are all good raw (very thinly sliced) when young and tender. They behave quite similarly when cooked and can be mixed and substituted for each other at will. Turnip, radish, and mustard greens are all tender and often interchangeable, though radish tops are a bit fuzzy raw. Make sure to blanch those.

Get Good at a Handful of Dishes that Showcase most any Vegetable.

It's not so hard to keep up when you have a handful of recipes that can accommodate most any vegetable and in a variety of combinations.

A simple frittata elevates most vegetables, from leafy greens to peppers, peas, herbs, potatoes and both summer and winter squash.

Pan-fried vegetable fritters/savory pancakes/patties transform mounds of vegetables of all kinds into savory nuggets. Broccoli with parmesan, leftover mashed potatoes, leeks and plenty of parsley, rutabaga and carrot latkes, Japanese-inspired cabbage pancakes with scallions, sesame oil and soy sauce. . .

Fried rice with loads of finely chopped vegetables; simple Thai-style coconut milk curries; and soups and stir-fries, of course, are all good vehicles for delicious CSA produce.

A quick, stove top version of mac 'n cheese with whatever vegetables you have, chopped finely, never fails to be devoured.

Finally, recipes can often accommodate way more vegetables than they call for. Perhaps a recipe calls for 1 lb of pasta and 3 cups of vegetables. Invert that ratio and use ½ lb of pasta and 6 cups of vegetables or just add more

vegetables and have plenty of leftovers. You'll figure out how to make such changes and have recipes and tips work for your particular selection of produce.

Get comfortable making a few of these dishes and make them your own, with different spices, herbs, cheeses.

And then. . .

Cooking (with a CSA) can in fact simplify one's life—a way through the general madness and a treat for the senses and body. Yes, this is work and it takes time and organization but the deliciousness of that regular infusion of produce is well worth it!

[Cook With What You Have](#) offers subscriptions for both CSA Farms and individuals to an online **Seasonal Recipe Collection**, organized by vegetable. It includes not only 600+ recipes but posts such as *Lettuce Management* and *the Dressing Jar* and recipe categories such as *CSA Heavy Hitters* and *Meals that Make Great Leftovers* and *Pantry Stocking Guides*. Katherine Deumling, owner of *Cook With What You Have*, wrote custom weekly recipe packets for CSA Farms in the Willamette Valley in Oregon for years before expanding her cook-with-what-you-have approach to cooking to this more accessible platform for farmers and eaters everywhere. The **Seasonal Recipe Collection** covers 80 vegetables, herbs and some fruits. Katherine's enthusiasm for vegetables, any time of year, never wanes and the site is regularly updated and expanded with tips, recipes and lots of reasons to love produce!

Recipe: Parsnip and Parsley Hash with Lemon and a Fried Egg

This is one of my favorite ways to eat parsnips. It takes about 10 minutes—start to finish! Scale up as needed.

Serves 2

3 tablespoons olive oil
½ an onion, sliced or chopped
5-6 small or several larger parsnips, trimmed and scrubbed, peeled if the skin seems fibrous
½ small bunch parsley, chopped
Lemon juice
Salt and pepper
Lemon juice

Grated the parsnips on the large holes of a box grater (or in food processor). Add olive oil to the largest skillet you heat over medium-high heat. Add the onion and sauté for just a minute or two. Add the grated parsnips and a few generous pinches of salt and sauté, stirring frequently until browned and almost tender about 7 minutes on fairly high heat. You may want to cover the pan and you may need to add a bit more oil and/or turn the heat down a bit so they don't burn. When the veggies are almost tender add the chopped parsley and mix well. Now scoot the parsnip mixture to one side of the pan. Add a bit more oil to the open side and fry your eggs there. Drizzle the parsnips mixture with a little lemon juice. When the eggs are cooked to your liking, serve the hash topped with the eggs, which you generously peppered and salted and drizzled with more olive oil.

