



# Community Supported Agriculture Share

## MEMBERSHIP HANDBOOK

### 2024 SEASON



Welcome to our farm family! We are looking forward to being your farmer this summer! We are passionate about growing delicious, organic vegetables for the people we care about, and sharing the story behind them! Our hope is that you will not only love eating our vegetables, but you'll experience the inter-connectedness of our membership community and learn from each other!

This is our CSA Handbook. We created it as a kind of "user manual" to help you understand what a CSA is, how it works and outline our shared commitments. We expect you to know the information inside this document. Please read this agreement to understand the Community Guidelines we both pledge to maintain!

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## WHAT IS A CSA FARM MEMBERSHIP? THE PRODUCT PROMISE

Thank you for becoming a part of our CSA for the season and sharing in our farm journey. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a beautiful partnership in which the members pledge to help support the farmer by sharing in the risks and rewards that come with being a working vegetable farm.

By paying for your share of the harvest BEFORE the season begins, you help us cover the early expenses of running a farm (when we need it most!), and provide us with a financial foundation that brings our business resilience no matter what the market or Mother Nature may throw at us. In return you receive a portion of the farm's crops every week of our 20 week season in the form of a veggie subscription box. Our goal is to fill your box with a bounty of fresh local produce by year's end! Members are responsible for showing up at their pick-up site on Tuesdays or Fridays each week to pick up their shares.

**But the veggie box is just the means to a greater end.** The longer you stay in our CSA, you'll notice that the veggies are the vehicle for many other powerful transformations (that are arguably even more valuable than the vegetables). After being a member of our CSA for 2-3 years, you will notice some very specific changes happening in your life.

- **You'll start cooking more "fancy."** It's a gradual shift, but as you get exposed to many new types of vegetables, and the inspiration from your fellow CSA members, your culinary experience will expand. This keeps your cooking adventure fun and exciting as you constantly experiment with new ways to wow your family of eaters!
- **Your kids will start eating more vegetables,** and they'll be exposed to a wide variety of tastes and obscure veggies. (Careful! They may even become a food snob).
- **You'll learn where your food comes from, how it's grown, and the many people involved** in bringing it to your kitchen. *When you know this information, it changes how you experience your food at the table.* Food becomes more meaningful. It tastes different.
- **You find your group.** "I belong here." CSA attracts people with similar values and interests. As you interact with other like-minded CSA members, you'll feel a deeper sense of community. We encourage you to share ideas with members in the Facebook group, visit the farm, and participate in our food challenges.
- **You'll learn SO MUCH** – whether it's farming practices, how nature works, what a broccoli plant looks like, how to make pesto, what to pair with dill, or what kohlrabi tastes like. Our CSA has a heavy educational support system that will hold your hand as you learn how to enjoy farm produce and eat with the seasons.
- **You'll get to know your farmers as real people!** Through our stories, videos and in-person interactions, you'll feel connected to your growers, and this changes how you feel about your food when you sit down to eat it.

**It takes a few years for this transformation to happen.** The first few weeks will initially be very exciting. But don't be surprised if you "hit a wall" mid-season, where you start to feel overwhelmed and veggies start piling up in the fridge. It happens to everyone in their first year. We want to encourage you to be patient with yourself, realize that this setback is par for the course, and even necessary to get to the other side. Just keep at it. Don't give up!! Do the best you can. Don't make it mean that you're a failure. It's all part of the journey. **We find it takes about 3 years** to find your groove with CSA and see a significant transformation in the way you eat.

## OUR GROWING PRACTICES

At Hessey Farmstead, we see ourselves first and foremost as stewards of the soil. We practice growing methods that create a thriving soil bed. You'll find us maximizing the use of crop rotations, cover crops, minimum tillage, and soil balancing techniques. We buy in local compost to amend our soil naturally and increase our organic matter. And we promote beneficial insects as alternative forms of pest control.

### ARE WE ORGANIC?

At this time we are not certified organic. However, we follow certified organic standards and practices. **We grow all of our crops without the use of conventional, synthetic or artificial fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and fungicides.** Most of our seed is sourced from organic seed producers. When organic seed is unavailable, we purchase non-GMO, untreated seeds. We believe that when we grow healthy soil, we'll be able to grow healthy plants with greater disease resistance and higher nutritional content for our customers. If you have any questions about how we grow your food, we invite you to contact us. We are happy to give you a tour and talk transparently about how we grow your food.

## UNDERSTANDING THE RISK OF CSA

As a member, you share in the abundance of our harvest, as well as in the risks that come with farming. We cannot stress this part enough! Although we have learned how to avoid or work around most problems, it is likely that EVERY year, Mother Nature will throw us a curve-ball, and we may lose a certain crop to drought, flooding, disease, bugs, hail, poor germination or seed quality, or other acts of God. This may mean that you will not receive that particular affected crop for that season.

If this occurs, we will do our best to make up for the financial value of the share by substituting something else in its place. Another option is to make up the value of your share on the back end of the season as we attempt to quickly plant "quick-turn" crops to recoup our losses. We will communicate regularly to keep you informed of our Plan B, and we ask that you be patient with us as we do our best to mitigate the consequences.

However, we reserve the right to lean into the spirit of the CSA agreement in the off-chance that our farm should suffer a catastrophic loss due to extreme floods, tornado, or hail. In the case that we have nothing to provide for you, you would forfeit your box share that week.

## WHAT'S INCLUDED IN YOUR CSA MEMBERSHIP?

Your membership in our CSA includes the following deliverables:

- Weekly box or 'share' of vegetables – usually about 8-12 items
- Option to purchase additional items from our online store
- Weekly recipes and newsletter to help you use the vegetables in your box
- Access to our private Facebook group for idea sharing and coaching
- Access to our ***A to Z Storage Guide*** so that you can identify and master each vegetable
- Access to ***CSA Tips and Strategies Guide*** and ***The Roadmap to CSA Success*** to teach you cooking techniques you need to master, what kitchen tools are a must, how to store your produce to keep it from spoiling, and common vegetable "exit strategies."

## WHEN DO WE START?

Tentatively... we will start the week of June 9, 2024. However, farming is weather dependent. Should the weather delay getting spring crops into the ground, we will alert you as soon as possible to identify our June 2024 start date. You will be notified 1-2 weeks before your initial pickup to let you know the season has started. You will receive a weekly share from us for 20 weeks consecutively thereafter.

## WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

We continue to try and expand our operation to include most annual crops that do well in southwest Michigan, so that our members receive a full spectrum of local, seasonal food. We strategically plant for our CSA so that you get a balanced amount of produce throughout the season with more greens early on, more fruiting crops (tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, etc) midseason and more root vegetables and storage crops to end the year.

We spend a lot of time before the planting season even begins mapping out your box content plan for each of the 20 weeks. Our goal is to provide you with a "core" **pre-packed** box of 8-12 items each week. Hessey Farmstead is a "traditional" CSA, meaning, your farmers decide what goes in your share (not the member). The items switch from week to week based on what's in season. We choose a mix of "popular" staples, but also try to include one unusual variety to push you to try new things.

**The early CSA boxes will not be quite as bountiful.** This is how it is every year in the early weeks, and there's a good reason for it: There just aren't as many veggies that will grow in the early months of the season. We do our best to provide as much variety as we can in the early weeks, but you may see a lower amount of product in those first 4 weeks.

## VEGETABLE HARVEST CALENDAR

When can I expect to receive certain crops in my CSA box?

VEGETABLE VARIETY	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER
ARUGULA	•	•				
BASIL			•	•	•	
BEANS			•	•	•	
BEETS			•	•	•	•
BROCCOLI			•	•	•	•
CABBAGE (RED OR GREEN)		•	•	•	•	•
CARROTS		•	•	•	•	•
CELERY			•	•	•	•
CILANTRO	•	•			•	•
CUCUMBERS			•	•	•	
DILL	•	•			•	•
EGGPLANT				•	•	
FENNEL		•	•	•	•	•
GARLIC BULBS				•	•	•
GARLIC SCAPES		•				
GREEN ONIONS	•	•	•	•	•	•
KALE			•	•	•	•
LEEKs				•	•	•
LETTUCE	•	•	•	•	•	•
ONIONS		•	•	•	•	•
PARSLEY				•	•	•
PEPPERS, HOT			•	•	•	
PEPPERS, SWEET			•	•	•	
PUMPKINS					•	•
RADISHES	•	•	•	•	•	•
SALAD TURNIPS	•	•	•	•	•	•
SNAP PEAS	•	•			•	
SWISS CHARD			•	•	•	•
TOMATOES			•	•	•	
WINTER SQUASH					•	•
ZUCCHINI / SUMMER SQUASH			•	•	•	

As the season progresses, you'll notice that the types of veggies in your box each week change. For example, garlic scapes will only appear in June; tomatoes appears mid-July and run through early September. Winter squash show up in the later weeks of the fall shares. Part of being in a CSA is learning how to eat with the seasons.

## HOW TO PICK UP YOUR SHARE

### OUR PICK UP LOCATIONS

Where and when do I pick up my share each week? When you signed up, you chose from 3 pick-up locations. If you need to change it prior to season start, you may do so by emailing [melissa@hesseyfarmstead.com](mailto:melissa@hesseyfarmstead.com).

**HARTFORD: TUESDAYS OR FRIDAYS, 5-6:30 PM.** Our farm is located at 49479 68th St. Hartford, MI 49057. Find us waiting for you on our back porch on either Tuesday or Friday night (you chose a specific day when you signed up).

**SAUGATUCK: FRIDAYS, 9 AM-3 PM.** Meet us at the Market at the SCA in Saugatuck located at 400 Culver Street, Saugatuck, MI 49453. We recommend that you come early in the day when your box is freshest the market is less busy.

**SOUTH HAVEN: SATURDAYS, 8 AM-2 PM.** Meet us at the South Haven Farmer's Market under the pavilion at 539 Phoenix Street, South Haven, MI 49090. We recommend that you come early in the day when your box is freshest the market is less busy.

### TAKING CARE OF YOUR CSA CONTAINER

Each member is allotted 2 REUSABLE plastic totes for their CSA season. Our crew washes and sanitizes all boxes every week before re-use. Please bring your container back the next week (rinsed out). **If you fail to remember your box, you will not be allowed to take home the container the next week** – you will have to take the contents without the box.

### Broken boxes

Please be gentle with our boxes. They are an investment! If you lose, break or crack your CSA box due to negligence, you will be charged \$20 for its replacement. You will not be charged due to normal wear and tear.

### How we clean your box

Washing and sanitizing the boxes is an important step we take each week to insure that your produce is safe to eat. With many boxes to fill each week, it is very time consuming for us to scrub boxes that are caked with dried-on dirt. We ask you to help us out by pre-rinsing the box before you return it.

## **THE ONLINE STORE – HOW TO ORDER MORE ITEMS**

Each week, we may have additional items to sell through our [online store](#) – things like additional bunches of carrots, syrup, and dried herb blends. You can order additional items and we'll have them ready on your CSA pick up day.

**To place your order, you must visit our [online store](#) ([hesseyfarmstead.com/store](http://hesseyfarmstead.com/store)).** Select items to put in your cart, choose the correct CSA pickup day, and then pay with a credit card. A confirmation email will be sent to your email address. **You must order by the deadline listed on the store page – usually 36 hours before that day's pickup time – giving us time to harvest it.**

## **CAN I SPLIT MY SHARE WITH SOMEONE?**

If you are a single person who can't eat all the vegetables in a Standard Share, by all means, split the share with another person. If you do split a share, we need to know with whom you are sharing, so they also get a weekly email. You are responsible for how the share will be divided and we prefer one payment for both parties. **We ask that no more than 2 people split a share.**

## **CAN I SWITCH MY PICK UP DAY/LOCATION?**

With many members in our CSA, it would be very difficult for us to manage pick up day and location change requests on a regular basis.

However, we know that life can throw you a curve ball so we try to be a little flexible. If you need to make a one-time adjustment due to vacation or a work difficulty, please let us know 3 days before your desired change so we can make adjustments to our packing numbers. To do so, you must email us at [melissa@hesseyfarmstead.com](mailto:melissa@hesseyfarmstead.com).

## **CAN I SEND *SOMEONE ELSE* IN MY PLACE TO PICK UP?**

Yes! If you cannot pick up your share yourself, simply send a substitute! All they have to do is give us your name during pickup. Please make sure that the box gets back to us the following week.

## **WHAT HAPPENS ON PICK UP DAY IN CASE OF INCLEMENT WEATHER?**

We define "inclement weather" as hail, tornado warning, and scary lightning storms – anything that would prevent us from safely standing outside. Check your email to find out what to do next. If we cannot be outside for safety reasons, we'll do one of two things: delay the pick up until the storm passes, or reschedule pick up for the next day.

## **WHAT IF I MISSED MY BOX?**

We return unclaimed boxes to the cooler. It is your responsibility to arrange for pick up the following day from our farm in Hartford. You can email us at [melissa@hesseyfarmstead.com](mailto:melissa@hesseyfarmstead.com). We can only hold your box for 2 days. We do not credit your account if you miss a pick up.

## **WHAT IF I GO ON VACATION?**

We do not hold your box for you or credit your account or double-up on boxes later.



But you have a few options:

1. **Send a substitute in your place.** Find a friend to take your share for you and either store it until you return OR eat it themselves! It's a great way to expose others to our CSA.
2. **Switch your pick up day.** You are allowed to switch your pick up day for occasional circumstances. We just ask that this not become the norm. See if your box can be picked up on the later end of the week (after you return).
3. **Ask us to hold your share at the farm for 2 days.** We won't hold your share for any longer than that, as we do not have the storage. We'll label your share with your name. You are responsible for scheduling and confirming a time to come to the farm to pick up your share.

## COMMUNICATION

### CONTACT INFORMATION

If you need to reach us, we prefer you email us at [melissa@hesseyfarmstead.com](mailto:melissa@hesseyfarmstead.com). If it is an emergency, or you will be late to your pickup site, text us at (269) 539-2073.

### HOW WILL I KNOW WHAT'S IN MY BOX EACH WEEK?

**Each Sunday, we will email you the contents of your box for that week.** We will also post it inside our Facebook group and put it in our online newsletter. This list is usually about 75% accurate, but there are sometimes changes, since Mother Nature is fickle and we may not always have exactly enough of the same crop for everyone. This causes us to sometimes make adjustments based on site. We do our best to keep things fair and give you a premium item later to make up for it.

### HOW WE STAY IN TOUCH WITH YOU EACH WEEK

**Our primary form of communication with members is via EMAIL:** We expect you to check your email inbox every week. Please be sure to "whitelist" our emails so we don't end up in your SPAM folder.

**We also send some information via our private Facebook group:** We provide weekly unboxing videos in our private Facebook group which is for members only. A lot of group interaction occurs here between members as they share advice and tips for making the most of your box. Request free access at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/hesseyfarmsteadcsa>.

If you're not on Facebook, we also load up our weekly newsletter on our blog. You can find the latest version of the newsletter at [hesseyfarmstead.com/blog](https://hesseyfarmstead.com/blog).

## **PAYMENT POLICY**

### **HOW DO I PAY FOR MY CSA BOX?**

We ask you to pay a deposit of 50% down once you sign up. Mail your payment to us via check. The remaining balance can be sent to us any time before June 1. You can pay via personal or bank check.

### **Where do I send my payments?**

Full payment is due by June 1st. Mail your check (made out to Hessey Farmstead) to 49479 68<sup>th</sup> St. Hartford, MI 49057.

### **Do you take credit card payments or Venmo?**

Sorry, not for the CSA shares. Credit card fees take about \$25 per share from us, which is a sizeable amount. Payment can be made via check, cash, money order, or bank check.

### **What happens if I don't pay my membership fee?**

Membership fees must be paid in full by June 1st. No shares will be distributed until payment is received. If payment has not been made by the time our CSA starts, we will consider this agreement null and void, and your membership will be cancelled.

## **CANCELLATION & REFUND POLICY**

Not clicking with our CSA? No worries! We offer a money-back guarantee. If, after 5 weeks, you are dissatisfied with your membership and wish to cancel, or if you have to move out of the area and cannot continue your share, we will arrange a refund on a pro-rated basis.

**Trial memberships are non-refundable.**

## EDUCATION & COOKING SUPPORT

### How do I know what to do with the veggies you give me?

One of the strengths of our CSA is teaching you how to cook the CSA way. We have developed a mini course called **"The Roadmap to CSA Success"**. You'll learn the checklist of basic cooking techniques you need to master, what kitchen tools are a must for CSA success, how to store your produce to keep it from spoiling, and common vegetable "exit strategies." We share this information with you during our onboarding process.

We also recommend that you download our ***CSA Tips and Strategies Guide*** for rookie members. This is a fantastic booklet that you can skim in 5 minutes, that shares all the CSA master "hacks" and secrets to fast track your own CSA learning curve. We share this resource with you during our onboarding process.

### STORING YOUR PRODUCE

Keeping your vegetables fresh for an entire week takes effort. Part of that is our responsibility. We are very careful about when we harvest your produce, to insure that we pick it at its peak of ripeness and in ideal harvesting weather conditions to keep it lasting as long as possible. But part of it is your responsibility as well.

**If you want to extend the life of your produce, it is imperative that you get your vegetables into a cool location ASAP. Leaving your box in your hot car is a very bad idea, and your produce will spoil very fast.**

Please thoroughly wash all your produce and inspect your veggies before consuming.

### Here are some suggestions for how to protect your produce from pick up to your kitchen.

- Learn how to store your produce the right way. This is your responsibility! Our ***A to Z Storage Guide*** spells out exactly where everything should be stored. It also includes a picture of every item we might grow on our farm. Use this to help you identify and master each vegetable.
- Purchase Debbie Meyer Green Bags from Amazon. These are around \$8, and are made of a special polymer that absorbs ethylene gas (emitted by vegetables causing them to spoil faster). They are reusable up to 10 times each. A great investment.
- Take the tops of your carrots and beets right away when you get home.
- Wash and store your greens right away in a plastic bag and store in the fridge ASAP.
- Plan your meals based on what will spoil the fastest!
- Your produce may appear "wet" from condensation when you open it. Wipe them down before storage.

## MEMBERSHIP AGREEMENT

**I agree to pick up my share** at my chosen pick-up site. If I cannot pick up my share I will make arrangements for someone else to pick it up. Unless prior arrangements have been made, shares that are not picked up during the designated pick-up window will be donated to a family in need or a local food pantry.

Understanding that Hessey Farmstead will do their utmost to have a bountiful season, **I am willing to share both the risks and rewards of farming with my farmer** which may include adverse weather, frosts, pests, disease, or crop loss. As a CSA member, I am supporting local, sustainable agriculture as well as a more just food system.

By accepting this member agreement, the member hereby releases, indemnifies, and agrees to hold harmless Hessey Farmstead, its agents and employees from any and all claims and/or liability from being on the farm property, being at any of the CSA pickup locations, from the purchase of a CSA membership or the use or consumption of food provided by the farm.

*Hessey Farmstead reserves the right to change parts of this Agreement related to production and distribution from time to time. We will contact our members via email to notify them in advance of any changes to the agreement.*