



WINTER'S BOUNTY

Here's a prescription for your winter produce blues: take part in Community Supported Agriculture. When you pay a farmer up front for weekly shares of the season's bounty, you're supplied with locally grown vegetables fresh off the farm. Make the most of your winter CSA with these insider tips.

—OLIVIA M. HALL

Shop Around

Ask farmers what they're planning to offer in their cold-weather shares. Expect storage crops such as carrots, onions, potatoes, sweet potatoes, and assorted cabbages. "Supplement that with Swiss chard, kale, spinach, and lettuce from the high tunnel [a farmer's simple greenhouse], and you've got a pretty good box," says Harriet Behar, organic specialist at the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service. Some CSAs offer add-ons such as homemade salsa, pickles, and preserves—a welcome reminder of summer.

Mind the Store

Most winter shares contain a mix of root crops that can live for months in your fridge or basement and more delicate items that need to be used within a week or two, says Pat Mulvey, cofounder of Local Thyme, a seasonal CSA menu-planning service: "It's really important to talk to your farmer about how to properly store your produce. Then come

up with a plan that's going to realistically make use of your vegetables so they don't go to waste."

Get Creative

If heaps of kohlrabis, rutabagas, and celeriac leave you scratching your head, consult your CSA provider or a seasonal cookbook (or visit vegetariantimes.com) for ideas on experimenting with less-familiar ingredients and trying new tricks with old favorites. "You have to readjust the way you eat to be seasonal," says organic farmer Robin Ostfeld of Blue Heron Farm in Lodi, N.Y. "But that's a good thing and kind of the point."

Cook Up a Storm

Veggie stews, curries, and puréed soups are easy-to-prepare and endlessly variable winter standbys, says Mulvey. The leftovers freeze beautifully, so cook up time-saving double batches. Better yet, invite friends and family to help with the chopping, and warm up your house with a cooking party. Mulvey's bonus tip: "Label everything well to avoid UFOs: unidentified frozen objects."



CSA LOCATORS

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