

The Kansas City Food Circle

UPDATE

Summer, 1997

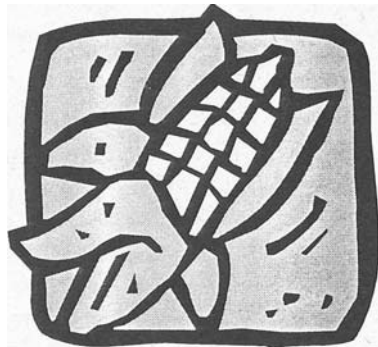
Supplement your CSA with a Spring Garden

It's tough to eat locally grown vegetables in the winter in Kansas City. However, gardeners can supplement the capabilities of our local farmers in the early spring.

Our farmers tend to delay planting until all danger of a hard frost is over. It's too big a risk planting a large field just to get caught with an unusual late freeze. That's why your subscription vegetables don't start coming in significant quantity until late May. If you are gardening small plots, though, it's a different story.

In the past several years Food Circle members, Craig Volland and Ann Allegre, have been experimenting with early spring gardening. Craig plants seeds indoors in early February under lights or next to a large south-facing window. By March 15, frost-hardy lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower, pak choi, Chinese cabbage and chard are transplanted outdoors. Spinach, peas, turnips, radishes, more lettuce and scallions are planted at the same time. This year Craig and Ann were eating out of the garden by the third week of April; and harvested their first broccoli on May 16. Some of the plants were still small, but the CSA kicks in by late May. Thus it doesn't matter if you take whole plants and thin the plot out as well.

They use the square foot gardening method with small, 4 foot square plots. These are easy to cover with two layers of clear plastic if a hard freeze comes in. The other big advantage with early gardening is that the bugs aren't yet mobilized. You can grow beautiful vegetables ~ without the special skills our organic farmers have to beat the insects in hot weather, when they are hungry and multiplying. By then Craig and Ann are inside and cool, eating CSA vegetables.



It doesn't always work. This year, Craig forgot that cauliflower is not quite as frost hardy as broccoli, and lost about half of them to a 20°F frost. Long term, the Food Circle hopes to provide some locally grown, organic foods all year around with the use of greenhouses, canning and packaging of grains and dry legumes. This would also provide jobs in the city. In the meantime, try early spring gardening next year to obtain fresh and nutritious food. Anybody have any ideas for late Fall?

The Case of the Contaminated Chicken

At least 62 people were sickened by salmonella poisoning at a Kansas City barbecue restaurant in April. According to the *Kansas City Star* the KC Health Department said the salmonella probably came from contaminated poultry received by the restaurant. The *Star* proceeded with the usual mantra that salmonella occurs when poultry, eggs and other foods are *improperly handled or prepared*. The poultry industry would have you believe that it is entirely a *point of preparation* problem. Actually industry growing and processing practices are also a major problem. Chickens are crammed into small spaces so that the bacteria can easily be transmitted, and slaughtered carcasses are processed in ways that increase the risk of cross contamination. The Department of Agriculture has estimated that some 25% of the chickens you find in the grocery store are contaminated with salmonella. It remains to be seen if the new meat processing regulations will improve that dismal record.

Eggs, Too!

The New York Times (5-15-97) reports that eggs have become the primary contributor to food poisoning in the United States. The Department of Agriculture says as many as 45% of all egg-laying flocks are contami-

Kenyan Proverb

"Treat the earth well. It was not given to you by your parents. It is loaned to you by your children."

nated with salmonella enteritidis. The Center for Science in the Public Interest is calling for tighter federal regulations. Under current law, eggs are rarely inspected for safety. Industry responds that they have enrolled 500/0 of all flocks in a voluntary program called Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points.

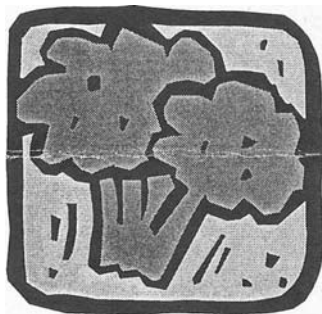
The Humane Farming Association reports that, in today's egg factories, laying hens are crowded together with three or four other hens in a tiny cage for their entire lives. Barely able to move, the hens strike out in frustration, pecking each other. To reduce cannibalism their upper beak is sliced off with a hot blade. This crowding together also increases the transmission of salmonella. You can avoid being a part of this bizarre practice by avoiding eggs or buying eggs laid by free range (cage free) hens. These are available from some of our Food Circle farmers: Wild Oats and some Hen House supermarkets.

Machinery Madness

Also from the *New York Times*, Consumer groups had been complaining about a new method of deboning beef by machine used by 75% of the nation's meat processors. They said this practice leads to marrow, ground bones and nerve tissue being passed off as ground beef. In February the Department of Agriculture acknowledged that some ground beef was being contaminated in this manner. One study found that 16 of the 48 meat processing plants that use the new machinery were not complying with regulations. The department vowed to tighten regulations but said the processing of neck and back bones for ground beef would be banned only as a last resort.

Pastured Poultry Association Formed

From *.Acres U.S.A.* (May: 1997). Due to the burgeoning demand for free range chickens, a group of farmers in the Southeast has formed the American Pastured Poultry Producers Association. In recent years a new method has been developed where chickens are raised in floorless pens which are moved daily to fresh pasture. The chickens receive exercise and fresh air while foraging for plants and insects. Their manure is thus spread evenly onto the pasture. They are also fed a (usually) non-medicated feed concentrate. Though this may not be totally "free range", the cage is necessary to thwart predators such as foxes and owls.



Another Battle Won in Kansas

Hodgeman County voted down corporate hog facilities 551 to 529. This vote, which was held April 1, has survived a recount and a ruling in the local court. This is another great victory for Kansas citizens who refuse to knuckle under to Big Ag's plan to turn rural America into a sacrifice zone for unsustainably produced food exports. Members of Stewards of the Land, a rural Kansas citizens group, visited Hodgeman County to help out before the vote. According to data compiled by the Kansas Rural Center, the total corporate hog vote in 19 Kansas Counties since 1994 is 47,657 NO and only 13,584 YES. Somebody should have gotten the message by now.

Compost Really Helps!

According to the *Kansas City Star* (3-26-97) researchers from Ohio State University have found that organic growers who rely on compost produce healthier plants. Certain organisms in compost interact with the root, and the biochemistry of the plant is changed so it becomes more resistant to disease. We're not surprised!

Urban Haven

Food Circle member Mary Gerkin reports that her Abiding Peace Lutheran Church north of the river near Antioch Mall has created a sanctuary for wildlife and worshipers - alike. Four acres of mowed grass with few trees was transformed, over the past ten years, into a nature trail, native trees and shrubs, a seventeen plot community garden and berries galore. A backyard mud hole is now a meditation garden. Grape vines have produced communion wine for the church the past three years. A Prairie Restoration Project, spectacular in the warmer seasons, provides much needed cover for birds and other wildlife in the winter.

KC Food Circle Sponsors Farm Tours

The KC Food Circle will host three summer farm tours. These will be held on Sunday afternoons and are an opportunity to tour local family farms and get to know your local farmers and families. For schedule and details; see page 10 of the Summer Directory.

KC Food Circle Planning Fall Growers' Conference

At our next public meeting, we will begin planning for an area-wide growers' conference, to be held in late-November. Your input would be welcomed. Meeting will be Sunday afternoon, August 3rd, at 2:30pm, at the Franklin Center.

This is a re-mastered copy – you can find the whole KCFC Update archive at www.KCFoodCircle.org