



LOCAL FARMS COME TOGETHER TO ESTABLISH “DEEP ROOTS”

BY JAMES ROBERTSON

Michael Pollan, who you may know from the Netflix documentary, “Cooked,” said, “Serve the kind of food you know the story behind.” Today, that may seem like one of the hardest stories in our lives to unravel. Here locally however, that story is unfolding at the hands of our dedicated and caring local farmers.

“We now have several farms in our East Texas area that are using sustainable, organic methodology to produce great quality food including vegetables, eggs, and clean pastured meats from naturally healthy animals,” said Barbara Gosnell of Gopher Knoll Farm in Athens Texas.

Gosnell, along with Jennifer Chandler of Chandler Family Farm in Mabank and Bobby Bever of Highway 19 Produce in Athens have come together to form Deep Roots CSA (Community Supported Agriculture), a local multi-farm CSA that provides fresh produce to families that purchase shares each season.

The idea behind the CSA not only brings you fresh locally grown food, it makes you a stakeholder in the success of that food and farm.

The subscription type market allows customers to pay for a share of produce in advance, providing the farmer with a secure market, and when needed, the funds to expand production in advance of the season. In return the customer receives a weekly box of truly fresh produce from the farmers which

consists of available products harvested at the particular time of year.

Customers are even encouraged to visit the farms, see where their food is being grown, and take part in the growing process if they so wish. In this way, the consumer knows exactly where the food they will be consuming comes from: directly from farm to table with no middle-man handling.

The process gives the consumer an actual stake in the success of local farming. With success also comes a certain amount of risk. Farming is not a predictable vocation and crops can be affected by a number of things including drought, flooding, and insects. When a loss cannot be prevented, the customer shares in the loss just as they share in the bounty when harvest is plentiful. This shared risk brings a heightened sense of awareness of what it takes to produce food.

“This also keeps the farmer on his or her toes in terms of finding effective ways to deal with the realities and plan for a variety of crops to ensure quality production despite the challenges,” says Gosnell. “Working with other farmers, as we do in the Deep Roots CSA, provides each farmer with a built in support system of other farmers’ experience and knowledge to help us deal with the challenges as well as providing our customers with a greater sense of security that any given challenge is not likely to overwhelm the entire group.”



Jennifer Chandler reinforces the importance of working as a team to ensure the consumer will be provided with product regardless of unforeseen circumstances; “The benefit of working with two other farmers as a collaboration is the built-in safety net. If I flood out in spring, most likely Barbara and Bobby will be able to provide what we need until I dry out.”

The CSA also allows the farmer to cut down on food waste by enabling them to better plan and schedule their growing process.

“It has personally made me better with my time and scheduling of planning and consistently growing something, whether inside the hoop house or outside in the garden,” said Chandler. “As a market farmer, you may end up taking fifty percent of your produce home and feeding it to the pigs but with the CSA, I know exactly what is already paid for. I can grow exactly what I need for the members and nothing more unless I want to. It is more stable than just selling at farmer’s markets.”

Community Supported Agriculture ensures your food is fresh, nutritious, and chemical free. The flavor difference of farm fresh produce versus the grocery store produce is huge. It is allowed to ripen and be picked at peak readiness and isn’t traveling across state or country borders before hitting your table.

Chandler Family Farm and Highway 19 Produce have both been featured in

“Edible Dallas and Ft. Worth” magazine.

As the Deep Roots CSA is able to grow they hope to expand their member base and grow year round. Member spots are slowly being expanded and the plan is to offer 3 seasons next year.

For share costs and more information please visit www.deeprootscsa.net. The farm blog page also features photos from this past spring and summer season.



PICTURED HERE: BARBARA GOSNELL - GOPHER KNOLL FARM, JENNIFER CHANDLER - CHANDLER FAMILY FARM, & BOBBY BEVER - HIGHWAY 19 PRODUCE AND BERRIES

