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RESOLVE TO SIGN UP FOR COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE

January marks a new year and a new decade. What were your resolutions? Weight loss typically tops the list. This year consider changing your focus to healthy eating and environmental sustainability.

The easiest and tastiest way to improve your diet is to eat REAL FOOD. Despite what the food manufactures would like us to believe, processed bags of any food is never as healthy as fresh from the farm. Standing in the supermarket aisle this week I was astounded at all of the bags of “healthy” snacks like chia and quinoa tortilla chips, organic fruit snacks, and kale chips. Full of sugar, fat, and/or salt these designer foods are empty calories in disguise and often cost more per pound than culinary delights like asparagus, raspberries or steak.

One way to get real food, with optimal nutrient density is to sign up for Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). Despite the snow on the ground, farmers are buying supplies now so they are ready for spring planting, so act quickly to join the harvest. Frederick is an agricultural leader in the state and blessed with more farmland than any other county.

“Supporting local farmers is an excellent way to promote economic and environmental sustainability in your community, and joining a CSA is just one way to do so,” says University of Maryland Agricultural Agent, Kelly Nichols. CSAs offer subscriptions where buyers receive a weekly or monthly basket of fresh just picked produce, typically vegetables. Some CSAs include in the basket: fruits, flowers or any sort of farm products like eggs, honey, jams, pies, even milk. Members buy shares of the farm’s harvest and also accept some of the risks. As the crop matures, it is harvested and you get a fresh supply of produce and support local agriculture. CSAs allow farmers’ better preseason planning since the crop is sold before it is planted. The advance payment creates working capital for the farm operation.

Some farms offer CSA subscriptions based on the seasons – spring, summer, and fall. Others have one CSA, lasting from 18-22 weeks. Joining one can bring huge savings in time and money. Cost is well below what you would spend in the supermarket. Taste and nutrition is out of this world and after you get the taste of just picked straight from the farm you will be hooked. I speak from personal experience enjoying local honey, eggs, meats, and produce.

Since time is an issue for everyone, many CSAs deliver baskets to a central location where you can pick it up or you go to the farm. If you work in Frederick the location may be just around

the corner saving precious gas as well. Some CSAs offer more than one location for pick-up so I encourage you to visit their website to get the specific details.

Dandelion and Rust Farm
781-799-6101
www.dandelionandrust.com

Rights of Man Farm
240-674-2727
www.rightsofmanfarm.com

Chocolates and Tomatoes Farm
571-271-2686
www.chocolatesandtomatoes.com

Seeds of Life Nursery & CSA
240-344-6533
www.solnurseries.info

Full Cellar Farm
301-639-9711
www.fullcellarfarm.com

South Mountain Creamery
301-371-8565
www.southmountaincreamery.com

House in the Woods Farm
301-607-4048
www.houseinthewoods.com

Sycamore Spring Farm
301-788-6980
www.sycamorespringfarm.org

Open Book Farm
240-457-2558
www.oakiedokefarms.com

Thanksgiving Farms
301-662-1291
www.thanksgivingfarmandgarden.com

Pleasant Hill Produce
301-471-2699
www.plesanthillproduc.com

The Little Red Wagon Produce
240-439-9401

USDA also provides a directory by zip code at
<https://www.ams.usda.gov/local-food-directories/csas>

Some of the CSA Farms have recipes on their websites, here are just a couple of samples. Enjoy your fresh from the farm to the table offerings!

BROCCOLI DIPPED IN WONDERFUL PEANUT SAUCE by Open Book Farm

Kids love this preparation! You can make everything ahead of time and serve everything either warm or cold. Serves 4-5

1 1/2 pounds broccoli
1 cup smooth, unsweetened peanut butter
3-4 Tablespoons honey
1 cup hot water
2-3 Tablespoons soy sauce or tamari
1 1/2 teaspoons minced garlic
2 teaspoons cider vinegar
3-4 Tablespoons finely minced cilantro
Salt to taste

BROCCOLI (continued)

Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Trim and discard any tough stem ends of the broccoli, and cut the broccoli into bite-sized spears. When the water boils, lower the heat to a simmer and cook the broccoli for 2-3 minutes (depending on how tender you like your broccoli).

Drain the broccoli in a colander, then run it under cool running water to stop the cooking.

Place the peanut butter and honey in a bowl. Add the hot water, and mash and stir patiently with a spoon or small whisk until blended. Stir in the remaining ingredients, adding salt to taste. Serve with the steamed broccoli for dipping.

DEEP-DISH BUTTERNUT SQUASH CASSEROLE WITH MAPLE-GINGER CRUST by Seed of Life Nurseries

This casserole will complement any table and doesn't need a special occasion. It becomes the occasion, as the ginger-scented crust is broken to expose the creamy cinnamon, maple-scented butternut squash and tart apple filling. Serves 6 to 8.

4 1/2 cups butternut squash, cooked and pureed OR 2 (15 ounce) cans Butternut Squash
2 tart apples such as Granny Smith, peeled, cored, and diced
1/2 cup chopped walnuts
1 cup crushed ginger snaps
1/3 cup light brown sugar, firmly packed
1/4 cup chilled butter, diced
1 tablespoon flour
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/4 cup pure maple syrup for drizzling over the casserole
Vegetable oil for spraying baking dish

Preheat oven to 350°F. Mix Butternut Squash with apples and walnuts and spoon into an ovenproof baking dish (2 quart), coated with vegetable oil or greased with butter. Place the dry crust ingredients (ginger snaps, brown sugar, butter, flour, salt, cinnamon, and nutmeg) in a large mixing bowl and combine with a fork or pastry cutter. Sprinkle the crust mixture evenly over the squash and drizzle the maple syrup overall. Cover squash with foil and bake for 30 minutes. Uncover and continue to bake for approximately 15-20 minutes longer until crust is golden brown and squash is heated through. You may substitute pears for the apples if you prefer.

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