



**A
PLAYBOOK
FOR
SUCCESS IN
THE CSA
KITCHEN**



Succeeding at CSA: a Four-Part Playbook

At a systems level view, CSA is an incredible, beautiful thing. You support our local, organic family farm. We support the health of your body and the planet. And we travel the season together.

However, when we switch lenses and look at CSA on the micro, everyday level, the view is a little different. That view? A fridge full of fresh produce that you may or may not know what to do with.

If you are the type of cook where mucho veggies excites you, and you have no issues cooking seasonally and using an adaptive approach to recipes, then good for you! You probably don't need to read this.

But for those of you who are new to CSA, incorporating a CSA share into your everyday life really changes how you plan and cook each week. Don't fret! You can do this!

What follows are tips for having a successful experience as a CSA member in the kitchen.

CSA Play #1 Veggie Roshambo (Raw, Freeze, or Cook)

One way to have a good experience with your CSA share, is to do some weekly meal planning. Take some time to sit down with a list of your ingredients (or spread them out on the kitchen table so you can visually and physically organize them) and make a plan for what you will do with them.

One great way to start this planning, is to split your veggies into 3 categories. In this Roshambo, you are choosing between: Raw, Freeze, or Cook.

RAW - Can you eat it raw? Carolyn Pope of Serious Eats, says this better than I ever could: It pays to keep it simple, especially if you're anticipating a particularly busy week. Sometimes the best approach to using up your CSA haul is to sprinkle it with salt and start taking bites of it. You'll know when it feels right. Don't be shy.



FREEZE- Again, Carolyn Pope has the gift of gab here: All fruits, all greens, tomatoes, beans, peppers, and even potatoes can be frozen raw for use later in the year, when you'll be thrilled beyond belief to see them. Some people suggest blanching first to cut down on bacteria and cooking time after defrosting, but it's optional. Spread out your produce on sturdy baking sheets and put in the freezer until frozen so it won't stick together, then store in the freezer in airtight plastic bags or reusable containers.

COOK - After you've separated what you'll eat raw and what you plan to freeze, you now know what veggies you'll need to cook with for the week.

After the relatively quick Veggie Roshambo, you'll now need to take some time to plan and search ideas for what you'll cook. It will no doubt be one of the hardest parts of CSA cooking at first! One way is to come up with a specific meal plan for everything you put in your cook category. OR you could decide loosely which vegetables you'll put together in a meal, and save the specific recipe searching for the night of. Either way, the idea is that success with CSA comes with a little time spent planning just how you'll cook with what you have. Here are some basic tips for recipe searching:

- 1) Use our recipe database. Over the years we have added just shy of 600 recipes to our website. These recipes are all seasonal in nature, meaning they aren't going to call for vegetables that grow at completely different times of the year locally.
- 2) Look for recipes that utilize several vegetables. Life (and the week) is too short to only cook 1 vegetable at a time.

- 2) Internet searches are your friend. Not sure what to cook with chard, fennel, and zucchini? Type in the veggie names along with the word recipe and see. Over the years, I have discovered some awesome recipes this way!

CSA Play #2 The MadLib Dinner

Remember MadLibs? I loved these as a kid. They were little stories that had a main theme and structure, like going on a vacation or to the fair, but you got to fill in some of the nouns, verbs, and adjectives. The result was a story that generally made sense, but had some silliness and uniqueness that the average story doesn't.

One of the best ways to be a good CSA cook, is to learn and practice cooking your own Madlib Meals. In other words, learn a handful of versatile recipes that can handle lots of different kinds of veggies. The structure, for example pesto noodles or fried rice, is the same, but you get to change up the veggie details depending on what comes in your box. The meals will be slightly different, but will generally turn out pleasing.

At our house, one of our favorite MadLib Meals is veggie mac n cheese. In the winter, we eat cheesy noodles with roasted carrots, parsnips, & rutabaga. In the spring, we puree mustards and arugula, cook in with ground meat and serve it over cheesy noodles. In high summer, our cheesy noodles are decorated with loads of zucchini, tomatoes, and peppers. In fall, we try our cheesy noodles with broccoli or roasted squash and kale. The options are endless. And the key is, no matter what - every eater in house will eat cheesy noodles, no matter what else is mixed in with it.

With a little practice, Madlib meals will help you use your veggies in a (noun) .



Favorite MadLib meals at our house:

- Quiche/Frittatas (aka quiche without the crust)
- Stir-Fry over rice
- Pesto! (pesto can be made with just about any leafy green, nut, and cheese)
- Vegetable Gratin (baked veggies with cream and cheese)
- Veggie & Bean Soup (a good broth will bring just about any combo together!)
- Grilled Vegetables alongside anything
- Veggie Curry over rice

Other great MadLib meals ideas:

- Fried Rice
- Omelets
- Creamy Vegetable Alfredo

Vegetable Lo-Mein (noodles with veggies and brown sauce)
Fettucine in light tomato sauce with mixed veggies
Greens in a Pan with Rice (no matter the green, chop, sautee and eat with egg and side of rice)

CSA Play #3

CSA: Constantly Substitute & Adapt

Until I became a farmer, I treated recipes as rules. If I didn't have the full list of ingredients for something, I wouldn't make it. If I found myself half way through cooking something and realized I was missing something, I'd feel stressed. And trying to find really great, veggie dense seasonally appropriate recipes could be frustrating.

Becoming a farmer forced me to renegotiate my relationship with recipes. I had so many seasonal ingredients (and not enough time to go to a grocery store) to be able to follow recipes literally. I wanted to be able to cook with what I had. To do that, I had to stop following recipes strictly.

This wasn't easy at first. But slowly, I began to use recipes as navigational suggestions, and started to substitute wildly. You know what I discovered? While the meals I'd end up with weren't exactly the same as what a recipe's author intended, most times the meals were still tasty. How freeing!

This transition to what we like to call substitution style cooking, is a key component to having a successful experience with CSA.

The more you cook—and you will be cooking (!)—the easier and more fun it is to substitute and adapt as you go. Use what you have! Families of vegetables such as brassicas and alliums have certain common characteristics that in many cases let you substitute one for another. And the more you do this, the more you begin to learn the flavor profiles of different vegetables and gain an understanding and confidence of what can substituted for what.

One last trick? Always use more vegetables than the recipe calls for! One cup of shredded kale... try two. You get the idea.

Remember, your new mantra for cooking in the kitchen: CSA - Constantly Substitute & Adapt

CSA Play #4

Stock Your Pantry.. and other Tips

This last play is a short, sweet one taken from an article entitled, Getting Hooked on Cooking with CSA by Katherince Deumling (author of Cook With What You Have).

A CSA share offers a plethora of produce every week and with it varieties we may have

never seen before, let alone cooked—a delight and a bit of a challenge, for sure. Fresh, delicious vegetables chosen for me week after week is my idea of heaven. It hasn't always been but I get more hooked every year. I'm hooked on the deliciousness, on not having to make any decisions about what vegetables to purchase, and on the creativity it inspires.

So, how does one get hooked?



Stock your Pantry, Two Ways:

Shop mostly to restock rather than for specific dishes. You'll spend less time (and money) running to the store for last minute items and can instead spend your time cooking, eating, and creatively using what you already have. This is a basic list but you certainly don't need everything listed to cook many dishes. And, your pantry will reflect your particular taste. This is just a loose guide.

Purchased Goods for Pantry, Fridge and Freezer:

- Lentils; French green, red, brown
- Beans: black, pinto, white, chickpeas
- Grains: brown and white rice, barley, farro, cornmeal/polenta, quinoa, pasta, couscous, bulgur
- Seeds & nuts: sunflower, pumpkin, hazelnuts, walnuts, peanuts, almonds, etc.
- Spices: cumin, coriander, mustard seeds, dried chilies, turmeric, caraway, paprika, cardamom
- Herbs: thyme, oregano
- Vinegars: cider, rice and red wine
- Oils: olive, sunflower, coconut, sesame
- Hot sauce, soy sauce, fish sauce
- Dairy products
- Eggs
- Lemons and limes
- Meat and fish in freezer: sausages, bacon, chicken, etc.

Semi-prepared Items:

When you have a little spare time you can add semi-prepared items to your fridge/ pantry that will make life much easier and tastier when you don't have those extra few minutes to get a meal on the table.

- Make a jar of vinaigrette and keep it in the fridge. Dress lettuces and greens as well as roasted vegetables or plain chickpeas/beans with the same vinaigrette, adding some chopped herbs and toasted seeds. Be creative!
- Cook a good quantity of beans. Put beans out to soak before you go to work in the morning. Cook them that evening while you're in the kitchen cooking something else for dinner anyway and have them ready for the next day or freeze half.
- Cook twice as much rice, barley or farro as you need for any given meal and freeze half of it to make fried rice, rice and beans or a soup the following week on a particularly busy night when you need the head start.
- Toast a cup of sunflower or pumpkin seeds and keep in a jar. Your salads will be better for them; your soups will have added crunch; your snacks will be cheaper and more nutritious!
- Use a whole bunch of parsley or cilantro to make a quick, savory sauce with garlic, olive oil, lemon juice or vinegar. Stir in some thick yogurt for a creamy version. Having a flavorful component like this on hand means a plain bowl of rice or beans or a fried egg turns into a meal in no time.

Make chicken or any other meat, fish or vegetable stock and freeze.