



THINK GREEN



EAT GREEN

Why should I join a CSA?

Here we are in the midst of our (perhaps not so) cold Maryland winter. This is the time of year when farmers and serious gardeners pour over seed catalogs, making plans for the crops they will harvest during our hot Maryland summer. It's also the time of year for CSA members to renew their commitment, and - for some of us - to consider joining a CSA.



What is “CSA” and who are the “members?”

CSA is Community-Supported Agriculture and membership is a “share” of the farmer’s produce, on a prescribed schedule (usually weekly), and with prescribed amounts of the current harvest.

The season's total cost is typically paid to the farmer ahead of the growing season; however, many farms offer a payment plan to spread costs throughout the season.

Additionally, some farms offer flexible share arrangements,

which may include requests for preferred items and/or swapping of items at pickup, or a market-style share with a variety of produce offered for your selection.

Why would I want to join a CSA?

Community-Supported Agriculture is a mutually beneficial arrangement between farmer and share member. The farmer benefits economically with up-front funding of seed and plant purchases, as well as advanced information for crop planning purposes. The benefits to the CSA member are many. After the share payment, members receive a continuous stream of fresh, locally-grown produce for no additional cost. The operative (environmental) word is “local:” Buying from a local farmer significantly reduces your carbon footprint as your produce does not travel great distances (or sit in storage losing valuable nutrition). You are encouraging that small farmer to stay in farming, possibly using organic, sustainable methods -- all of which are beneficial to our planet. An article from *The Spruce Eats* details the [many benefits of CSAs](#).

Unfamiliar produce. With a CSA share, you may be introduced to vegetables or fruits that



involves no plowing (tillage) and does not otherwise disturb the soil. Studies show that this planting method reduces soil erosion (drastically, by some accounts), while water retention is increased (ditto) as undisturbed soils remain moist, and fossil fuel usage as well as labor costs are reduced. But a significant environmental benefit of no-till farming is in the soil's biome: simply put, by leaving communities of microorganisms undisturbed and feeding off the soil's organic matter, those organisms will in turn feed nutrients to the plant. The end result is a healthy, vigorous, and increasingly nutrient-dense plant. *Genetic Literacy Project* has an article on [the sustainable benefits of no-till farming.](#)

In summary, the benefits of supporting a small, local farm are abundant -- for us, for the earth, and for the earth's future inhabitants. If we are serious about supporting a path that leads to a healthier planet, then joining a CSA program is a good step along that path.

The farms listed here are enthusiastic about their CSA programs AND have a weekly presence at the Havre de Grace Farmers Market. Information on other local farms may be found at [Local Harvest.](#)

Third Way Farm <https://www.thirdwayfarm.com/csa-community-supported-agriculture.html>

Harman's Farm <https://harmansfarm.com/csa-program/>

Flying Plow Farm <https://flyingplowfarm.com/csa>

SOME GREEN THOUGHTS



"To make agriculture sustainable, the grower has got to be able to make a profit."
-Sam Farr, former U.S. Congressman from California

"Greetings from the non-Barcode people."
-Joel Salatin, owner of Polyface Farm

"You've seen large agri-businesses benefit from enormous profits from existing farm programs, and I think we should be focusing most of those programs on those family farmers."
Barack Obama, debate, Oct. 12, 2004

"Shake the hand that feeds you."
-Michael Pollan in *The Omnivore's Dilemma*