

How To Start Your Own CSA (Community Supported Agriculture)

Think of all the people you know through church, kids' school, on your block, etc. that would love to access local, delicious sustainably-raised food directly from a local farmer. As you will see below, CSA benefits the farmer, the subscriber, the community, and the earth.

How to Get Started:

1. Know the Basics:

What is CSA? CSA is not a buying club. It is a grassroots movement which liberates the farmer—"The man who feeds us all," from exploitation by the capitalist supply and demand, market economy. Members pre-pay for the season's harvest, thus sharing the risk and the bounty, and enjoy whatever the farm offers, eating with the seasons. This means lots of tomatoes in August, and no tomatoes in February! (unless you choose to supplement from an organic food co-op store.) CSA is a new form of social and economic interaction, caring for each other and the earth. It enlivens local economies and promotes food security (see next point.)

What is sustainable farming? Organic and Biodynamic farming essentially involve agricultural practices that can be carried on for generations without degrading our soils, water, air, biodiversity or our health. It means farming that doesn't use synthetic chemicals, growth hormones, or antibiotics, and that incorporates natural pest management, composting, crop rotation, etc. Small farmers are simply better stewards of the earth and are better equipped to manage climate change, pests, etc. BIODYNAMIC Farming predates organics by 30 years. It uses NO chemical inputs, *unlike organics !*, and is the most holistic method, treating the farm itself as a self-sustaining living organism. **If possible, support biodynamics, as it truly heals the earth.**

2. Have conversations with friends and neighbors to explore their interest. See if they might be willing to come to a meeting to learn more about why it's important to support local family farmers and how to access their food directly.

3. Set up a meeting. We can provide talking points: a rationale for producing and consuming sustainably-grown, local food, the importance of supporting small farms, what farmers serve your area, and how to get the whole thing started. (e-mail: shantiyoga2@earthlink.net, or call 1 888 384 9642.)

4. Choose a farmer (or two) and explore with him or her what number of CSA members they would need to make it worthwhile financially for them. REMEMBER: THE PURPOSE OF COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE IS TO GIVE THE FARMER COMMUNITY SUPPORT: so s/he can earn a good living and do their job: to heal the earth and produce true food. To ease the farmer's burden, consider picking up directly from the farm, if that is convenient, or having a group pick up the food weekly to bring to the drop-off point for distribution (see number 6 below.)

5. Recruit, advertise, publicize, and recruit some more! Post flyers everywhere!

6. **Set up a drop-off/pick-up location** at someone's home, a church, a community building or business, and establish pick-up hours.

7. **Establish a payment system with your farmer.** Since members are pre-paying for the season it works well to set up an installment program 6 months before the season starts.

8. **Select a coordinator responsible for communicating logistical info to the farmer and to the participants.** A Chat Group is easy to set up and is a good way to exchange recipes, and work out logistical issues such as late pick-ups etc. We can offer advice.

9. **Enjoy the food! Recruit new members!** Have an annual potluck to celebrate and review how the season went.

10. **Set some ground rules for participating** (we can help you with that).

Don't forget to tell us what you're doing so we can tell others about you and help them to start their own CSA

Adapted from: [Seven Generations Ahead.org](http://SevenGenerationsAhead.org)

“Become sustainable, then restorative”