

Tahoe residents clamor for food straight from the farm

By Kathryn Reed

In today's world of instant gratification, global trade and I'll eat what I want no matter the season attitude, some folks in Lake Tahoe and beyond are putting an end to all of that.

Community Sponsored Agriculture (CSA) is a growing movement.



Loading boxes for the Great Basin Basket CSA.

Photos/Provided

Small farms in California and Nevada are growing produce for the consumer, not the grocery store or some middleman distributor. This means the farmer is making more money, too.

It's good for the farmers because they know their goods will make it to a table at a set price before the harvest. It's good for the consumer because they are getting food straight from the farm and what is in season.

"You get what grows here and what grows well, and what should be the diet of somebody who lives here," said Ann Louhela, coordinator for the Great Basin Basket CSA, which is based in Fallon. "If you hate beets, beets are still going to be

there.”

Participants of CSA pay for weekly deliveries of produce. Boxes may have close to a dozen items. Prices and sizes of boxes vary, but can be as low as \$21/week. Supplements for fruit can be added through some CSAs. In some cases, a supplement of tomatoes can be added or wheat grass or some other specialty.

In larger communities like the Bay Area, boxes arrive at an individual’s house.

For the Great Basin Basket, South Shore participants are still being gathered so a drop-off can be local instead of someone needing to bring it up from the Carson Valley.

Natural Trading Company, a CSA whose farm is in Penryn off Interstate 80, has drop-offs in Incline Village, Kings Beach, Tahoe City, Truckee and three locations on the South Shore.

Melanie Greene of South Lake Tahoe has been a member of the Natural Trading Company CSA for a handful of years.

“You are eating with the season. That is something people have to get used to,” Greene said. “You are eating more nutritious food. It makes you eat more creatively. I have great dinner parties.”

She finds the shipments less expensive than buying organic produce at the grocery store. Plus, it’s driven a shorter distance than the average 1,500 miles produce travels from farm to kitchen.



Great Basin
Basket
workers.

With the large bounty that arrives, friends often share a box.

Each CSA is different – it depends what grows in the area where it's located. The variety also depends on the number of farms involved in the cooperative. With Great Basin, Lattin Farms is the primary supplier of produce, but a number of other farms are also part of it. This contrasts with Natural Trading Company, which has the loan farm run by Bryan Kaminsky and Caren Hamilton and their 12-year-old daughter.

Some CSAs allow participants to request to opt out of a certain vegetable. Others say give it to a neighbor.

Most participants say it's like unwrapping a present each week because they don't know what's inside.

Both of these CSAs identify what the produce is if it might not be commonly known, sometimes offer tips how to cook it and provide full recipes on occasion.

Most CSA participants aren't familiar with everything that shows up each week. But that's also a nice thing because a CSA can provide things a grocery may opt not to supply.

Kohlrabi and some of the squash were new to Greene.

Nicole Zaborsky, who helps coordinate the South Shore effort for Natural Trading Company, said mizuna, a Japanese green had her scrambling to figure out what to do with it.

Zaborsky said meeting the farmers who grow her food has been an incredible experience.

"It is picked the day before so you can't beat that," Zaborsky said. "They started doing poultry this past fall, which was phenomenal. We got our Thanksgiving turkey through them."

Roommates Shana Gross and Taylor Farnum have been members of both these CSAs.

As a vegetarian, Gross likes Great Basin a bit more because of the variety that comes from the ability to tap into multiple farms. Great Basin also extends its season farther into the fall.

The thing about CSAs is that it's hard to join one once the season has begun. Deliveries often start in April and run through early fall.

Most of the CSA participants are fans of farmers markets. But some find it difficult to leave work to shop there or they use the farmers market to fill in any gaps the box may have left.

For more information about Natural Trading Company, [click here](#). For Great Basin Basket information, [click here](#).