

Fort Collins Colorado CSA Guide

Dan Moore



<http://coloradocsas.info>

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I'd like to thank all the farmers and ranchers who are out growing and raising the food we all enjoy.

*The cover image is courtesy of Carl Wycoff, and can be found here:
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/carlwwycoff/3954013472/>*

Thanks to my wife for always encouraging me to follow my passion.

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What is a CSA

CSA, which stands for Community Supported Agriculture, is a system for helping farmers sell direct to consumers. Consumers pay at the beginning of the season, when the farmer needs capital most (for seeds, fertilizer and other seasonal startup costs), and receive farm raised goods later that year, typically on a weekly or monthly schedule. CSA programs are also called farm shares, because consumers are buying a share of the farm's production. There is also an element of risk sharing—the crop is poor, share members agree to receive less; the converse is also true—the farm produces a bumper crop, share members will get more.

There are a wide variety of CSAs available. In Colorado alone, I have found over 100 active CSAs, selling farm produced goods ranging from vegetables to meat to flowers to garlic to soap (the vast majority of CSAs, however, produce vegetables). Local Harvest, a nationwide CSA listing site, has over 4800. Share sizes can vary too—some farms sell only one size, while others have small, medium and large shares.

Once you've joined a CSA, you pick up your share once a week or month from the farm or another designated location. CSAs happen during prime growing season (in Colorado, they tend to run from June to October, but every type of share and farm is different).

Why join a CSA

There are many reasons to join a CSA or farm share. From the consumer's perspective:

- The typical CSA farmer is happy to answer questions about their growing practices, giving you more insight into how your food is grown.
- You are helping to support a local farmer; this includes keeping land in agricultural use, maintain cultural knowledge of small scale farming and strengthening the local farming community. on of small scale agricultural knowledge.
- You get to enjoy different fruits and vegetables than you might normally have picked at the store (I learned of a love for turnips, myself).
- You don't have to visit the grocery store, or at least not as often.
- In some cases, you get to visit the farm, meet the staff who is providing your food.
- Buying local helps the local economy.
- Your food is super fresh—often picked hours before you get it.
- Your food will taste better—carrots and tomatoes in particular stand out as far better tasting.
- You'll eat more vegetables. (You might give some away.)
- You'll cook more.
- You'll save money, compared to the farmer's market.
- You are more connected to the seasons—you will eat greens in the spring and tomatoes in the fall.
- Finally, you are helping to support a local farmer (worth a second mention).

The main reason that farmers do it is because it allows them to get capital when they need it and don't have much of anything to sell (early spring). It also connects them to a community and is more profitable than selling to stores.

CSAs are not perfect for everyone, however. Here are some reasons to skip signing up for a farm share:

- If you don't like to cook, you might want to avoid CSAs that provide meat or produce, though a milk, fruit or honey share might be acceptable.
- If you don't have time to cook, as well as pick up and process produce, I'd stay away from produce shares.
- If you don't have the ability to pay hundreds of dollars for a share at the beginning of the season, a share might be difficult to buy, but check with farmer—some have programs for under privileged families.
- If you travel or eat out more than 50% of the time, then you'll miss pickups or have spoiled food in your fridge.
- If you have no time to pick up your share, you'll want to see if farms close to you have home delivery options.

If you are interested in a farm share, here is some information to help you take the next step.

- Signup season runs from January to May. Some farms pro-rate if you join later, others sell out in February. Find a farm close to you or one that delivers to your city. You can use ColoradoCSAs.info for this, if you live in Colorado, otherwise I'd try Localharvest.org.
- Talk to multiple farmers and get member references if possible. Each CSA farm is different and talking to existing members is a great way to find out if a particular program will work for you.
- Start small. Get the smallest share you think will be worth your time, as sometimes the amount of food you receive and have to eat in a week can be overwhelming.

Sample CSA Listing

Info	
Phone	Phone number, if provided
Web	CSA farm website, if provided
Email	Email address, if provided
Address	Farm address, if provided

Sold out for the year: If this is present, this means that at the time the book was generated, this farm had no more shares left for sale. It is always worth contacting the farmer, because they may decided to grow more or have a waitlist.

Pickups in: Cities where the farm has pickups (locations you can pick up your share at).

Share types offered: What kind of good is included in the share. Produce, meat, honey, garlic, and milk are among the types of food you can buy using CSA.

Share Type	Description	Length	Price	Notes
Share 1 Type	Description	Length	Price	Notes
Share 2 Type	Description	Length	Price	Notes

Growing Methods: Any specific types of growing methods that a farmer uses. Examples include:

- organic ([certified organic by the USDA¹](#))
- organic methods (follow organic methods, but has no certification)
- certified biodynamic ([certified by Demeter USA²](#))
- biodynamic (follows biodynamic methods, no certification)
- [certified naturally grown³](#)
- neighborhood supported (where a farm is embedded in residential community)

Other services provided: If the farm provides meat or eggs without a membership commitment, this is outlined here.

Home delivery: If this is available, it's noted here.

General Notes: Notes, if any about the farm, share, or other programs offered.

More details: Link to more details on ColoradoCSAs.info, including price and user rating.

Most recently updated: The date at which this information was most recently reviewed.

¹<http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop>

²<http://demeter-usa.org/about-biodynamic-agriculture/>

³<http://www.naturallygrown.org/>