



HOW TO  
REAP  
— the —  
BOUNTY  
— of —  
COMMUNITY  
SUPPORTED  
*agriculture*



Illustration by Mary Kate McDevitt

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**C**OMMUNITY SUPPORTED Agriculture (CSA) is the gawky term for a feel-good undertaking: Members purchase a subscription “share” in a farm, and then at weekly pickup locations they receive boxes—or bags, or baskets—of just-harvested produce and

sometimes other staples, including eggs, cheese, or meat. It gives consumers a chance to meet farmers, helps kids understand where food comes from and what grows in which seasons, and often acquaints buyers with lesser-known but lovable vegetables like kohlrabi (a versatile root vegetable).

Our temperate climate obviously supports long growing spells and diverse bounty: The earthly delights in your CSA may include asparagus, radishes, onions, and strawberries in the spring; tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, okra, blueberries, and figs through the summer; and greens, sweet potatoes, winter squash, turnips, beets, and apples come autumn.

As with farmers markets, the blossoming interest in local, sustainable foods has inspired an increasing number of CSAs. According to Atlanta-based nonprofit Georgia Organics, CSAs in the state jumped from fifty in 2009 to 174 in 2012, with nearly half of those in the greater metro area and North Georgia. You can find a complete list at [localfoodguide.georgiaorganics.org](http://localfoodguide.georgiaorganics.org) (search by category, then select “farms” and “CSAs”). In most cases the farmers select your product mix, but a couple of programs allow choice.

Over the last year, we subscribed to five different CSAs to compare prices, pickup locations, and styles. Tussles in the office over who was snagging the fragrant cantaloupe and who took home the gorgeous bunch of rainbow chard became a highlight of the week. —DEBORAH GEERING