

7 Years of CSA Farming with Profits with Daniel Brisebois and Emily Board

Partners Daniel Brisebois and Emily Board, who form 2/5 of the Quebec based Tourne-Sol Cooperative Farm, again captivated the audience with their straight-forward and transparent reveal of how their CSA works.

While the farm attends Farmers Market weekly in St. Anne de Bellevue, CSA is their main source of income at 55%. They also now have a seed company, and offer a catalogue.

They offer all the “standard” veggies, cabbage, carrots, potatoes, etc and many less common varieties. But advise – be careful not to put in too many bunches of greens! They offer kale only 2x per season. Generally, everything is washed before it goes out. Tourne-Sol offers their salad mix each week in the first 3-4 weeks, then lettuces –head and leaf -during the middle weeks – and then salad mix again in the final 3-4 weeks of the season.

They keep track of share value weekly, and try to add 10-15% above value each week as a bonus for CSA Members --as they pay in advance.

They aim to have full baskets from the very beginning of the year. To make them full, early baskets are made up of transplants and medicinal plants. They also have surplus things for sale at the drop points: other farmer’s products as well as extra veggies from their own farm.

Later in the season, they also offer carrots, beets, onions etc in bulk: 10lb and 20 lb bags. Pre-order works best for these storage crops –orders are taken just before harvest – 1-2 weeks beforehand.

Also at end of season, the Farm offer a Double Share Basket – which includes storage roots, potatoes, kale, garlic, herbs and other items the Member may wish to put away for winter.

Their CSA membership is at 260 weekly shares, one half is picked up at the farm and the remaining is delivered to drop spots.

Their shares are “market style” –ie not pre-made; members choose their own items from bulk bins and take home their share in their own baskets. A list of what goes into the share that week is posted at the Drop Location.

Generally, the Farm uses Bulk measurement (for example: a quart of tomatoes) rather than using a scale. (I.e. A pound of tomatoes)

Carrots are done in bulk, not bunched, for the CSA. However for market, they’re bunched in the field – for efficiency and speed.

They always have an “exchange” basket available during CSA pickup; it’s an easy way to keep people happy and offer choices and at the same time it gives the farm a good idea of what’s popular.

Tourne-Sol has about a 75% retention rate of CSA Members year to year. They intend to cap their operation at about 300 shares.

Annual Share price – Broken Down: ---

Cost of delivery	\$26.78
Vegetables	\$482.00
Admin Fee	20.00
Equiterre Fee	18.00

Total Cost of Share

Infrastructure and Tools

Tourne-Sol has a 20'x96' oil-heated greenhouse which they split in half with a hanging curtain – using one side for transplants and planting in-ground on the other side. They have two field tunnels; one used for hardening off transplants and the other devoted to tomatoes, peppers, etc.

They own a mechanized transplanter, but do some transplanting by hand, especially when growing on plastics.

They have both an earthway seeder and a Jang Seeder; the jang seems to work better for carrots and brochilli. For larger applications - cover crops - they use a large seedrill.

Row cover is used extensively and is effectively anchored with sandbags.

The have an extensive irrigation system, with sprinklers, using 30psi about 15' each side. They have a Cold Room, which helps in planning the Harvest.

Members help with specific projects through the season: for example: there's a "Call out" for helpers during garlic harvest.

On pickup day, the farm offers a "pick your own flowers" for free.

They also have "pick your own peas and pick your own beans" (for a fee) on pick up day. Several special events – Activity Days – are held during the season:

Garlic Braiding Workshop
Kids Day
Violin Concert
Open House Day.

They issue one newsletter per month – and will launch a blog this year.

Client base is split 50/50 English/French. They maintain both a website and facebook page.

<http://www.fermetournesol.qc.ca>

20% of their seed comes from the farm; OP= open pollinated

OP plants are varieties that grow true from seed. This means they are capable of producing seeds from this season's plants, which will produce seedlings that will be just like the parent plant.

Much work and research must continue to encourage and assure that open pollinated cultivars are available.

They work great for cukes and many other vegetables. However, hybrids do better in the field where they are less likely to split, etc.