

***It's that time of year! Renew your CSA share from Bakers' Acres for fresh, local, certified organic produce all season.***



Dear [first name],

I want to thank you for your past support for the farm, and I am writing to invite you back to Bakers' Acres for our 2017 season! It would be great to see your name on the sign-up list again, and if you're planning to join us, I hope you're looking forward to boxes full of nutritious, delicious, seasonal, hand-picked, fresh-from-our-farm certified organic produce.



I owe all of you current and former Community Supported Agriculture customers a hearty update on farm happenings, now that the farm has reached its 5<sup>th</sup> year of operation and achieved aggressive size and scale goals, thanks to your support.



You've helped one of the many beginning farmers of my generation get started on the land, a struggle discussed from coast to coast these days at a time when legacy CSA farms are shuttering their doors, retiring after decades of being the go-to sources for local, clean food. It's more important than ever for my farm to fulfill the need in our community for certified organic food and a connection to the land in which it's grown. This coming season will be the first in which I can focus 100% on food production, and it feels great. I am more excited about this year than I've been about any step along the journey so far. Thank you for being a part of it.

Your commitment to Bakers' Acres has made it possible for the farm to:

- Begin, and transform a conventionally farmed rye field, deadened and for want from years of row crops and soil erosion, into rich, healthy, living soils that now create nutrient-dense food free of synthetic chemicals and fertilizer.
- Enable a beginning farmer (me) to learn how to produce 3+ acres of annual vegetables that will grow here and be eaten here in our small communities, leading the way toward better food security and minimizing food miles.
- Expand and stabilize a level of production that serves 70 families in Central Minnesota and can finally, in 2017, pay a living wage to the Farm Manager. At a \$22K salary this year, up \$6K each year since I started earning my income solely from the farm in 2014, it's still about 10 cents shy of the Stearns County living wage (\$10.66/hour)...but it's so close! I'll consider that an accomplishment.
- Sell out every year, enabling us to cease deliveries to the Twin Cities and now serve only Central Minnesota!
- Achieve organic certification two years in a row and become a Minnesota Agriculture Water Quality Certified farm.
- Obtain a second hoop house which will double the production of early greens and late-season tomatoes and spinach (in 2018); build a livestock shed to house animals and raw manure safely away from fresh and raw produce production areas; and concrete a third section in the barn to ease our produce washing and packing processes.
- Attract Whiskey Creek Honey's apiaries away from conventional fields (where they lost half of their bees) and establish their home on our farm, where the bees buzz and pollinate happily and healthfully – especially in the buckwheat cover crop and zucchini blossoms!
- Install ponds and 900' of berm and swale on contour to allow rainwater to soak



slowly into the soil across our hillsides, rather than swoop down and across our fields. Instead of viewing water as a liability like many farms do (think drain tile and eroding stream banks), we can keep every drop of water that lands on our farm, on our farm, and stop it from dragging topsoil and nutrients off of the land and into the neighboring lake. So far, this new habitat development has attracted the biodiversity we were hoping for: a family of pheasants, hundreds of frogs, and the return of native plants and wildlife. We will expand this project in 2017 and invite the public to learn more about saving our groundwater and the quality of our lakes and rivers.

- Haul only one truckload of plastic garbage to the landfill after five years of growing (that’s amazing!) thanks to you customers returning CSA boxes and us minimizing our use of plastic mulch.
- Buy a Farmall Super C tractor and several new (to us) / used implements to improve weed management, transplanting, and harvest efficiency.
- Work with a nutrient management consultant in partnership with the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service to apply the right amount of fertilizer. Annually, we buy \$1500 of natural fertilizers that zero in on exactly what our crops need, rather than over-apply nitrogen and phosphorus, which can pollute our drinking water.
- Hire and train some of our community’s best and brightest young land stewards, eager to learn about organic food production, responsible family farm operations, soil health, and using food as medicine.
- Accomplish a list of financial, social, and environmental goals I set out to achieve through the Land Stewardship Project’s Journey person program several years back. (All of them!)
- And, last but not least, earn the legal ability to live on the farm, which will improve the operations (and my sanity) in such indescribably positive ways! (I mean, c’mon, air conditioning and a place to cook myself and the crew some lunch?! Yes, please!). Being an organic farm had a lot to do with this – our township wrote goals decades ago aimed at securing something like 25% of its agricultural land in organic production. We’ll get there!



So thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for making this all possible – for enabling me to be the change I want to see in the world, in a way that feels ethical, responsive, compassionate, and hopefully leads by example.

As you’ve helped lead this growing movement toward building what we need – regenerative agricultural methods (not just sustainable), healthy soils, common sense water management strategies, and a slow food system based on community needs not corporate profits – our commitment to you continues.

This season we plan to:

- Bring forth the “community” in CSA. By shifting the delivery schedule on Tuesdays, I can be at the farm during the pick-up timeframe and see some of you every week! For others, I plan to be at the locations



for the pick-up timeframe during one of the first couple of weeks. I hope to see all of you at least once this season!

- Bring back some FUN to the farm! You've made it clear we are fulfilling a need here in Central Minnesota, and we are ready to host some events again so you can spend time on the land where your food is grown. Mid-June, we'd like to invite CSA customers out for a Pea Pick and glean the field, eating and harvesting as you go. The annual Hoedown with karaoke in the barn and a bonfire will return when the green fields turn to gold, along with the family Pumpkin Pick and farm tour to celebrate the Harvest Moon in the fall. We'll also be working with our favorite chefs, brewers, and musicians in hopes of hosting another Dinner On The Farm event with live music. We would love to see you at one or all of the events.
- Put my dad on the payroll! He retired last July, so he can now help me better manage the fields, equipment, construction projects, and livestock.
- Hire back Laura, our intern who prepared recipes for each box in 2016, to join the harvest crew this year. We're also currently interviewing some other stellar candidates who are passionate about non-GMO food and working on a small farm.
- Continue responding to your survey feedback – for example, we selected new seed varieties for melons and napa cabbage after trials failed, and we'll bring back old varieties we've learned your families love, like purple, yellow, and red carrots.
- Repeat and refine the same plan we used last year – pack 50 CSA boxes each week mid-June through mid-October, and sell early- and late-season wholesale. That is the highest number of customers we've served, and it will be the highest this farm serves for the foreseeable future; our systems are set up to accommodate that exact volume of vegetables, from walk-in cooler space, to wagon sizes, to our greenhouse size, to delivery vehicle, to labor budget, to field size.
- Last but not least – whip those fields into shape! We tweak things from year to year, and some things are improvements, and some are mistakes; each winter, I reflect on what worked and didn't work. In this coming season, we're prepping for many small improvements, like reverting back to 12" row spacing for our direct-seeded crops instead of 18" because our cultivator does a better job of killing and burying baby weeds the original way. It's unfortunate we can't make adjustments like that more than once a year – but once it's planted, you can't really do much about it until the next season! I am excited to use the best tactics we've learned for our field management and make this farm run like a well-oiled machine.

Personally, I am looking forward to a season of re-grounding myself at the farm, regaining some balance that I haven't had since I started the busy CSA-farmer-life in 2012. I will be identifying recipes for the CSA boxes on my own again, dedicating more time to indulging in the food we grow and the delights it brings to our tables as we eat through the seasons together. We will raise more meat birds, holiday turkeys, and laying hens this summer, and likely get another set of beef steers. (Let me know if you'd like more info on meat sales.) I might also be adding a pony or two to the pastures to give my niece and nephew some more outdoor adventure when they visit. That means I might also need to find an old trail horse for myself. ;) I hope this goal to assert more balance into my farmlife will also allow



me a little more time to write sincerely to you customers – I miss sharing tales of all the joys overflowing from this land. This is hard work, what we do here, but someone’s gotta do it! And I couldn’t be happier, participating in our world in this way. I am lucky to be serving customers who highly value this good work.



**Today, I am asking you to renew your support for our farm.** We would love to see you on the sign-up list again, and because we’re exiting the Minneapolis market, we have some openings! Your CSA purchase will go right to paying for fertilizer, boxes, fuel, and supplies for the 2017 season.

Returning customers – you – can reserve your 2017 CSA share at a discount until March 1st: \$365 for a Small share (9 boxes / every other week) and \$575 for the Large share (18 boxes / every week) with a deposit of \$100.



We will continue using the large brown boxes (larger than the boxes we used our first couple of years) – each box is approximately 12x12x12” and, as you already know, filled with everything nutritious that is ready to harvest that week, from basil to scallions to tomatoes, cucumbers, raspberries, potatoes, head lettuce, and so much more! We’ve averaged 10 items per box over the last couple of seasons.

Online orders can be made at [www.bakersacresfarm.com](http://www.bakersacresfarm.com), or, you can use the enclosed order form. Prices will increase after March 1<sup>st</sup>. And if you can’t join us this year, we understand! Feel free to share the enclosed brochure with a neighbor or friend, or, consider rating Bakers’ Acres on Facebook, Google, LocalHarvest, or Yelp and leave feedback about the things you liked during your CSA experience.



For those of you who already reserved your share, thank you! Those early purchases help tremendously as we begin our seed orders – it’s hard to believe it, but we spend \$1,500-\$2,000 just on seeds each season, and we pay out lots of greenhouse and transplanting labor before we see the first CSA box packed in June!



To those of you who were our gracious customers in our first years, and especially those of you who’ve been with us every year since – you are very special to me, having cheer-led the farm through its infancy. I look now at how far we’ve come and am thrilled to see things working like they should. We learn something from every season, we do better every season, and we grow a little stronger every season. Thank you for being the support that makes this all possible. Thank you for being eaters who will never let the food system get the better of you and who are the leaders of change. Your support of a Community Supported Agriculture farm inspires people around you – you are what instills hope in me for a better future for our livelihoods, communities, our planet’s health, and the places children will play. You are wonderful! It was and is my pleasure to serve you and our shared land.



*Proud to be Your Farmer,*

Lisa Baker  
Farm Manager, Bakers’ Acres

