

## **Diversified Winter Production at Kilpatrick Family Farm**

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Winter production is very important for us. In fact, we start our planning for the next year's winter production in December, and are planting from the middle of April on for our winter sales. Our sales are a mix between CSA and Farmer's market which requires not only great diversity but also large -scale production. There are several categories of what we produce for our winter sales:

**Root crops-** We produce a huge array of roots. From Carrots to kohlrabi, to parsnips and diakon we grow pretty much all of them. Root crops are the bread and butter of winter markets- while not costing a lot to produce they make up a significant portion of our sales. Our goal is to have mature, prime crops to harvest in October and November. This allows them to sweeten up from frost and take advantage of ideal growing conditions in the fall, and us to finish with weekday summer markets before harvesting becomes a major endeavor. We store them dirty in plastic feed sacks and then barrel wash fresh each week so they look the freshest and brightest- this does make a difference in how many we sell. Sweet potatoes we harvest late September and store in an insulated garage at around 55 degrees.

**Storage crops-** These are crops like Leeks, Brussel sprouts, squashes, cabbage. Most of these are stored in the same root cellar with our roots; however, they have a different harvest schedule. Leeks and brussels we harvest more toward the end of November or even into December and they are placed upright in plastic bulb crates. This allows for adequate airflow around them so they don't go bad in storage. We grow a wide array of squash, but only plan on storing butternuts as they keep the best and sell well. We grow 2 types of cabbage- storage cabbage which we cut and put in bags in the root cellar and winter cabbage which we just leave in the field until we need it.

**Storage greens-** We plant lettuce, spinach, boc choy, chinese cabbage, kale and mache as late as we can and still get full size plants and then harvest and store them. Depending on the green we can get as much as 3 months of storage before they turn yellow. Greens that are planted this late and are subjected to multiple frosts tend to go into hibernation and concentrate sugars in their leaves therefore lasting much longer than a summer planting. Storing greens allows us to bunch up our greenhouse greens and therefore have a higher production of greens year round.

**Greenhouse greens-** We plant a mixture of spinaches, mesclun, chard, asian greens, herbs, and arugula for deep winter sales, seeding most the middle of October. Greenhouse greens are the Lindt truffles/ loss leaders of winter production. They are expensive to produce, taste awesome, and draw the customer in to buy other products. Our goal with winter greens is to bridge the gap between the storage greens and the overwintered greens in our mini-tunnels. One specialty green that we produce year-round in our prop house are microgreens, which are quick and relatively easy to grow.

Other crops- recently, we have started to freeze/process some of the summer's bounty. We planted more strawberries this year than we knew we could sell and froze 600 quarts- this will allow us to have strawberries all winter for our customers. We also froze tomatoes, rhubarb, raspberries and ginger. Our seconds on winter squash are baked and frozen in quart containers to be sold after we run out of squash in March. We also planted extra peppers and tomatoes and made our own salsa which we canned. These crops allow us to extend the summer bounty and bring unusual and exciting crops to market in the dead of winter.

Our goal is to have between 20 and 25 different crops on the table at any one time. As the winter rolls on and we start to run out of individual crops we will release other from storage to keep interest and have a full array. For example, we will keep the winter radishes in storage until we run out of regular red radishes and diakon. We will also keep different varieties of potatoes in storage and then release them in January as something new and exciting in the middle of the winter to get people to come in.

Winter production can be a great and profitable aspect of farming and also a great way to connect and stay in touch with your customer base year-round. Please follow the below URL or scan the QR code to access the custom resource page which has much more information on varieties, dates of planting and harvesting, storage, the presentation slides and other relevant resources.

[www.kilpatrickfamilyfarm.com/NEVF](http://www.kilpatrickfamilyfarm.com/NEVF)

