

# City Residents Pick Up the Season's First CSA Deliveries

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By [Julia Botero](#)

This week, [Golden Earthworm Organic Farm](#) trucks overflowing with leafy collard greens and plump sweet strawberries delivered their first shipments to Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) drop-off locations in Queens. Back in 1991, [Roxbury Farm](#) in Kinderhook, New York was the only farm to offer up its produce to city residents, according to [Just Food](#), a nonprofit that helps connect farmers with residents in New York neighborhoods. This year, some 32,000 New Yorkers are members of 105 CSAs across the city that receive produce from 70 local farmers.

Individuals in want of farm fresh vegetables become CSA members by paying farmers the costs of seeding, planting, growing and harvesting a crop in February and March. Then, roughly each week from June through November, farms deliver a box full of recently harvested food to locations around the city. Members are given a window of time to pick up their boxes from their CSA location.

Paula Lukats, of Just Food, said Harlem and the Lower East Side had the highest concentration of CSA members. Fourteen separate farms provide the neighborhoods' residents with an array of vegetables, meat and dairy. Other neighborhoods that have a high number of CSAs are the Upper West and Upper East Side; both of them get their first CSA shipments next week.

Lukats said that the CSA exchange helped create a supportive relationship between CSA members and farms over time. City dwellers get fresh products and farmers feel secure that there's a market for the season's crop.

"Taking up the urban market was the only way we could make a profit," said Chris Cashen, a farmer for [The Farm at Miller's Crossing](#). His Columbia County farm in upstate New York has been providing vegetables to CSA members in Flatbush, Fort Greene and Long Island City for the past five years. "Once we signed up, we jumped from 150 members to almost 900 members."

Cashen said the upfront CSA member payments ensured he would be compensated for his labor costs.

"As a farmer, when you sell wholesale, you put the money down upfront and hope everything works out," he said. "With CSAs, you know you're protected even if you happen to lose a crop because of something like inclement weather."

Unlike [Greenmarket Farmers Markets](#), which are another popular place for city dwellers to pick up produce, CSA members get their weekly green bounty from one farm instead of from several.

"Many of the farmers who sell their products at Greenmarket also run CSAs of their own," said Lukats of Just Food. "Greenmarket and CSAs have more of a symbiotic relationship than a competitive one."

A spokesperson for Greenmarket Farmers Markets confirmed that CSA shipments didn't cut into their farmers' profits.

CSAs also make affordable, fresh produce available in communities that don't have them.

"While options for healthy produce have increased in New York City, there are still many communities where it remains a challenge to find fresh healthy food — not to mention food that is locally produced and sustainably grown," said Lukats.

Overall, most CSA members are on board with supporting local farms and getting fresh food out of the deal. But it's a known entity that the lack of variety in some CSA shipments can be challenging.

"At one point we had a whole lot of turnips, radishes and kohlrabi," said Patrick Guyer, a member of the [Brooklyn Bridge CSA](#). "I had to Google 'kohlrabi' to find a few recipes. I had no idea what to do with it."

This year, many CSA members will also be getting their farm shipments late due to this year's wet spring.

"This year, members will be reminded that this isn't a grocery store; it's an

individual farm," said Cashen of The Farm at Miller's Crossing. "Some things we can't control."

### **Did you know...**

While still making sure farmers get paid for their bounty, some CSAs have been able to develop flexible payment options such as food stamp use, sliding scale pricing, and payment plans.

In addition to their fresh farm products, some CSA members can learn about their farms, acquire cooking tips, and meet other farm-supporting folk at their pick-up spots. Check with your CSA for details.

Some CSAs maintain their own Web sites, online forums and blogs, such as [Central Brooklyn CSA](#) and [Turf CSA](#) in the Bronx.

The [Southside CSA](#) in Williamsburg is one of the CSAs that insists each "share family" volunteer 12 hours of community work over seven months by helping sort vegetables, serve food at the Greenpoint SoupKitchen and contribute to the community by, among other things, planning a farm trip or updating the CSA's blog.