



FOOD SAFETY WHILE BUILDING COMMUNITY

LOVE IS LOVE FARM

FARMERS: Demetrius Milling and Joe Reynolds

LOCATION: Just outside the Atlanta city limits

LAND BASE: 5 acres with about 2.5 in vegetables

MARKETING: 80-90% CSA with some restaurant and wholesale accounts and an annual plant sale

EMPLOYEES: 2 co-managers, 3 seasonal part-time staff, one summer part-time staff

FOOD SAFETY BASICS: No certifications requested and qualified exempt from FSMA

When the co-housing concept that is now East Lake Commons was discussed in 1997, the developer and community decided to designate most of the land in the center of the property as a farm and to concentrate the 67 houses, shared common house, and parking areas to the west. That original community decided that the farm would be certified organic, and a committee of community members continues to play an important role in the farm to this day. The farmers meet with the committee each month, the community members lend a hand, and some of the community members buy CSA shares. In turn, the farm gets a land lease and infrastructure for one dollar per year.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS ON THE FARM

Demetrius Milling, one of the co-farmers, appreciates how the community advocates for the farm, watches over the land, and enjoys access to the general farm area at all times. This relationship, along with CSA workshares and other visitors to the farm, could pose some food safety challenges, but Love is Love Farm has taken some steps to try to mitigate those risks:

- All community members are instructed to walk only on the clear paths around the perimeter of the fields, never through the fields.
- All dogs are to be kept on leash and only walked on paths. As the community and the food safety rules have grown over the years, this has become more routine and dogs are always leashed. Love is Love Farm doesn't really struggle with wildlife, other than rabbits and squirrels. Signs are posted to remind people to remove dog poop.
- The community has a designated smoking area, far from the farm fields. All other shared areas in the community are non-smoking.
- This co-housing community is great for kids, but children



aren't permitted on the farm unsupervised.

- Three handwashing stations are placed around the farm and visitors, employees, and all workshares are instructed on how and when to properly wash their hands.

WORKSHARES, STAFF, AND VISITORS

In addition to employees, Love is Love has workshare members who reduce the cost of their CSA by volunteering on the farm, a system that CSA farms have traditionally used. The workshare members are trained using the same methods as the employees because they work alongside one another doing the same tasks. Farm managers are almost always working with the workshare members. The food safety aspects of this training include sick policies, hygiene practices, what not to harvest, a rule about not touching cell phones, how to clean and sanitize, review of the packhouse tasks, and more.

All volunteers, CSA members, and workshares are asked not to come to the farm if they're feeling sick. If it is possible and their illness is mild, employees can come to work but not contact produce.

Eating is restricted to a designated lunch table outside of the pack area, and no glass bottles are allowed on farm. The community common house includes a restroom that is cleaned regularly, and all farm workers and visitors use that toilet. There are three other handwashing stations around the farm.

As Love is Love has many visitors, they'd like to improve their visitor-logging system, but have yet to come up with a system that feels convenient enough to implement consistently.

CSA MEMBERS

Love is Love has an on-farm market-style CSA pick up which takes place in the open air packhouse. They cover the tables with clean washable tablecloths to protect the shares and wash them after every use. If a member can't make it to pick-up, they're allowed to enter the cooler to retrieve a bagged share on a specific shelf.

All CSA members sign an agreement which spells out specific rules about pick-ups, including: no dogs at pick-up; if you're sick, have someone else come for you or let us pack your CSA for you; wash your hands before pick-up, especially if you've been on your phone or touching a pet;

rules about clean shoes and other considerations when entering the cooler. Demetrius educates the members about food safety and why it is important. A mobile handwashing station is set up near the packhouse so it's convenient. The member check-in sheet serves as a visitor log on CSA pick-up days.

WASHING AND PACKING AREA

Love is Love Farm received a grant through the FoodWell Alliance to enhance their food safety practices. They used those funds to install municipal water taps in three places on the farm and to upgrade their packhouse. The packhouse has stainless steel tables, a place for clean and dirty bins to be stored separately, spray tables, a concrete floor, a four-basin stainless steel sink, and more. As with many improvements, Demetrius already wishes it were a little larger, but it has been great for the farm. Some of their other food safety practices are using separately colored bins for harvesting and clean produce, daily knife sanitation, and washing harvest bins and other totes after each use.

While building the packing space, the farm shifted from washing produce in tubs, or batch washing, to almost exclusively using spray tables with municipal water. Only arugula is regularly batch washed in the four-basin sink. Building the packing space has increased the shelf-life of their produce. Plus, it's more efficient for the farm!

