

# Merrymeeting Gleaners

## JANUARY NEWSLETTER



*Left to right: Paste tomatoes from Harvest Tide Organics poised to be roasted and pureed for sauce: one hundred pounds of Goranson Farm sweet potatoes fill the tilt skillet: the addition of red cabbage makes the coleslaw mix something to really smile about!*

### A WORD FROM THE GLEANING COORDINATOR

BY DAVE BAECHER

So long, 2023! Before I make broad generalizations about the gleaning year that was, I want to establish that, more so than data points and trends, my lasting impression of the year is formed by a series of snapshot images: muddy farm lanes, overloaded sedans, bountiful Sharing Table displays, produce rolling through the foodbank by the cart load, veggies boiling in the tilt skillet or shooting out of the food processor in shreds and the volunteers who made it all happen. It plays through my head like a movie montage: colorful, organic, chaotic and far too authentic to be distilled into any neat themes or conclusions.

Yes, I can be a bit of a sentimental sort... Though I also happen to be a sentimental sort who enjoys a good spreadsheet so, in the midst of my more dreamy reflections, I've also attempted to use some of the data from the year to surmise what made 2023 unique.

I haven't even been here for the whole year so I can't claim to have full knowledge, but here are the two main points that jumped out to me:

1. Gleaning totals were down 12% from 2022!
2. Volunteer hours were up 10% from 2022!

What's with the inverse correlation?

Yes, with the cool, rainy summer that we had, it isn't surprising that harvest totals were lower (I think I'm willing to argue that this growing season was at least 12% worse than 2022) but, given the less abundant conditions, I was interested (and excited) to see that volunteer engagement actually grew stronger in 2023. This particular uptick is primarily accounted for by the addition/growth of a couple value-adding shifts, in which we focused on enhancing the quality and utility of the produce we sent out.

Specifically, we added a produce sorting shift this year in which volunteers worked in the food bank bagging, bunching and grading produce before packing it in boxes for distribution to recipient organizations. This designated time allowed us to increase the diversity and quality of our offerings while catering to the specific preferences of each recipient.



Then, of course, we had two shifts a week in the Community Kitchen throughout the year with the dual missions of reducing food waste and making gleaned produce more user-friendly for food pantry guests.

In the summer, the bulk of our efforts were spent battling the inevitable seasonal gluts: feverishly chopping, blanching and freezing gleaned produce—sometimes, to be honest, without full consideration of its final use.

As we transition into winter, the hypothetical is becoming more and more real and we are now fully focused on final use! What was frozen is being

thawed to be used in soups and other value-added products and, of course, we are getting creative about how to incorporate our friendly neighborhood root vegetables.

The Gleaners actually started working in the kitchen in 2022 but it became a more consistent part of the schedule this year and the total processing output has gone by more than a factor of three!

So, if I may speak broadly, I'll say that 2023 was the year of adding value and I am very proud of the strides we made in that direction. And, if I have to make a resolution for '24, well, let's see if we can increase both quantity and quality this year!



*Left to right: a volunteer whittles away at our zucchini surplus by making zucchini noodles; a volunteer bravely contends with a napa cabbage from Growing to Give; trays of zucchini fries, green peppers and roasted eggplant headed for the flash freezer.*

## GLEANNING STATISTICS

# 51,436 lbs

2023 TOTAL

Finally, to summarize the work we have done in the kitchen this year in a bit of a collage, I leave you with many of our value-added product labels from 2023 (see following page).



### Mashed Sweet Potato

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

Made on: 1/2/24  
Use by: 1/8/24

*Ingredients:* sweet potato, **milk**, **butter**, 16 oz



### Sweet Potato Wedges

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

Made 12/19/23  
Use by 12/24/24

(for roasting or frying)



### Frozen Hashbrowns

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

Packaged 12/12/23  
Use by 06/12/23

*Ingredients:* shredded potatoes.



### Potato Latkes

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

Packaged 12/6/23  
Use by 12/12/23

*Ingredients:* potatoes, eggs, onions, flour, garlic scapes, baking powder, salt, pepper.



### Brussel Sprout Tops

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

Frozen 9/25/23  
Use by 7/5/24

10 oz



### Frozen Corn

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

Frozen on 9/27/23  
Use by 9/27/24

1 lb



### Diced Butternut Squash

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

Chopped on 12/8/23  
Use by 12/14/23

16 oz



### Potato Leek Soup

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

made on: 12/7/23  
use by: 12/13/23

*Ingredients:* Potato, Leek, **Heavy Cream**, **Butter**, Vegetable Stock, Garlic, Olive Oil, Bay Leaf, Thyme, Black Pepper, Salt



### Coleslaw Mix

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

Made 11/30/23  
Use by 12/5/23

12 oz.

*Ingredients:* cabbage, carrots, celery



### Frozen Broccoli

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

Frozen 9/15/23  
Use by 5/15/24

12 ounces



### Apple Pie Filling

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

made on:  
10/18/2023  
use by: 10/24/2023

*Ingredients:* Apples, Cinnamon, **Butter**, Corn Starch, Sugar



### Zucchini Noodles

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

Made on 9/12/23  
Use by 9/16/23

1 pound  
Simmer or saute for 2-3 minutes or eat raw



### Hot Pepper Pack

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

Packaged: 8/24/23,  
Use by: 4/24/24

*Cayenne, Jalapeño, Anaheim, Poblano*  
\*Keep Frozen\*



### Quick Pickles

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

Made on 8/16/23  
Eat by 8/23/23

\*keep refrigerated\*  
*Ingredients:* Cucumbers, Distilled White Vinegar, Water, Salt, Sugar, Dill, Garlic, Red Pepper Flakes, Mustard Seed



### Zucchini Fritters

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

Made on 8/10/23  
Use by 11/10/23

\*Keep Frozen\*  
*Ingredients:* zucchini, eggs, flour, garlic scapes, bread crumbs, salt, pepper, oregano, thyme.



### Shredded Cabbage

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

Made 8/1/23  
Use by 8/6/23

32 oz.

Keep Refrigerated



### Cauliflower Rice

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

Made on 7/12/23  
Use by 1/12/24

(1 pound)  
\*keep frozen  
\*thaw under refrigeration\*



### Garlic Scape Pesto

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

Made on 7/13/23  
Use by 1/13/24

\*keep frozen\*  
\*thaw under refrigeration\*  
*Ingredients:* garlic scapes, swiss chard, walnuts, goat cheese, olive oil, salt



### Mashed Butternut Squash

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

Made on 10/7/23  
Use by 8/7/23

\*keep frozen\*  
\*thaw under refrigeration\*



### Applesauce

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

6/28/2023, 16 oz.

*Ingredients:* Apples



### Frozen Rhubarb

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

6/26/2023

1.5 lbs



### Frozen Strawberries & Rhubarb

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

6/13/23

Celebrate springtime by using in a baked good, making a simple jam, or adding to a smoothie!



### Zucchini & Kohlrabi Fritters

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

Made on 7/25/23  
Use by 10/25/23

*Ingredients:* zucchini, kohlrabi, eggs, flour, garlic scapes, salt



### Coconut Curry Carrot Soup

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

4/24/2023

\*thaw under refrigeration\*

32 fl oz.



### Potato & Zucchini Soup

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

4/3/2023

*Ingredients:* potatoes, zucchini, vegetable stock, olive oil, onions, garlic, salt, pepper, spices



### Root Veggie Stew

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

3/20/23

*Ingredients:* potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots, parsnips, kale, swiss chard, collards, garlic, onion, vegetable broth, tomatoes, olive oil, spices



### Tomato Soup

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

2/7/2023

*Ingredients:* tomatoes, onions, garlic, olive oil, basil, salt, pepper, vegetable broth, half & half



### Winter Squash Soup

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

1/6/2023

*Ingredients:* winter squash, carrots, onions, garlic, spices, vegetable broth, maple syrup



### Smoothie Kit

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

5/18/2023

Strawberry, Blueberry, Banana  
Blend fruit along with your favorite liquid, yogurt, greens, etc!



### Many Veggie Italian Soup

Merrymeeting Gleaners  
at MCHPP

5/15/2023

*Ingredients:* carrots, onions, garlic, summer squash, bell peppers, tomatoes, potatoes, chickpeas, olive oil, vegetable broth, salt, spices