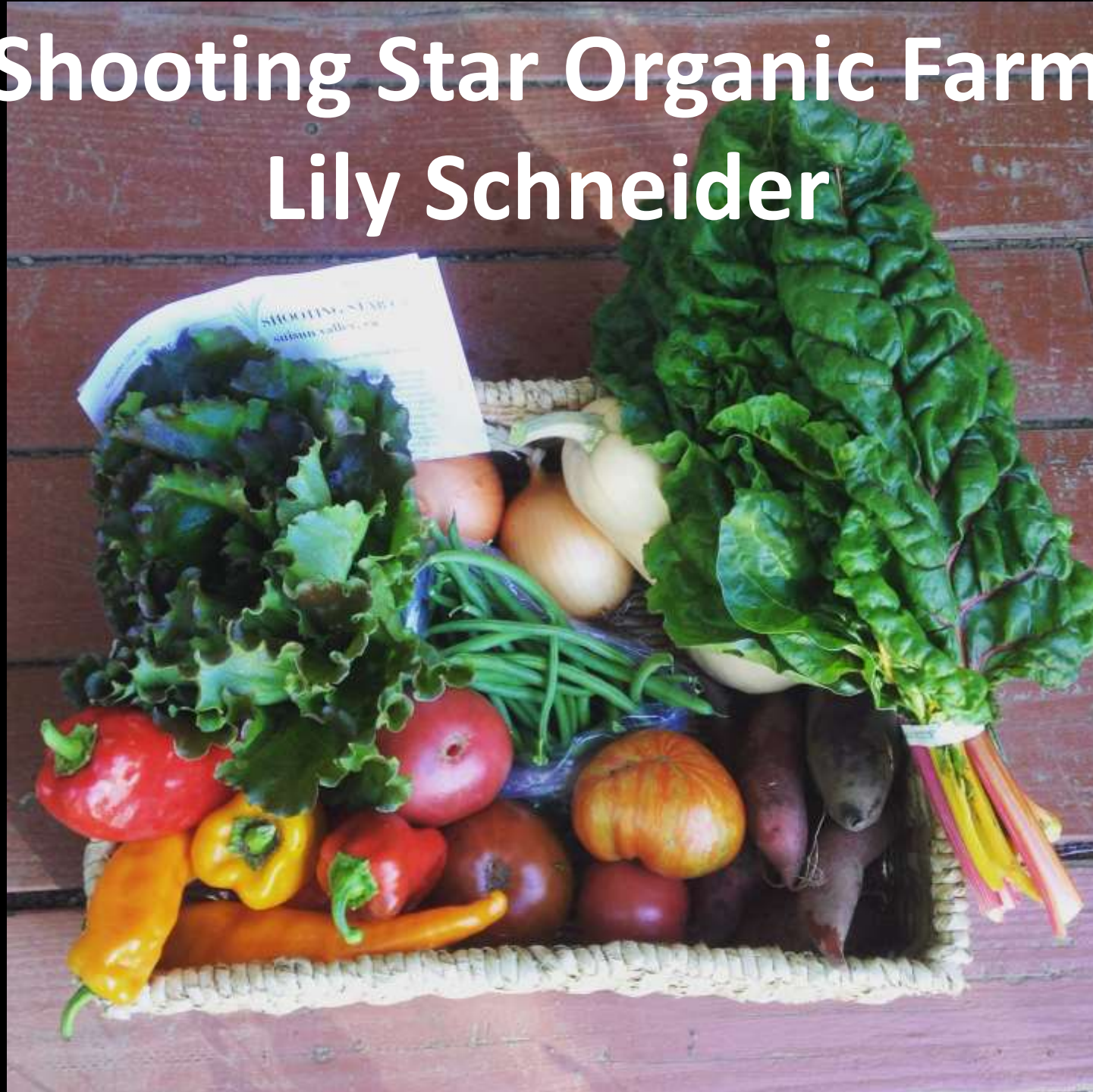


# Shooting Star Organic Farm

## Lily Schneider



# Our Farm

- Started in 2009
- Certified organic
- Located in Suisun Valley (Fairfield)
- 15 acres
- 35 different crops
- 3-5 seasonal employees
- Direct market sales:
  - CSA
  - Farmers Markets







# Beginnings

- Searched for land in Northern California
- Three important property requirements:
  - Good soil
  - Sufficient water
  - Easy access to markets (customers)
- What works for one farm may not work for another



# CSA

- CSA: started with 100 members in first year
  - Mostly people we knew
  - Relied heavily on personal connections
- Grew to 275 members
- Seasonal production May-Nov, 28 weeks
- Success was in differentiating our product from competition
  - Fresher, tastier, better in every way





# Farmers Markets

- We attend three weekly markets
- You will learn quickly what sells and what doesn't
- Can be highly competitive, depending on location



CHERRY TOMATOES  
\$14/basket  
\$11 for 3 baskets

CERTIFIED ORGANIC  
Black Zebra  
Green Zebra  
\$3/LB

CHERRY TOMATOES  
\$14/basket  
\$11 for 3 baskets

ALL ORGANIC  
GROWN ON  
DE



STRAWBERRIES  
SUPER SWEET.  
\$4.00/BSK  
OR  
3 BSKT for \$11  
CERTIFIED ORGANIC BY COOP



# Deciding what to produce

- What does your customer want?
  - NOT about what you want to grow
  - How are you different, why should people buy your product?
  - You need to believe your product is the best
- “You can be a bad farmer but you can’t be a bad marketer”
  - If you can’t sell it, don’t grow it

# Farm = Business

- Important to make decisions based on logic, not emotions
- Only sustainable if you are sustaining yourself (making money & quality of life)
- If not, you are subsidizing the cost of food with your labor
- Efficiency matters in EVERY aspect of business
  - Production, administration, marketing

# Planning and Financing

- Start with basic marketing plan and cash flow spreadsheet
- Look at numbers, do they work?

# Deciding sales outlets



# Your Story

- What is your 1-2 line pitch?
  - communicate who you are, why you are special, how you are different from competition
- People like farms, and they LOVE your personal story

# Networking

- Everyone you know is potential customer, advocate, farm mouthpiece
- Dedicated customers will advocate for you because they believe in your product

# Online Presence

- Basic website is mandatory
- Social media
  - Works for some, not for others
  - Choose one platform and do it well
  - Keep it farmy, personal touch
  - Relevant content & focus on what your followers like

# Crop planning

- Considerations – match production goals to marketing goals
  - Succession plantings
  - Sowing/seeding dates
  - Varieties
  - What does well in your area? Ask ask ask

# Keeping records

- You can't change what you don't record
  - Recordkeeping allows you to make strategic changes, not repeat same mistakes
- Planning = success
- Top three:
  - Crop plan
  - Sales receipts w/crop info
  - QuickBooks

# Challenges and Successes

- How to thrive in highly competitive market?
- Overproduction = more work, less money
- Found great group of customers, they promoted us

Questions?