Sharing Harvest Traditions
Micah Anderson, Seattle Tilth Farm Works' Education Manager

Harvest season is in full swing at the Seattle Tilth Farm Works (STFW) farm in Auburn. Harvest carts and baskets swell with ears of fresh golden corn, juicy red and purple tomatoes, slender green beans, and a dazzling array of delicious produce ready for market. This amazing bounty fills 52 Seattle Tilth CSA (community supported agriculture) boxes, stalls at the Columbia City and Madrona farmers markets, and shelves at Central Co-op. While relaxing after fulfilling another successful weekly harvest, several farmers share stories about harvest traditions from their past.

Grain harvests are especially significant in Ethiopia, where Akil Eshete was born. Teff, maize, wheat and barley are all important staples that farmers harvested by hand, pressured to bring it in safely before the rains. Farmers depended on help from the whole community and the host family always prepared a delicious meal to share, using freshly harvested ingredients. Tabitha Maina remembers harvesting maize, cabbage, broccoli and tomatoes by hand in the Central Provence in Kenya. On large farms, farm managers often relied on employees to complete the harvest, but in smaller villages, farmers still relied on their communities. Tabitha particularly enjoyed sharing mukimo – a dish made with potatoes, corn, greens and stew meat – paired with ugali – a staple made from maize – during harvest season.

In Somalia, Ramadhan Mugasa remembers the harvest season as a time of joyous celebration. After helping bring in the harvest, neighbors would jump, dance and sing together through the night. They would also share meals of ugali and gazali – a harvest specialty made with beans and corn – that was specially prepared by the host to share the harvest. The harvest season meant bright, red-stained fingertips for Janell Patterson.
In her early teens, Janell spent many summer days picking strawberries at local Bellingham farms. Janell enjoyed the fruits of her labor via a punch card and paycheck at the end of the week. If you are interested in sampling some of STFW’s current harvest, meeting and learning more about the farmers and their harvest traditions, please come see us at the Columbia City Farmers’ Market on Wednesdays, or Madrona Farmers’ Market on Fridays.