



Live Earth Farm (Com)Post

A weekly newsletter for the Live Earth Farm CSA Community

13th Harvest Week

July 24th – 30th, 2002

Season 7

What's in the box this week:

Strawberries
Asian stir-fry/mustard
greens
Lemon basil
Cucumbers
Garlic
Green beans
Lettuce
Onions
Blue and red potatoes
Sugar snap peas
Summer squash
Sungold cherry toma-
toes

(Carrots again next
week.)

and if you have an extra-fruit share:

Strawberries, raspber-
ries or blackberries

Soil -- the "ground" of our being. In response to Vaiva's inquiry whether the quality of the soil affects the nutritional value of the crops grown, I thought about the Banana Slug String Band's song "Dirt made my lunch", in which they so wonderfully praise dirt, i.e. soil, as the fundamental substance and source of our nourishment. "Thank you dirt, thanks a bunch...!" In our industrialized world, however, many people see earth as a filthy material that "soils" them. Often in our urban habitat, dominated by concrete and asphalt or carefully manicured lawns, we find ourselves separated from the source of life.

Accustomed to thinking of food as a packaged commodity supplied by the supermarkets, we forget that all our food comes from the earth. Today scientists are discovering that soil is filled with life. Every cubic inch teems with billions of microorganisms that play many different parts in the soils' cycle of fertility.

Worms, ants and termites, springtails, protozoa, fungi, and bacteria ranging from the visible to the unimaginably minute perform important functions, and as a farmer I sometimes see my focus on growing soil as more important than growing crops. So the answer to Vaiva's question is a definitive "yes!" The healthier the life of my soil, the healthier the crops I can grow. It is the soil microorganisms that drive most of the activity in the soil, and that ultimately becomes responsible for nutrient mobility. So as soils become depleted by overuse -- sterilized and contaminated by pesticides and synthetic fertilizers, etc. -- the soil life is reduced, limiting the microorganisms' activity, which in turn limits the nutrient and mineral availability to the plants... and ultimately to all of us. This soil abuse also puts stress on the plants leaving them more vulnerable to pest and disease attacks, starting a vicious cycle of chemical use. So good soil management is key to growing healthy plants and providing food that is rich in nutrients and full of flavor. David Suzuki in his book "The Sacred Balance" paints a vivid picture: "Imagine a giant tomato with a diameter of 70 meters but skin no thicker than that of an ordinary tomato. That thin outer layer corresponds to the fine wrapping of soil that covers the surface of our immense planet. The constant renewal of life on Earth occurs in that thin layer; we, like all other terrestrial life forms, depend on it, directly or indirectly, for our food." There is no question in my mind that the decrease in nutritional value of our crops is primarily linked to the depletion of our soils. - Tom

*"We know more about the
movement of celestial bodies
than about the soil under
foot."*

- Leonardo da Vinci

Mini Camp Reminder

We are 3 weekends away from our summer Mini Camp and we still have space available. Surprisingly, no CSA families from the Willow Glen, Los Gatos or downtown San Jose pickup locations have called to register, so I am urging all the foxes from "over the hill" to come to Mini Camp and experience the farm and its peacefulness without the concern of having to drive at the end of the day. Equipped with small and large baskets, we will spend our days harvesting, tasting and discovering the magnificent diversity of fruits, vegetables and herbs growing on the farm. Special projects (see below) and dips in the pool will be part of sharing this time together as a community.

To recap schedule and cost: we will start August 2nd, with a pot-luck at around 7pm, and continue to Sunday the 4th, ending at noon. The cost is \$40 per adult and \$20 per child, with a maximum of \$100 per family, and includes all the meals except the Friday evening pot-luck. Register with Constance at (831) 763 2340 to reserve your place!

Mini Camp Special Projects:

- QUILT MAKING PROJECT One of the activities planned by our CSA families is a quilt making, and each child will be given the opportunity to make a square! We will use fun, Nature material, creativity, and lots of adult supervision in this process. We are looking for portable sewing machines,

so if you have one that you can bring or lend, please call Constance!

• **POPSICLE MAKING PROJECT** What are small hands made for if not to crush these juicy berries? Add a little cream or lemon and here we goooooo!!! So if you have popsicle-making sets in your kitchen (these small plastic containers with a separate handle), please bring them to the mini-camp!!

See you soon..... Constance 🐾

Crop of the Week

Blue potatoes??? Yes, potatoes can be blue or purple. Don't be alarmed by the intense blue color of the potatoes in your share this week. They were originally selected from wilder strains in the high Andean mountains of Peru (hence their name "Blue Peruvians"), and are wonderful to bake or puree. The purple color will sure intrigue everyone at the dinner table -- especially the kids.

Notes from Debbie's Kitchen

Have a recipe you'd like to share? Contact the newsletter editor.

Here I was, in the middle of preparing this week's newsletter, when my computer 'squeaked' the arrival of an email. Turns out it was from Dorle, last year's intern (now home in Germany), and she was sending me a recipe... for summer squash! Talk about timing. Also, to herald the arrival of our purple potatoes, I found a recipe which uses them AND sugar snap peas, another box item this week! And lastly, something on lemon basil. - Debbie

Dorle's Zucchini Cake

Dorle says, "It is my very favorite cake recipe in summer -- delicious, juicy and not long-lasting..."

180 grams unsalted butter (Dorle sez this is more than 1/2 lb., but I did a metric conversion and, rounded to the nearest whole unit, came up with 13 tbsp., which would be 1 stick + 5 tbsp. You'll probably be fine with anywhere btwn. 1 1/2 and 2 sticks of butter. - Debbie)

1 1/2 C brown sugar
4 eggs
1 tsp. cinnamon
4 tsp. lemon juice
4 tsp. cream cheese
1 C chopped nuts (walnuts or whatever you like)
2 C grated zucchini
3 C pastry flour (very delicious with whole wheat)
3 tsp. baking powder
maybe some milk

Preheat oven to 180°C (another conversion lookup: 350 degrees F). Cream butter

and slowly add the sugar, beating until smooth. Beat in the eggs and mix thoroughly. Stir in the cinnamon, cream cheese, lemon juice, grated zucchini and chopped nuts. Add flour with the baking powder and maybe some milk. Only mix lightly now. Pour batter in prepared buttered pan and bake in preheated oven for 45 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in center comes out clean.

Purple Potato, Sugar Snap Pea and Mint Salad serves 2

from Gourmet Magazine, June 1997

1/2 lb. small purple or other boiling potatoes (about 5)
1/4 lb. sugar snap peas, trimmed
2 tsp. balsamic vinegar
2 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
10 fresh mint leaves, sliced thin

In a small heavy saucepan cover potatoes with cold salted water by 1 inch and simmer until tender, 15 to 20 minutes. Transfer potatoes with a slotted spoon to a colander to drain and cool 10 minutes. Return water in pan to a boil and blanch snap peas until crisp-tender, about 1 minute. Drain snap peas and refresh under cold water. Drain again and pat dry with paper towels. Cut potatoes lengthwise into quarters. In a bowl toss together potatoes, snap peas, vinegar, oil, mint, and salt and pepper to taste.

Note from Debbie: As I recall from the info on potato salad from two weeks ago, the low-starch or 'waxy' potatoes were better for salads than the high-starch bakers.

The author said that the high-starch potatoes were not as sturdy, and tended to suck up the dressing more than the others. My point for bringing this up is that I think the purple potatoes lean to the starchy side. But I will try them in this salad, as well as drizzled in olive oil, sprinkled with salt and pepper and baked, and compare for myself. Please let me know what your experiences are with these new potatoes!

Lemon Basil semi-info

Well I have spent the last several hours hunting in my cookbooks and online for the definitive blurb on this herb and have come up mostly blurb-less. I was hoping to find a recipe that featured it, or perhaps something that compared and contrasted it with other basil, but all I ended up with was generalities... "great in Asian-style soups, fish and shellfish dishes" (no sample recipes!) or "there are over forty types of basil from which to choose...including (several basil names) and lemon basil." I did learn that it is not just for use in savory dishes, however. Mariquita farms had a member who sprinkled chopped lemon basil liberally on fresh pineapple, and a recipe for lemon basil and pistachio cookies!! (Alas that recipe was too long to fit here.) But that ought to give you all some ideas. I'd also say come up with some way to eat it with those exceptionally sweet Sungold tomatoes in this week's box! And if you cook with it, remember to add it at the end to preserve its delicate flavor. But I open the forum up to you all -- let me know what creative things you come up with. And then bug Tom to put more of it in our boxes so we can share the ideas!

Live Earth Farm Calendar

Fri - Sun Aug. 2 - 4	<u>Children's Mini Camp</u> 7pm Friday - noon Sunday (registration required)
Sat. Sep 21	<u>Fall Equinox Celebration</u> 3pm - 9pm
Sat. Oct 26	<u>Halloween Pumpkin U-Pick</u> all day
Nov. 20/23	(Weds/Sat) ***Last box !***