



# Live Earth Farm (Com)Post

A weekly newsletter for the Live Earth Farm CSA Community

18<sup>th</sup> Harvest Week

August 28<sup>th</sup> – September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2002

Season 7

## What's in the box this week:

Strawberries  
Asian stir-fry mix OR  
collard greens  
Beets  
Cilantro  
Garlic  
Lettuce  
Onions  
Peppers (a few; some Hungarian yellow wax and possibly a green apple pepper or two)  
Potatoes (Yellow Finn)  
Sugar snap peas  
Tomatoes  
(Carrots next week)

## and if you have an extra-fruit share:

Strawberries and pears;  
Melons (Saturday only\*)

\*last week, Wednesday got Melons, but not Saturday

A reminder about the pears: For those of you getting extra-fruit shares, the pears this week are still pretty firm and need to be stored awhile (ideally in a paper bag for 3-5 days), in order to soften up. These are "Warren" pears, a variety which is believed to have spread from Mississippi. It falls under the French-butter-pear category, and if you have the patience to try them at different stages of softness you will discover at which stage they are the most desirable. - Tom

## What's Up on the Farm

It's all about Compost. Here we are starting to harvest our first tomatoes, and it's already time to think about fall and winter planting, and about pruning the apricots. But most importantly, we are getting ready to make compost. Making good compost is not just a bunch of "horse manure," but rather it is like nurturing a living organism. It is very much akin to making wine, brewing beer, or maintaining sourdough starter. You don't have to worry about seeing a bag of this "earthy gold" in your box anytime soon (but come to think of it, that's not a bad idea!). Compost is a cornerstone of building healthy soil, and here on the farm we start in the fall to make our compost, which won't be applied until the spring and fall of the following season. Virtually every organic gardening or farming system recommends adding to and building up the organic matter content of the soil. However it is the life cycle of millions of critters such as bacteria, nematodes, earthworms and fungi that turn this organic matter into the heart and soul of any productive soil: HUMUS. One thing we like to do almost every Sunday as a family is to take a walk through the forest at Nisene Marks State Park. As we hike through the denser parts of the forest I always get the desire to walk off the general path onto the spongy soft ground beneath the trees. It is here where nature shows us the perfect example of humification. By digging below the first couple of inches of decaying leaves and twigs my hand sifts through a dark, crumbly material with no recognizable bits in it. This is forest humus, and I almost instinctually bring my hand close to my nose to enjoy the characteristic sweet and musty aroma. Most of the year we collect the ingredients that we will use to make our compost. They include chicken and horse manure as our main nitrogen source, and wood shavings and rice hulls as the main carbon source. It is every microorganism's favorite dessert if the

## "Top Ten" Eco-Foods shopping checklist:

1. Was it grown locally?
2. Is it in season?
3. Was it organically grown?
4. Was it grown at a small family farm?
5. Does it contain GMOs (Genetically Modified Organisms)?
6. Were antibiotics or growth hormones used? Was it factory raised or free-range?
7. Was it fairly traded and/or sustainably sourced?
8. Could I buy this closer to the farmer, at a farmer's market or CSA?
9. How was it processed or preserved?
10. Does it encourage stewardship?

- from Cynthia Barstow's new book entitled "The Eco-Foods Guide - What's Good for the Earth is Good for You"

(I recently received a letter about the publishing of this book. Being CSA members, we rank right up there among "Eco-shoppers!" How many items you can check off? - Tom)

pile has 30 times more carbon than nitrogen. Add the right amount of moisture and air, and pile it all in a row 4 to 5 feet high, and in a few days the first microorganisms will have such a party that the temperature will get up to between 140-160 degrees Fahrenheit. It is this heat aspect of the process which rids the compost of organic wastes such as salts and toxins, and pasteurizes many weeds and diseases. Although compost is not humus, it is halfway there. It is a stabilized material that, when added to the soil, can decay rapidly into humus without upsetting the life and properties of the soil. Another technique which is rapidly becoming an important and proven method of using compost is to protect plants from diseases by applying "teas". Here on the farm over the last couple of years we have been applying compost teas successfully to prevent disease on tomatoes, strawberries, and potatoes. I encourage everyone -- gardener, brewer or recycler -- to compost. It's a great way to understand what nature does to create life on this planet. ☺

## Live Earth Farm Calendar

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| Sat. Sep 21 | <u>Fall Equinox Celebration</u><br>3pm - 9pm |
| Sat. Oct 26 | <u>Halloween Pumpkin U-Pick</u><br>all day   |
| Nov. 20/23  | (Weds/Sat) **Last box**                      |

## Notes from Debbie's Kitchen

*Kind of a mishmash of recipes this week.. No particular theme, just ideas for what's in the box! The first is another recipe (tested and) submitted by member Sue Burnham. - Debbie*

### Five Minute Beets

from Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone, by Deborah Madison

4 beets (about 1 lb.)  
1 tbsp. butter  
salt and pepper  
lemon juice or vinegar, to taste  
2 tbsp. chopped parsley, tarragon, dill or other herb

Grate beets into coarse shreds. Melt butter in a skillet. Add beets. Toss with 1/2 tsp. salt, and pepper to taste. Add 1/4 C water\*. Cover and cook over medium heat until beets are tender. (Sue says you can stop right here and it is even good!) Remove lid, raise heat to boil off any excess water. Taste for salt. Season with a little lemon juice or vinegar (either balsamic or red wine vinegar) and toss with herbs. (Sue said she tried it using fresh tarragon and it was wonderful!) Also, if you don't mind the shocking color, you can add 1 tbsp. of sour cream or yogurt at the end.

\*variation: use orange juice instead of water

### Sugar Snap Peas info

Sugar snaps are in our boxes again, so I thought I'd share some miscellaneous ideas on preparing and using them. – Debbie

Store them in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. If they appear wet when you get them, you might want to dump them out of their bag and blot them dry, then put them in a fresh, dry bag before storing them in the fridge. Too much wetness and they can develop rot. Also, sometimes they arrive

with what look like little grey fuzzy bits stuck to them. These are the remains of the blossom from which the pod grew. If you see a lot of these in the peas, you may want to rinse, wipe or pick them off before storing (remember to dry them if you do rinse). They sometimes accelerate rot too.

You will also notice the pods come in different fatnesses. This can vary by batch (i.e. the first week we get 'em, they're young and thin, and in subsequent weeks they become fatter, more mature). Often they'll vary all in the same bag (between young and mature). Although all are flavorful, if you find ones where the pod wall has become thin and tough, it is best to shell and use the peas, discarding or composting the pods. Just because the pod is fat doesn't necessarily mean the shell is no good. Check the thickness of the pod wall (cut through one to see). If it is still nice and thick and juicy, even if the peas are large, the whole thing is good eating. But I must say, sometimes when I'm preparing a dish that calls for plain ol' peas, if I have enough 'big fat sugar snaps', I'll shell them and just use the inner peas.

When you go to use them, typical prep entails 'unzipping' them (and we're all in agreement that they should be washed and looked over first for bad spots). Gently hold the pod and 'snap' off the stem end, and the 'string' will usually peel away from the short side of the pod. Discard the stem and string. The pods can either be used whole or cut into pieces, depending on what your recipe or senses suggest. They of course can be eaten raw, as a snack, or used raw in a salad. If you're going to cook them à la carte, they don't need much cooking time. Have the rest of your meal ready to go, then put them in your steamer for a minute

or two. Or drop them into boiling water just until they turn bright green then drain and serve immediately. They're delicate beasts, and will continue to cook with the residual heat. Likewise if you are preparing a stir-fry or some such dish, add them late in the cooking process. Overcooked sugar snap peas are a sorry sight, olive and limp, and just don't taste as good. So remember to mind your peas and q's when cooking them!

**Spanish Rice** serves 4 people modestly from "Tomato Blessings and Radish Teachings" by Edward Espe Brown

1 C long-grain white rice  
1/2 medium red onion (about 3 oz.), diced  
1 tbsp. olive oil  
1/2 green bell pepper, diced  
1 clove garlic, minced  
1/4 tsp. salt  
1-lb. can whole tomato (plain), with its liquid  
(I used a yellow pepper, and white onion when I made it and it worked just fine. – Debbie)

Roast the rice in a dry skillet over moderate heat, stirring as needed, until it appears toasted and fragrant. Sauté the onion in olive oil for a minute, then add the green pepper, garlic, and salt. Cook another minute or two. Coarsely chop the canned tomato (I used canned, already-chopped tomatoes, or you could peel and chop a few fresh ones. – Debbie), and add water to make 2 cups. Add to the onions and peppers and stir to get the juices off the bottom of the pan. Combine this mixture with the rice, and cook in a covered pot about 15 minutes until tender. Open the pot and stir, then cover and let sit a few minutes before serving. (This last step is important. When the rice is first done cooking, it is stuck to the pan. But the 'letting sit' step steams and loosens the rice after a bit. – Debbie)