



Live Earth Farm (Com)Post

A weekly newsletter for the Live Earth Farm CSA Community

7th Harvest Week

May 21st – 27th, 2003

Season 8

What's in the standard share:

Fruit:
Strawberries

Veggies:
Broccoli or cauliflower
Carrots
Fennel
Green garlic
Lettuce
Onions
Radicchio
Spinach
Mystery item

and special --

a small bouquet of
Peruvian Lilies! One for
each Standard Share!

and if you have an extra-fruit option:

More strawberries!

(over for more!)

Members with children may find that joining our CSA adds an extra challenge to the pot, especially if they haven't seen or tried some of the unusual and odd-looking vegetables before. While it may be a challenge, it can be fun as well. By not getting your produce from the store, children will suddenly recognize that vegetables, "their" vegetables, have a face, and are grown on a real farm, "their" farm, by real people like farmer Tom who gave them a ride on his tractor, or Linnea who picked strawberries with them. I encourage everyone – especially children – to take the opportunity this season to get to know your vegetables, both through the experience of learning how to cook and eat them and by visiting the farm. Going to pick up your share, for example, can become a weekly ritual children look forward to, especially if they know they can expect to taste something yummy. This may also get them interested in the more suspicious looking stuff. On Saturdays at the Willow Glen Farmer's Market I have fun meeting the kids who accompany their parents to pick up their share. Some will ask me questions about the farm, and others would like to sit in the driver's seat of the delivery truck, or help me make a sale at the market stand. Kristin Schafer, who with her husband Jim and their two children Linnea and Connor have been long-time members of the farm, suggested we have a "kids' corner" in the newsletter that shares stories, and answers children's questions about farming, plants, eating and preparing vegetables. I think it's a great idea! So below is our first 'Kids' Corner.' I encourage you to send me your children's questions or stories, to be included in the newsletter. Let the fun begin! – Tom

"As our bodies are sustained with this food, may our hearts be nourished with true friendship and our souls fed with truth."

- prayer from "A Grateful Heart"

Kids' Corner

Our first question for this column comes from Kristin Schafer's daughter, Linnea. "Why are strawberries called 'straw' berries?"

Answer: The strawberry belongs to a large family called Rosaceae, and if you think that sounds like the strawberry is related to the beautiful rose in your garden, you guessed it right. Also related are other beautiful and great-tasting fruit such as apples, pears, cherries, peaches, raspberries, and blackberries. Strawberries are also called 'walking plants,' because they send out runners to look for new ground to make more little strawberry plants. Since strawberries grow low to the ground, the berries will touch the soil, and so once upon a time, gardeners and farmers who wanted to avoid having their red sweet juicy fruit get eaten by soil critters and go rotten would mulch them with straw – hence the name, strawberries. Today, instead of straw we use a plastic mulch which not only keeps the fruit healthy, but also reduces how many times we have to bend over to pull weeds. ☺

Of Interest

Water Quality. What kind of water do we use to irrigate our vegetables? A few months ago the press released a finding that vegetables, particularly winter lettuce coming from southern California's Central Valley, were found to contain "perchlorate," a chemical used in making rocket fuel. It seems that the Colorado River, a main source of irrigation water in southern California, was carrying high levels of this compound – somewhere in the 20 to 50 parts per billion range. Here on the farm our water comes from 300-to-400-foot deep wells, and has been tested for drinking water quality. Fortunately for all of us, the Pajaro Valley is not home to any industrial sources of pollution. Although we are blessed with clean water, the biggest issue affecting our agricultural community is the overuse of groundwater. It raises concerns that depletion may result in saltwater being drawn in from the ocean and mixed with the groundwater. Farmers along the coast had to shut down wells because the water in them had too

much salt. Conserving water by using drip and micro-irrigation systems, as well as growing less water-demanding crops, will be increasingly more important to protect this area's groundwater resource. ☺

Crop Info

New this season are radicchio and fennel. Radicchio belongs to the chicory family and is closely related to its cousins escarole, Belgian endive, and curly endive. It is a red, broadleaf, heading form of chicory. Most popularly grown in Italy (where at least 15 well known kinds are grown), it ranges in shape, color and taste. This is the first time we are growing it at a large scale, since many members encouraged me to. It makes a great addition to salads and tastes wonderful lightly grilled or roasted. I really enjoy the crinkly shape and color which ranges from green-purple to maroon with white midribs. The variety we grow is called "Leonardo" and is considered a non-forcing type of radicchio. Nonforcing radicchio forms a head under normal growing conditions, whereas a forcing variety will form a head only after freezing weather.

The fennel you've been getting recently, with its beautiful feathery green foliage, looks a little bit like celery and is often confused with dill. This tall, aromatic perennial belongs to the parsley family and is native to southern Europe and the Mediterranean area, especially near the sea. The fresh leaves and tender leaf stems are used as a boiled vegetable and are sometimes served raw in salads or with other vegetables. The flavor is like that of anise or licorice. Fennel is very good for digestion and is often used with meat dishes such as chicken, pork, beef and fish. ☺

Notes from Debbie's Kitchen

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

No, the lilies are not for eating – they're for dressing up the dinner table! But DO eat the radicchio! - Debbie

Radicchio ideas

from "Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone"
by Deborah Madison

"Chicories, endive, escarole, frisée, dandelion and radicchio [are] interesting greens [which] range from slight to pronounced bitterness. They take well to fragrant nut oils, shallots, sharp vinegars, and pairings with citrus, apples and pears, walnuts and hazelnuts, and bleu cheeses. They also stand up well to hot dressing, which sweetens their bitterness."

As you will see from below, however, radicchio is not just for salads! - Debbie

Grilled Radicchio

from "Vegetables on the Grill" by Kelly McCune

Trim the base of the radicchio head without removing it completely, leaving the leaves attached. Slice the entire head in half lengthwise if the head is large. Rinse gently under running water and allow to drain. Brush with olive oil and grill over medium-hot coals for 3 to 5 minutes a side, or until browning, and until the thickest part near the base is tender when pierced with a skewer.

Radicchio Seared in the Skillet with Mozarella

serves 2 - 4
also by Deborah Madison, only this time it is from her newest book, "Local Flavors, Cooking and Eating from America's Farmers' Markets"

1 lg. head radicchio
3 tbsp. olive oil
sea salt and freshly ground pepper
1 garlic clove, minced
2 tbsp. balsamic vinegar
1 (4-ounce) ball fresh mozzarella, cut into thin rounds

Rinse the radicchio, then cut it into wedges about 1 1/2 inches across, keeping the root ends intact. Brush generously with olive oil and season well with salt and pepper. Heat a cast iron skillet* over medium-high heat. When it's good and hot, add the radicchio. Press down on the wedges to ensure contact, reduce the heat to medium-low, and cook until browned, about 5 minutes. Turn and cook on the second side. The red will turn brownish, and the leaves should get crisp in places. Scatter the garlic over the radicchio, add the vinegar, and cover with the cheese. Cover the pan and cook just until the cheese is soft, 2 or 3 minutes. Season with pepper, arrange on a platter, and serve.

* if you have one. If you don't (like me), just use a regular skillet. Should be fine. – Debbie

Live Earth Farm Calendar

(see calendar on website for more detailed info)

Sat. Jun 21	<u>Summer Solstice Celebration</u> 4pm - 10pm with Kuzanga Marimba!
Aug 8, 9, 10	<u>Children's Mini Camp</u> Friday evening to noon Sunday
Sat. Sep 20	<u>Fall Equinox Celebration</u> 3pm - 9pm with the Banana Slug String Band!
Sat. Oct 26	<u>Halloween Pumpkin Palooza</u> all day the Banana Slug String Band will play here too!