



The Weekly (Com)Post

A newsletter for the Live Earth Farm CSA Community

26th Harvest Week

Sept. 6th - 12th, 2004

Season 9

IMPORTANT DATE CHANGE Our Fall Equinox Celebration, originally scheduled for Sept. 25th, will be postponed to Saturday Oct. 23rd due to the upcoming birth of our daughter Sept. 17th (see last week's newsletter or our website for details).

What's in the standard share:

Fruit:

Pears (inside your box)

Veggies and herbs:

Carrots

Cucumbers

Eggplant

Garlic

Kale or chard

Mustard greens

Onions

Peppers

Fingerling potatoes

Radishes

Spinach

Dry-farmed tomatoes

Heirloom tomatoes

Mystery Items

and if you have an extra-fruit option:

Apples, pears and strawberries

(over for more)

"Deer" Friends - Wild farming continues: I appreciate the calls and e-mails I received last week in response to my considering having a couple (2) of deer shot in order to reduce the impact this particular deer family has on our crops. Several members were strictly opposed to the notion of shooting the deer, which led me to reassess the practical alternatives and reflect upon my own farming philosophy. My initial intention was to limit my immediate economic loss by removing the deer, but your feedback allowed me to step back for a moment and see the farm as part of the larger surrounding landscape and not just an isolated enclave. As an organic farmer, I am challenged to transcend my dualistic mentality of producing as much as possible in one part of the landscape while trying to preserve as much as possible in its natural state somewhere else. In order to support and increase the native biodiversity of the region I have to take farming in harmony with nature to the next level, which includes all living organisms. So rest assured I will not shoot the deer, but find ways to coexist. For the time being, keeping a dog around and putting up a temporary fence has kept them away. Thanks for all your suggestions, and I will keep you posted of my success. Meanwhile, you all get to "bear" the deer burden with me in the form of no lettuce in your shares for a while. – Tom

"We forget that nature is, quite simply, the universal continuum, ourselves inextricably included..."

*- Theodore Roszak
from "Where the Wasteland Ends"*

Can Organics Save the Family Farm?

Eliot Coleman [September 2004]

A groundbreaking essay by one of the nation's foremost organic growers and writers. Here is a section about soil which I excerpted for you, as I thought it was interesting. You can read the entire article online at www.rakemag.com/features/detail.asp?catID=61&itemID=19847. – Tom

"Thor Heyerdahl's classic adventure story, The Ra Expeditions, has a lesson for agriculture. Heyerdahl wanted to prove that ancient Egyptian sailors could have reached the New World in traditional boats constructed of bundled papyrus stalks. He and his crew studied fresco paintings, three to four thousand years old, on the tomb walls of pyramids for instruction on the size, shape, and style of the crafts. In the paintings there was one rope represented, from the stern's curled-in tip down to the afterdeck, for which they could discern no purpose suggested by modern physics, and in the ensuing construction it was left out. Ra I collapsed in mid-ocean for lack of that rope. Their second attempt, Ra II, with the newly appreciated rope in its assigned place, completed the voyage without a hitch.

"In the story of agriculture's transition from the traditions of the past to the realities of the present, there is a missing element that is the rope's equivalent – an unappreciated detail without which the worldwide agricultural system will eventually fall

Live Earth Farm 2004 Calendar

(see calendar on website for more detailed info)

Sat. Oct. 23

Fall Equinox Celebration
AND Pumpkin Palooza
3pm until dark

apart. That crucial element, found in healthy, viable dirt, is called "soil organic matter." Many organic farmers realized that they needed to return to pre-chemical practices, and improve them if possible, rather than reject them in favor of chemical shortcuts. They believed this was the direction they needed to go if the health of the soil, the health of the produce, and the health of the human beings consuming the produce were to be maintained.

"The organic pioneers wrote and spoke about their realization that the farm is not a factory, but rather a human-managed microcosm of the natural world. Whether in forest or prairie, soil fertility in the natural world is maintained and renewed by the recycling of all plant and animal residues which create the organic matter in the soil. This recycling is a biological process, which means that the most important contributors to soil fertility are alive, and they are neither farmers nor fertilizer salesmen. They are the population of living creatures in the soil. The number of these creatures is almost beyond belief. It was often said that a teaspoon of fertile soil contains at least one million live microscopic organisms. Hard to believe as that may be, that number is now considered far too conservative. Once you begin to understand that the soil is a living thing rather than an inert substance, a fascinating universe opens in front of your eyes.

"The idea of a living soil nourished with organic matter also helps cast light on the difference between a natural and a chemical approach to soil fertility. This approach is usually called feeding the soil rather than feeding the plants. The idea that we could ever substitute a few soluble elements for a whole living system is a lot like thinking an intravenous needle could deliver a delicious meal.

"Through the years, as organic farmers have worked with this world of nature, they have developed harmonious farming practices that are outstandingly productive. The general level of expertise today among the best organic growers allows them to equal chemical agriculture in yield while far surpassing it in quality. Coincidentally, they discovered that this approach to farming could save not only their soil, but the family farm itself - especially from the crushing onslaught of petrochemical agribusiness." 🌱

Notes from Debbie's Kitchen

Have a recipe you'd like to share? Contact me at deb@writerguy.com or 408.288.9469.

Visit the recipes link on our website for a comprehensive list of recipes 'by key ingredient' (pictures too!). Includes recipes from newsletters back to 1998.

This week, a selection from my extensive clippings file. – Debbie

Pears and Bleu Cheese

This is not really a recipe, just a recommendation: When Tom's pears are ripe, cut them into wedges and serve them with a really good bleu cheese. Just eating a bite of pear-and-bleu together is sublime. If you haven't tried it, do it now. – Debbie

Cold noodle salad with cucumber and spinach

from an undated SJ Merc. clipping, with a recipe credit for Helen Haining Li
serves 4 as a side dish

"Refreshing cold noodle salads are popular in Beijing," says the author, who always seasons hers simply with sugar, black vinegar, salt and sesame oil. "Adjust amounts and proportions to your taste, but try to keep the sugar and vinegar roughly equal."

About 2 oz. bean thread* noodles (1 small bundle)
1/2 medium cucumber, seeded if desired and cut into matchsticks
1/2 bunch spinach, cut into thin ribbons
1/2 tbsp. sugar
1/2 tsp. Chinese black vinegar
1 tbsp. sesame oil
Pinch salt

Bring a pot of water to a boil. Meanwhile, soak noodles in a bowl of hot tap water until soft, about 5 minutes. Use scissors to cut them to a manageable

length, 4 to 6 inches. Drain noodles and add them to boiling water. When water returns to a boil, they will be done. Drain and immediately rinse with cold water. Drain again. Toss noodles with vegetables. Dress all with sugar, black vinegar, sesame oil and salt.

*sometimes called cellophane noodles or green bean noodles. Choose medium-thick noodles for this dish.

Eggplant Caviar with Fresh Tomato Coulis

from a Bon Appetit magazine clipping
serves 4

1 large eggplant (about 18 oz.) [or an equivalent amount of smaller ones]
1/4 C plus 1 1/2 tbsp. good olive oil
2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
1 garlic clove, minced
1 1/2 lbs. tomatoes (about 6 medium)
1 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp (scant) ground white pepper
4 fresh basil sprigs, for garnish

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Pierce eggplant several times with a fork and place on baking sheet. Bake until very soft and skin wrinkles and cracks, about 45 minutes [less if eggplants are smaller]. Cool slightly. Cut eggplants in half lengthwise and peel off skin. Place flesh in a sieve and let drain 45 minutes, then chop finely.

Whisk 1/4C olive oil, lemon juice and garlic in medium bowl to blend. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Add eggplant; toss to coat.

Bring medium pot of water to boil. Add tomatoes to boiling water and blanch 30 seconds. Using slotted spoon, transfer them to a bowl of cold water and cool. Using a small sharp knife, pull skin off tomatoes, then core, cut in half crosswise, and squeeze out seeds. Transfer tomatoes to a food processor and blend until smooth. Transfer puree to a bowl, mix in remaining 1 1/2 tbsp. olive oil, salt and white pepper. Let coulis stand until any air bubbles have popped, stirring occasionally, about 45 minutes.

Spoon 1/2 C tomato coulis into center of 4 shallow bowls. Using 2 large soup spoons, form eggplant mixture into an oval shape and set atop coulis. Repeat, placing 3 ovals in each bowl. Garnish each with 1 fresh basil sprig [or cilantro, or parsley, if you don't have basil].

Marinated Kale

(quick! raw! vegan!) from this month's Whole Foods magazine
[says 'serves 6' but only looks like enough for 4]

1 bunch kale
3 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
1 tbsp. olive oil
2 tsp. finely minced garlic
1 tsp. sea salt

Wash and spin-dry kale; strip leaves from stems and slice into 1" strips [or chop]. In a bowl, combine rest of ingredients and whisk to blend. Add kale and toss until well coated. Serve immediately or store, covered and refrigerated, for up to 1 day.