



The Weekly (Com)Post

A newsletter for the Live Earth Farm CSA Community

3rd Harvest Week

March 29th – April 4th, 2004

Season 9

What's in the box this week:

Fruit:

- Strawberries

Veggies:

- Baby beets
- Broccoli
- Small red cabbage
- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Chard
- Chinese chives
- Potatoes
- Bunch of baby leeks
- Romaine lettuce
- Bag of baby mustard greens or bok choy

(Remember, "Extra Fruit option" doesn't start until May!)

(over for more)

If it wasn't for the soil... there'd be no lunch! We are busy mowing and plowing our tall and lush winter cover crop into the still moist and rested spring soil. I happen to love to run my fingers through that rich, dark, earthy brown stuff. We so often dismiss soil as something inert that clings to our shoes and gets under our fingernails. However, this dirt is at the heart of growing healthy and nourishing food. Soil scientists now recognize that the microorganisms in the soil, mostly invisible to the naked eye, have intricate and fine-tuned relationships which over millions of years have created the environment on which plants and animals exist. Sustainable farming practices focus in great part on nourishing and caring for this living soil, recognizing that the health and vitality of our food depends on it. When I see a seed germinate, sending its delicate roots deep into this dark, musty-smelling stuff packed with "creepy crawlies," I am always astonished and mystified, having more faith than understanding in nature's way of renewal and life. I am reminded of the popular song children always request the Banana Slug String Band

to play during our farm celebrations: "Dirt made my lunch." I guess spending most of my waking hours as a "Dirt Farmer" is something my parents can be proud of after all.
– Tom

"The grower of trees, the gardener, the man born to farming, whose hands reach into the ground and sprout, to him the soil is a divine drug. He enters into death yearly, and comes back rejoicing. He has seen the light lie down in the dung heap, and rise again in the corn."

- Wendell Berry

Calendar Update

Our apologies for any confusion: for a brief while we were going to change our Open Farm Day to May 22nd instead of the 15th in order to accommodate the Banana Slug String Band, who wanted to play for us, but could not do so on the 15th. Some of you were told about this change. But due to there being so much material already in circulation with the May 15th date on it, we are sticking to our original schedule, and 'the Slugs' will instead be playing for us at our Fall Equinox Celebration. In other good news, Kuzanga Marimba has agreed to a return engagement at our Summer Solstice Celebration! Please don't miss either of these wonderful events. Mark your calendar now! 🐸

What's Up on the Farm

It's springtime and everything is awake. The peach, apricot, and plum trees have all finished their bloom and all have a nice fruit set. If the weather continues to be this warm, we should have a good crop this year. The apricots, in particular, tend to crack and struggle with the cold and moist spring weather we have along the coast. The apple and pear trees are all in bloom, and together with the bees we have been busy pollinating. Our pear trees, a variety called Warren which originated in Mississippi, for some reason have a poor fruit set in our climate, although

Live Earth Farm 2004 Calendar

(see calendar on website for more detailed info)

Sat. May 15	<u>Open Farm Day</u>
Sat. June 19	<u>Summer Solstice Celebration</u> field tours 2 – 5 pm celebration 5 – 9 pm <i>Kuzanga Marimba returns!</i>
July 30, 31, Aug 1	<u>Children's Mini Camp</u> Friday evening to noon Sunday
Sat. Sept. 25	<u>Fall Equinox Celebration</u> 3 – 9 pm <i>with The Banana Slug String Band!</i>
Sat. Oct 23	<u>Halloween Pumpkin Palooza</u>

they are considered self-pollinating. For several years we've been experimenting with different techniques to increase fertilization and found that buying pollen from other pear varieties and puffing them onto our trees substantially increases the number of fruit we get.

We are planting, planting, planting. This is the busiest time to get all the crops into the ground so as not to fall behind in our summer harvest schedules. We are planting tomatoes, cucumbers, and summer squash this week, and melons, eggplant and peppers by mid-April. Green beans are going into the ground early next week just before the full moon, and potatoes are best planted two weeks later before the New Moon. Oh how marvelous and exciting it is to dance with the earth again in springtime. 🌱

Crop Notes

Chives and Leeks. This week you have one bunch of baby leeks – slender stems, white and green at the base still with the roots attached. Leeks make a great substitute for onions during this time of year. Whether they are braised, sauteed or steamed they are great for giving any dish an unmistakable hint of onion. These young leeks are so tender they can be cut into salads, and only require a short cooking time. Experiment using part of the leaves as well.

The second bunch you'll find in your box are Chinese chives, which have flat green leaves (kind of like a blade of grass) and a mild garlic flavor. Marco Polo found them in China 800 years ago, and they had been in use for thousands of years at that time. Their garlic flavor, although much milder than the garlic you've been getting the last couple of weeks, makes a great addition to salads, stir-fries, scrambled eggs, soups and sandwiches. 🌱

Morris Grassfed Beef

With a mind towards promoting local family farms and sustainable agriculture, I (it's Debbie) would like to let our greater CSA membership know about this very healthful (both to the environment AND to humans) option for those of us who eat meat. Joe and Julie Morris of T.O. Cattle Company, San Juan Bautista, are 6th generation ranchers. Joe actually calls himself a 'grass farmer,' as – just the way Tom talks about the soil being everything to growing healthy crops – proper stewardship of the grassland upon which the cattle feed is all important. The range serves as watershed for habitat for a diverse biological community. Joe and Julie manage their animals so that they enhance the diversity of life on the range, as well as the quality of the water that falls on the range and flows to towns and the sea. All their cattle are born and raised on the coastal ranges of Central California, enjoy a completely organic diet of fresh grass, forbs, legumes, and clean water, and are never given synthetic hormones or antibiotics: the animals grow only as fast as their genetics and the range will allow. Most importantly, they are never 'finished' on grain, like most beef labeled "Natural" or "Organic." Cattle are ruminants by nature, and so consuming grain is actually unnatural (and unhealthy) for them! While beef is one of nature's best sources of protein, zinc and iron, only grassfinished beef is high in the nutrients beta-carotene, vitamin E, essential Omega 3 fatty acids, and Conjugated Linoleic Acid (CLA). Their beef can be purchased in 'whole,' 'half,' or 'split-half' portions (split-half is their most popular). Meat is cut into individual cuts, wrapped and professionally frozen, and delivery is around the end of June. For more information, call Julie and ask her to mail you a brochure – 831.623.2933 or visit their website at www.morrisgrassfed.com. I have purchased my beef from them the last 2 years and cannot say enough good about them! 🌱

Notes from Debbie's Kitchen

Have a recipe you'd like to share? Contact me at deb@writerguy.com or 408.288.6469. (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 I want to share with you a few comments from our members, which also double nicely as recipes if you read between the lines! - Debbie

"This isn't exactly a recipe, but in an attempt to use up the last of the spinach we had last week I convinced those nearest and dearest to me to eat spinach salad with warm bacon dressing for breakfast! I had planned to serve it last night and had the bacon, hard-boiled eggs, and washed & dried spinach ready to go. This morning, I warmed the bacon bits, chopped the young onions, threw in some balsamic vinegar, and hey presto, a new twist on bacon and eggs." – Kirsten Nelson, San Jose

"We got our first share this week and I am reminded of how great it is. Beets, rutabagas and potatoes, along with a supplement

of tomatillos, zucchini, onion and garlic cloves made for a great roasted vegetable mix (chopped, spiced with paprika, salt and pepper, drizzled with olive oil). I'm definitely going to try the 'warm salad' from the [first week's] newsletter. And the kids are asking for the red cabbage and green garlic stir-fry again. Yumm..." – Mark Stevens, Saratoga

"I'm loving these veggies! Last night we had the purple cabbage, yellow potatoes, carrots and rutabagas with our corned beef. Yummy!" – PK O'Meager, Aptos

Tagliatelle with Shredded Beets, Sour Cream and Parsley

from Bon Appetit

serves 4 to 6

1 tbsp. butter
2 tbsp. olive oil
2 garlic cloves, minced (yes, go ahead and use your green garlic!)

3 C (packed) grated (peeled) raw beets
1/2 tsp. cayenne pepper
2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
12 oz. tagliatelle or fettuccine
1 8oz. container sour cream
6 tbsp. chopped fresh Italian parsley

Melt butter with oil in large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add garlic, stir until pale golden, about 1 minute. Add beets and cayenne; reduce heat to medium-low and sauté just until beets are tender, about 12 minutes. Stir in lemon juice. Meanwhile cook pasta in a large pot of boiling salted water until tender but still firm to bite, stirring occasionally. Drain pasta and return to pot. Stir in sour cream and 4 tbsp. of the parsley, then beet mixture. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Transfer pasta to bowl. Sprinkle with remaining 2 tbsp. parsley and serve.