



The Weekly (Com)Post

A newsletter for the Live Earth Farm CSA Community

9th Harvest Week

May 10th – 16th, 2004

Season 9

remember – Open Farm Day is this Saturday! BBQ, baby goats, farm walks, live music (Kuzanga Marimba!), strawberry picking, and of course games for the children!

What's in the standard share:

Fruit:

Strawberries

Veggies:

Arugula

Bok choy

Broccoli

Carrots

Chard

Fennel

Green garlic

Kale or collard greens

Leeks

Lettuce

Stir-fry mix

Mystery Item(s)

and if you have an extra-fruit option:

More strawberries!

A typical morning. The farm is now bursting with life, and it is challenging to pay attention to all the details as the pace accelerates. My favorite time to start the day is just before sunrise, around 5:30 am. I brew myself a cup of coffee and head out, just as the rooster crows. First stop is the greenhouse to prioritize what needs to be planted. Today, the canteloupe and a second succession of tomato seedlings are ready. A new batch of summer squash, cucumbers and a trial sample of watermelons is germinating. Seedlings in the greenhouse need to get out of their little containers so they don't get stressed and root-bound. Timing is important. In the field, everything must be ready before they can be planted. The soil has to be prepared which in the spring is especially challenging. Our tractors work hard and long hours. The cover crop has to be mowed down and plowed under, then compost, gypsum (a calcium and sulfur rich mineral), rock dust, and organic fertilizer are spread mechanically. Preparing the soil so that it has its loose, crumbly consistency is a dance with the moisture content in the ground. Too much moisture creates a sticky mess compacting the soil; too little will create a dustcloud and pulverize the soil structure. Once the beds are shaped, all the irrigation must be set up. Some crops, such as tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers and eggplant, will be drip irrigated. Others, such as broccoli and lettuce, love to be rained on from above with sprinklers. Checking the rest of the greenhouse, I notice the birds have discovered a batch of sunflower seedlings. I cover them to save what remains, hoping I do not have to resow the whole batch. I check the gopher traps in the strawberries, and make a note that some plants are showing signs of verticillium wilt (a soil borne fungus) which inevitably will spread throughout the block. The plums have aphids... should I spray a garlic/compost tea mixture or wait for the ladybugs (which I notice have also spotted the aphids) to do the job? As I check to see if the raspberries need watering, I spot a yellow dot among a thicket of green.

"Forget the past, for it is gone from your domain! Forget the future, for it is beyond your reach! Control the present! ... This is the way of the wise."

- Paramahansa Yogananda

Mmmm... I savor my first sweet golden raspberry of the season. The goats spotted me as well, "meeeh, MEEEEHHH!!," calling me to feed them. They will have to wait for Joe, who will feed and milk them soon. I take a quick peek underneath the rowcovers to check on the eggplants which were transplanted to the field a few days ago. Next, I turn on the well pump to make sure all our storage tanks are full before meeting with Juan, who is waiting for me at our other site down the road. We farm a total of 25 acres, spread across three different sites. Although I like the diversity in microclimates and soil conditions, I wish I could farm only one piece of land. Juan and I inspect the crops which will be harvested for the shares this week. Arugula is already mature enough to be harvested; I make a mental note to add it to the list of "what's in the box this week." I see the workers have arrived, and already have begun to pick strawberries which need to be delivered to Santa Cruz before noon. As I walk back to the car I notice one of the tractors has a flat tire, which reminds me I also need to repair one of our leaking water pumps. I take a shortcut through the pear orchard and notice several pear trees have fireblight, a notorious pear disease which can kill the tree if not stopped by carefully pruning the affected areas. As I head home, hoping to squeak a quick bite of breakfast into my morning, I also remember that Kristy, this year's farm intern, will join us today. The timing of her arrival is perfect, as we can use her help for Saturday's OPEN FARM DAY. - Tom

(over for more)

Crop of the Week

Kale and collards are cool weather, non-heading cabbages that have been around for at least 4000 years. They are among the truly ancient vegetables, and probably were the earliest cultivated forms of European wild cabbage. The name "collards" comes from the Anglo-Saxon name 'cole worts' or 'cole wyrts.' Both kale and collards are among the most nutritious of all vegetables, and the easiest of the brassicas to grow. The delicious greens are very high in vitamins A, C, and calcium. All kale and collards get tough sitting on supermarket shelves, but used the day of harvest, or after a few days of chilling in the refrigerator, they are one of the finest greens around. I like to eat kale raw mixed in with salads or cooked in a manner similar to spinach and chard. We grow two types of kale: Lacinato or 'Dinosaur,' an Italian heirloom variety with dark green-blue (almost black) and deeply-crikkled sword-shaped leaves, and Red Russian, a tender, colorful specialty kale with purple-green raggedy-edged leaves and a flattish middle. Collards have round, flat, smooth green leaves, and are cooked similarly to other dark leafy greens (not generally eaten raw). ♣

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>

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.)

I'm so happy to have kale and arugula back -- two of my very favorite greens! (Okay, maybe I have lots of favorites...) This week, some member-submitted recipes, plus a few surprises. – Debbie

Arugula Salad with Pecorino Romano and Toasted Walnuts

from one of member Sue Burnham's cookbooks

8 to 10 C arugula leaves (Sue will also use a mixture of arugula and salad greens)
1/2 C grated cheese (Romano, Parmesan)
1/2 C toasted walnuts

walnut oil vinaigrette*:

1 1/2 tbsp. sherry vinegar
2 shallots, finely diced
1 tsp. dijon mustard
6 tbsp. roasted walnut oil (or plain walnut oil, or a mix of walnut and olive)
salt and pepper to taste

Macerate shallots in vinegar, then combine with rest of dressing ingredients and toss with arugula, cheese and walnuts.

*a radish note

Sue says that radishes are wonderful dressed with the above walnut oil vinaigrette... especially in the summer. Just slice a bunch of radishes and toss with dressing; tastes something like a Japanese pickle.

Greens Soul Food Style

from member Carol Locke, of Boulder Creek

Use larger leaves of kale, collards, mustards or turnip greens, or a mixture of any combination. Wash well and remove stems. Fill a gallon kettle with leaves torn in pieces. Dice and add 1 large onion. Add several dried hot peppers, whole or cut up. Add

olive oil – 1/4 C or to taste; add salt – 1/2 tsp. or to taste; add vinegar (or lemon juice) – 1 to 2 tsp. ("This helps tenderize older greens, so I'm told," says Carol.) Add enough water to halfway fill kettle. If you push down on greens with your hand you should see water. Bring to a boil, then turn down and cook until tender.

Traditionally, soul food greens would be cooked with a ham hock or even a couple tbsps. of bacon fat rather than olive oil. For these traditional variations, don't add salt, at least not until after cooking (probably none is needed).

Sometimes I cut up 2 thick slices of meaty bacon and use that in place of olive oil and salt. Sometimes I cook parts of the stems too, and if they're large they may take 45 minutes or more, in which time the bacon gets very tender. For tender young greens, on the other hand, it might be better to just precook the bacon and crumble it on top.

Here's another fennel recipe, since we really are (supposed to be) getting it this week! – Debbie

Fennel, Apple, Arugula and Pecan Salad with Cider Vinaigrette

from an undated Bon Appetit clipping. Serves 4

1/2 C unfiltered apple cider or juice (how 'bout Billy Bob's apple juice?)
3 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
2 tbsp. apple cider vinegar
1 tsp. honey
1 lg. tart green apple (like Granny Smith), quartered, cored, and thinly sliced
1 medium-sized fresh fennel bulb, trimmed and thinly sliced

2 C arugula leaves (about 3 oz.)
1/2 C pecans (about 2 oz.), toasted

Whisk first 4 ingredients in medium bowl to blend; season dressing with salt and pepper. Combine apple, fennel and arugula in large bowl. Toss with enough dressing to coat [i.e. don't dump all the dressing in as it may be too much – Debbie] Mound salad on 4 plates, sprinkle with pecans.

Lastly, I'm guessing I'm not the only one with lots of carrots! Here's a tasty and different way to use 'em (you have to have a juicer though). – Debbie

Licualdo de mango y zanahoria (Mango and carrot licualdo)

by Jennifer Viegas, SJ Mercury News. Serves 5

"A refreshing drink made of icy cold milk and fresh fruit or other ingredients, licualdos are popular throughout South and Central America. They are a concoction that dates back hundreds of years to ancient South America and Mexico, though the invention of the electric blender – 'la licuadora' – certainly gave them a boost."

1 C. freshly made carrot juice
1 C freshly squeezed orange juice
2 mangoes, peeled, pitted and sliced [Trader Joe's carries frozen fresh mango chunks, which would be good here - Debbie]
1 C crushed ice
1/3 C freshly squeezed lime juice
1 C evaporated milk
1/2 C whole milk
1/3 C sugar

Combine all ingredients in a blender. Whip until smooth.