



Live Earth Farm (Com)Post

A weekly newsletter for the Live Earth Farm CSA Community

2nd Harvest Week

April 4th – 10th, 2005

Season 10

What's in the box this week:

Family Share:

Broccoli
Red beets
Carrots
Chard
Green garlic
Red Russian kale
Lettuce
Peppermint
Stir-fry mix (Asian and mustard greens combined)
Strawberries

Small Share:

Broccoli
Carrots
Chard
Green Garlic
Lettuce
Stir-fry mix (Asian and mustard greens combined)
Strawberries

(some items in small share may be less in quantity than in the family share)

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

With the increased number of delivery sites and expanded membership we had an exciting start last week! Rain greeted us both Monday and Tuesday, keeping the strawberry harvest small, but the greens loved it, staying vibrant and fresh. The forecast predicts more unsettled weather over the next few weeks, making it very challenging to stay on top of our planting schedule (see below). For the next few weeks we are working closely with other local farmers and for the time being will be supplementing your shares with some of their organic veggies, to be sure everyone gets a good box.

Debbie did an extraordinary job keeping delivery and pick up snafus to a minimum, I delivered to the wrong house in Morgan Hill, and some members showed great signs of patience and perseverance to locate their shares... still, we are off to a wonderful start! To help keep things running smoothly, we make an extra effort to get pertinent information (about your shares and CSA program) to you via e-mail, this newsletter, and via instructions provided in the binders at your weekly pick-up site. Please read the information we send you!

"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..."

- Wendell Berry, from 'Praise of Fertile Land'

Sometimes, with our oh-so-busy lives, it may seem that CSA is 'just a weekly box of veggies,' but really it is much more. I hope that many of you will have a chance to visit 'your' farm sometime during the season for our celebrations, mini camp, or U-pick days. And I hope, too, that this newsletter will help you to establish a closer connection to the farm, the food we grow, and the land that nourishes all of us. This is our goal. – Tom

What's Up on the Farm and in the Fields

I love the vibrant green colors this time of year. The rain is a blessing for the land and watershed, however as a farmer (and like most of my fellow farmers in the Western United States) I have a mixed relationship with the rain gods. We are used to growing most of our crops during the dry season, relying on elaborate and controlled irrigation systems to grow them. The earlier the rains stop, the sooner we can till the soil and plant our crops. With the late and fairly frequent rains we've been having, we are behind schedule with our early plantings. Sometimes we even plant tomatoes by the first week of April. Our farm has mostly heavier clay soils which drain slower than the deep alluvial and loamy soils in the valley below, so if it's too wet we just have to wait. One thing I have discovered over the years is that when spring rain-fall patterns are unpredictable, it is best to leave cover crops in the ground to speed the drying of our soils. Cover crops, which stand 5 to 6 feet tall, are not only great soil builders, offering valuable nutrients and organic matter, but right now they also have the capacity to pull large quantities of moisture out of the ground by a process known as evapotranspiration. Thanks to our jungle of cover crops that has been pulling excess moisture out of the ground since last week's rain, we were able to work all weekend to prepare

Live Earth Farm 2005 Calendar

(see calendar on website for more info)

Sat. June 18	<u>Summer Solstice Celebration</u> field tours 2 – 5 pm celebration 5 – 9 pm
July 29, 30, and 31	<u>Children's Mini Camp</u> Friday evening to noon Sunday
Sat. Sept. 24	<u>Fall Equinox Celebration</u> 3 – 9 pm
Sat. Oct 22	<u>Halloween Pumpkin Palooza</u>

enough land to plant potatoes, cauliflower, bok choy, fennel, lettuce, and broccoli. The cover crops have also turned into a favorite playground for my son, where together with his friends they spend hours wielding stick swords, slashing secret passageways through a thick jungle of fava beans, vetch, and oats. 🌿

Logistical Updates

There are a few things which are new this year over last year, so even if you are a veteran CSA member, please read:

First, we are using perforated plastic liners in the boxes. This not only helps keep the produce fresher longer (as it sits at your pick-up site waiting for you to come get it), but also, feel free to use it as your 'bag' to carry the produce home in. Although we ask you to not take the box with you, we encourage you to take the bag/liner. We don't need it back.

Second, visually there is not a huge difference between the boxes we pack the family and small shares in. The small share now uses the box we used to pack our standard shares in, and I think this has caused some confusion. But since we couldn't find a suitable smaller box (the next smaller size was too tiny, and we don't want to cram the produce in), we felt it better to err on the generous side, and make sure the produce in both shares had plenty of head room. Both boxes have the same 'footprint,' but the family share box is taller -- about 11" high; the small share box is about 8" high.

Third, the new family share boxes fold differently than the small share boxes. The family box you simply turn over and push in the bottom and it unlocks. The small share box you turn over and squeeze the flaps along the short sides to unlock. See diagram on check-list cover sheet. 🌿

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.)

Thank you to all who 'answered the call' to contribute to this weekly recipe section. I'm keeping a list and will be contacting each of you as the weeks progress. This week we have our first eager and enthusiastic contributor, P.K. O'Meagher. She gets a small share, and so configured her contribution accordingly. I'll add a few recipes for family share items she didn't cover. - Debbie

What I'd do with this week's box

by member PK O'Meagher of Aptos

Mmmm, the small share is looking good this week! While I agree with processing the lettuces when you open the box (i.e. rinsing, washing, drying, spinning, storing in paper towels in plastic bags, etc.), I usually don't process my other veggies until usage. I think it keeps 'em fresher!

The chard is always a wonderful item. I first came across chard in the open air marche/market in Morocco. My English friend, Jan, taught me how to prepare chard. Strip the leaves from the stems and chop the stems, then stir/steam stems in a little olive oil. This softens them, and you can either remove them from the pan or add the leaves which you have chiffonaded. Tossing in a little of the fresh green garlic always pumps the taste up! Don't cook them too long, as the crunch adds to the taste delight.

The carrots that we get with our shares usually come with the tops attached, which I really appreciate. I've heard the theory about removing the tops to make the

carrots last longer, but fresh carrots in our house don't usually have a chance to wilt. My family seems to have a Bugs Bunny complex – they love eating the carrots with the green part dangling – so I'll just scrub them to get soil off (there's a lot of vitamin content in the skin) and serve 'em right alongside the salads as part of the plate decoration.

The broccoli gets served raw also. I'll provide a fresh vinaigrette (lemon juice, olive oil, minced green garlic ends, salt and pepper) in individual ramekins, so as to facilitate dipping. Our vegetables are so fresh from the field - so crisp, crunchy and delectable – I often don't even cook them!

The strawberries that come from our area (another definite blessing from these parts) don't usually make it past two days. That's because they are gone! I'll rinse and stem them, and sprinkle a little amaretto liqueur on them, serve 'em in an old fashioned ice cream dish with a spring of fresh mint. Makes a delightful end to the meal.

Purée of Carrots & Apple with Mint

from "Recipes from the great chefs of Santa Cruz County" – Shadowbrook restaurant.
serves 4

2 medium apples, peeled, cored and diced
1/2 medium onion, diced
2 1/2 lbs. carrots, peeled and sliced
2 tbsp. powdered ginger
1 tsp. cinnamon
1 tsp. nutmeg

1/4 lbs. of potato, peeled and diced
1 qt. chicken stock
1/2 C half and half
1/2 C heavy cream
1 tbsp. brown sugar
fresh minced mint for garnish

Combine first 8 ingredients and simmer till tender. Purée in blender until smooth. Add half and half, cream and brown sugar, simmer to incorporate. Thin down with more stock if necessary. Garnish with mint.

Orange Ginger Beets on Wilted Stir-fry mix salad

made this one up last week! - Debbie

Roast beets, cool, peel and dice (to roast, rub with a little olive oil and wrap in foil, or place in a pan with a little water and cover with foil. Bake at 375 degrees for about 45 minutes [more for larger beets], until they pierce easily with a sharp knife). Have your mound of stir-fry mix washed and ready, as the 'wilt' process is very quick. Place diced beets in a saucepan or small skillet with a little butter, orange juice, honey, pinch of salt, and grated fresh ginger (or use some dried ground if you don't have fresh). Over medium heat, simmer until thickened and syrupy. Remove from heat, cover and set aside. In a wok-type skillet, heat some olive oil, toss in greens and a splash of water; toss/stir 'til just barely wilted, dress with a little champagne (or rice) vinegar. Mound wilted greens on a plate and top with warm syrupy diced beets (and optional slivered bits of jicama or maybe toasted nuts!).