



Live Earth Farm (Com)Post

A weekly newsletter for the Live Earth Farm CSA Community

4th Harvest Week

April 18th – 24th, 2005

Season 10

What's in the box this week:

Family Share:

Beets
Carrots
Chard
Dandelion greens
Fava beans (big bag)
Green garlic
Lettuce
Radishes
Rutabaga
Strawberries (3 baskets)

Small Share:

Carrots
Dandelion greens
Fava beans
Green garlic
Lettuce
Radishes
Rutabaga
Strawberries (2 baskets)

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

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

Field Notes from Farmer Tom

I sometimes joke that joining a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm like ours is like having your own garden, but with a farmer to do all the work for you. This week "your" garden is going through a major transformation. We are hard at work plowing under and preparing all the fields which have been under lush cover crops all winter, and transplanting thousands of seedlings which have been growing in the greenhouse over the last few months. The earlier we get those peppers, eggplant, basil, tomatoes, melons, and cucumbers into the soil, the sooner in June and July we can start enjoying their summer bounty. Yet even as I dream of future harvests, I also have a wonderful spring crop to rave about.

This week we are starting to harvest a much forgotten but delicious bean: the fava. It is truly a crop to celebrate Spring. My daughter Elisa, now 7 months old, was fascinated to be carried through the tall stands of fava beans, still flowering at the tips of their tall stems but loaded with thick harvestable pods at the base. I remember reading that this member of the pea family (*Vicia faba*) is one of the oldest known cultivated plants. They have been a part of cuisines all around the Mediterranean, and the Chinese have eaten them for more than 5000 years. Elisa is probably not the first child to be carried by a parent through a stand of tall green favas to harvest a meal, or just to play-hide from the Spring buzz all around her.

Fresh favas are a sign of spring in Italy and in many restaurants around the Bay Area. I like to mash or puree the fresh beans with some garlic and spread on crostini, or serve it together with seared scallops. When I am in a hurry I just blanch the shelled fava beans in a saucepan filled with water for 1 minute and add them to whatever I am making – pasta, risotto, chard – and then sprinkle all with some parmigiano and "voila!" It's a heavenly way to celebrate spring.

The fava is a unique legume. Not only is it high in protein (a benefit to us humans), but it also replenishes the soil by converting nitrogen in the air to compounds that plants can use, thus making it both a soil and a food crop. Legumes are a special family in the plant kingdom, because they have developed a mutually beneficial relationship with a group of bacteria called Rhizobium. The bacteria, in return for the sugars produced by the plant, will "fix" nitrogen from the air and turn it into nitrate, in a form plants can use. In some respect this symbiotic relationship is what inspired the CSA philosophy. CSAs are also mutually beneficial: as a community we promote and strengthen local, nutritious, sustainably grown food systems, which in turn nourish the health of our community and our bod-

"Each individual seedling is its own life, and yet all the garden together is also one. Like people; like families; like humanity..."

- from 'Zen Gardening' by Veronica Ray

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>

ies. As we celebrate another Spring and a new cycle of life, we as a community are slowly but surely making a difference. One member at a time we are changing a social, economic and political system that would have us believe it all doesn't matter, that as long as food is cheap and abundant we are all well off. But we know it *does* matter, and that is why we are doing what we're doing. □

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, longtime members Anna Espinosa and Lipti Oh from Morgan Hill volunteered their ideas for what they'd do with this week's box (okay, in truth, Lipti volunteered Anna's services). New this week clearly are the favas and the dandelion greens.. I'll talk some more about these and other stuff after Anna's contributions. - Debbie

What I'd do with this week's box

by Anna Espinosa of Morgan Hill

Our meals generally focus on health first and flavors second, but we do try to make dishes that will entice our daughters to eat them. Depending on the content of each share, how busy we are, and the desired taste of the week, our flavoring will range amongst Mexican, Chinese, Indian (Hindu) and Italian, using herbs and spices. This week, busy schedule dictates simple stir-frying and an Indian curry.

The first and easiest is to stir fry the dandelion greens with lots of coarsely chopped green garlic. Next is stir-frying the beet tops and chard with sweet red onions, yum! Favorite of the week is stir frying together peeled, sliced (raw) beets, sliced carrot and green garlic. Our girls love this "sweet, garlicky creamy mess" as they call it. The radishes in the share will be minced and mixed with finely chopped green onions and cilantro to make a fresh condiment (an acquired taste), when serving steamed pacific halibut or Alaskan salmon.

This week's curry will use up all the fava beans, sweet rutabaga and half of the carrots. The precooked beans, diced carrot, diced rutabaga and red sweet onions together with good curry powder make a hearty vegetable stew. Whole Foods market in Cupertino carries high quality Indian curry that is long on flavor and short on heat. The best, though, is to buy fresh ground spices from an Indian market.

We do not know what we will do next week, but that is all part of the fun!

Cilantro redux

Member Laura Dolson of Ben Lomond emailed me with a comment about cilantro with respect to Amoreena Lucero's recipe last week, and I told her I'd share it with the membership because she had a valid point. Many people do not know that cilantro stems have as much flavor and usability as the leaves. Often in recipes you will see people talking about removing the leaves from the stems, but this is not necessary. I literally chop up leaves and stems together, and maybe for something like Amoreena's pesto (which I made, by the way, and it was wonderful!) all you'd need to do is trim off the very root end, but use all of the rest. Anywhere I use cilantro myself (like when I make salsa fresca), I use both the leaves and stems together. This is particularly common in Thai cooking. - Debbie

Dandelion Greens

Dandelion greens are so-called 'bitter greens,' and therefore will stand up to strong flavorings. They can be an acquired taste for some, but when they are as fresh as the ones we'll be getting in this week's box, I think they will be very flavorful.

They would go well sautéed with garlic or onion and some salty thing (anchovies or bacon or sausage of some sort), or, literally cook them in well salted water (think seawater) a minute or two, then drain and season with vinegar, or lime juice and hot sauce of some sort, or olive oil and crushed red chiles. They would probably also go good with sautéed onions or garlic and mushrooms! Or as Anna suggested, you could simply combine them with chard in any chard recipe you might make.

I'm not sure as I've ever used them raw as a salad green, but would love to hear from other members with their experiences.

Beets and Beet Greens

Many people do not realize that the leaves and stems of the beets are also good to eat. So often people just twist them off and compost them. Like the carrots, you want to separate the beet root from its leaves/stems

before too long, or they will begin to draw from the root and make it rubbery. I like to chop the leaves off an inch above the root and wash them (separating out and discarding any withered or yellowing leaves), then spin off excess water in a salad spinner and store them layered in paper towel in a plastic bag. That way they're ready for use. A trick I've learned is, rather than chop the greens before cooking them, if you put the leaves/stems whole into a pot of boiling salted water (like you would pasta), then cook them until al dente, you can then drain them and now have a manageable lump of greens which you can then chop as coarsely or finely as you like. Last week I did this, then cooked the beets separately in a pressure cooker, then sliced up the beets (or you could dice them) and served them mixed in with the cooked, chopped greens and a little butter and balsamic vinegar.

How to cook fresh Fava Beans

I know I've talked about this in past years' newsletters, but I'll go over it again, for the benefit of you who are new to this wonderful legume which Tom regales in the body of this newsletter. Don't be daunted by the big sack of pods; the pods can get really big, but it is only really the beans inside which you eat. (Although in a past year we had a member mention how her mother-in-law cooked the pods too, cooked 'em down real good and all, but that she suspected that this 'recipe' sprang from a time when food was scarce, not out of a love of fava bean pods.)

Anyway, shell the favas and have a pot of boiling water and a slotted spoon standing by. Drop the fresh beans in and after a minute they will turn bright fresh green; scoop them out. If they're small, you can just cook with them or eat them as is. If they're on the big side (like large limas), you may want to peel off the skin. Either way they're great as a snack just sprinkled with a little salt, or cooked in the several ways Tom suggested!