



Live Earth Farm (Com)Post

A weekly newsletter for the Live Earth Farm CSA Community

19th Harvest Week July 31st – Aug. 6th, 2006

Season 11

What's in the box this week: (content differences between Family and Small Shares are underlined/italicized; items with a "+" in Family Shares are more in quantity than in Small)

Family Share:

Strawberries
Basil
Broccoli +
Carrots
Chard
Dandelion greens
Green beans +
Kale
Parsley
Potatoes
Summer squash
possible mystery item!

Small Share:

Strawberries
Basil
Broccoli
Carrots
Chard
Cucumbers
Green beans
Parsley
Potatoes
Carrots

Extra Fruit Option:

1 basket of strawberries, 1 basket of blackberries or raspberries, and 1 basket of Sungold cherry tomatoes!

After surviving one of the most extreme heat waves in recorded history, the cool coastal fog has never been more welcome. Most of our recently germinated or transplanted seedlings got heat damaged, and an explosion of shiny black flea beetles devoured what was still struggling to survive. Flea beetles are not fleas turned vegetarian who suddenly decided to abandon their warm mammalian habitat to chow down on some bitter arugula leaf. They are true beetles, hard bodied, and due to their acrobatic ability of hopping like fleas have gotten their common name of "flea beetle." They are miniscule, hibernating in the soil, laying their eggs around the base of a plant, and when conditions are right (i.e. hot weather) they will appear overnight, peppering the leaves of anything in the mustard or nightshade family with so many holes that all that is left is the outlines of what used to be a leaf. Unable to use a row cover (which was not an option since it would have increased the temperature even more), we hoped to keep them in check with frequent watering. But in the end we just couldn't keep up. So... mustard greens, arugula and radishes will not make it into your shares anytime soon, as those were the crops we lost. It will probably be 3 to 4 weeks before the next sowing will be harvested.

*"We are thankful for this meal
The work of many people
And the sharing of other forms
of life."*

- Buddhist prayer

Our natural world is one of constant contrast, and we seem to be in a period where the experience of these contrasts is becoming more extreme. On the farm, every season is different. There isn't a season when we aren't going around saying, "Isn't this unusual weather we're having." There is always something unusual about the weather and we work with the elements and have to take our chances with them. Whether they're kind or not, they're doing exactly what they're supposed to be doing. The unpredictability of the weather adds excitement to every season, keeping us from settling into complacency. It's an act of faith when we plant a seed and expect that in a few short months it will produce an abundant harvest. Plants and animals have to withstand whatever nature dishes out, and as farmers we experience the elements together with them. I like that! - Tom

Farmer Tom's Crop Notes

First, a quick logistical note, then on to one of my favorite subjects. Cucumbers and summer squash: for the next few weeks, we will be alternating cucumbers and summer squash between the Family and Small shares, as there is not enough to give an adequate amount of both to everybody each week.

Potatoes. Every year I write about them, one of my favorite crops, so this year is no exception! (These are excerpts from past newsletters.) The sight of a lush, green, potato field dotted with white and purple flowers, to me, is one of the highlights of the season. Slipping your hand under the loose soil and pulling up the first new potatoes is like finding buried treasure. Do you know that the so-called "Irish" potato actually comes from the highlands of Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador, where it has been cultivated for over 5000 years? Potatoes were the staple of the Incas, who grew and ate hundreds of varieties. The Irish were the first to grow the potato extensively since it yielded 4 to 5 times more calories per acre than any of the traditionally grown cereal grains. By

Live Earth Farm 2006 Calendar

(see calendar on website for more info)

Aug 25, 26, and 27 Children's Mini Camp
*** Sold Out***

Sat. Sept. 23 Fall Equinox Celebration
3pm until dark

Sat. Oct 21 Halloween Pumpkin Palooza

changing their diet, it allowed the Irish to survive without having to depend on the English grown grains. In war-torn Europe peasants planted potatoes as a kind of insurance since potatoes could be left in the ground through the winter and dug only as needed for daily consumption. This would allow peasants to survive the raids of soldiers during wartime: soldiers usually could not take the time to dig the field to get their food, and certainly they would not do so if grains were stored in neighboring barns. However in 1845-46, the year of the devastating Irish Potato Famine, late blight (*Phytophthora infestans*), a common fungal disease that thrives under cool and wet conditions (i.e. Irish weather) wiped out most of the Irish potato crop. Hundreds of thousands died before public relief could be organized, and scores of thousands who survived emigrated to America. The harsh lesson of this famine was the importance of maintaining a diversified farming system, i.e. don't rely solely on one type of crop (monocropping). Although potatoes grow underground they are not really roots. They are the swollen ends of skinny underground stems called rhizomes. To stimulate their growth, about a quarter to a third of the plant has to be covered with soil, or 'hilled up' to stimulate the formation of 'tubers.' Today heirloom potatoes are making a comeback, with hundreds of varieties now available in unique shapes/colors, from purple, to knobby fingerlings, to round, red-skinned boilers, to oval, brown-skinned boilers. 🍷

Notes from Debbie's Kitchen

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

Check out my **recipe database** for a comprehensive list of recipes 'by key ingredient' (pictures too!). Go to our website and click on "recipes" (on the left).

Phew, good riddance to that heat wave!! I don't recall one ever being that hot that long. Glad that's over! Last week, member Celesta Birnbaum sent me this marvelous cold yogurt cucumber soup recipe (in honor of the heat wave!), which I made and served this weekend to a bunch of friends. Rave reviews! Not just the adults, but also our friends' 14-month-old son loved it! A truer testament I know not. - Debbie

Versatile yogurt cucumber soup

from Deborah Madison's "Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone"

1 qt. yogurt, drained for 25 min. [I used Strauss Organic Creamery whole fat yogurt and it was already thick and wonderful, requiring no straining/draining – Debbie]

1/4 C chopped parsley

1 1/2 C milk or buttermilk [I used buttermilk]

3 tbsp. chopped mint

2 garlic cloves

1 tbsp. extra virgin olive oil

salt and freshly milled white pepper

few drops fresh lemon juice

2 cucumbers, peeled if waxed [I used 3 big ones, peeled and seeded]

4 to 6 mint sprigs for garnish (optional)

[I also used Celesta's suggestion, below, and grated and added 1 large fennel bulb, then used fennel fronds for garnish instead of mint sprigs – Debbie]

Combine the yogurt and buttermilk in a bowl. Pound the garlic with 1/2 teaspoon salt in a mortar until smooth. Halve the cucumbers lengthwise, scrape out the seeds, then grate them using the large holes of a grater. Stir the garlic, cucumber, herbs, and oil into the yogurt. Taste for salt and season with pepper and lemon juice. Chill well and serve garnished with mint sprigs.

Celesta says, "this soup recipe is really versatile. I used grated fennel, lots more mint, added some dill... it was good for two days."

Dandelion Greens with Bacon

I made this one up last time we had dandelion greens. Keep in mind that, among the so-called 'bitter greens,' dandelion greens are definitely on the 'more bitter' end of the spectrum, and so can really take strong flavorings. – Debbie

1 bu. dandelion greens, washed

1 medium onion, chopped

2 to 3 strips of bacon (Niman Ranch has a great nitrate-free bacon from humanely, sustainably raised pigs)

1 tbsp. or so brown sugar

2 tbsp. cider vinegar

handful of golden raisins

If you want to temper the 'bitter' of the dandelion greens a bit, try pre-cooking them in well-salted (think 'seawater') boiling water for a minute or so, then drain well and chop. If you're adventurous and not afraid of the strong greens, just chop them raw, then use them as follows:

Soak the raisins in the vinegar, maybe adding a little water, to cover. Chop raw bacon into small pieces then brown in a pan (I use a big nonstick wok), along with the onion. Add greens and stir fry/cook until wilted (if using the raw greens), or add cooked greens and stir to mix/heat through. Add raisins and their soaking liquid, plus the brown sugar and cook/stir until liquid cooks down a little and raisins are soft. Taste and adjust for salt, if needed.

And here are two potato recipes I saved from the Mercury News earlier this year (modified to accommodate our shares):

Spud Tacos

your favorite recipe for home fries or pan-fried potatoes

chopped cilantro

salt

grated cheddar or jack cheese

corn tortillas

Sprinkle hot, cooked home-fried potatoes with cilantro, salt and grated cheese, cover and allow to melt. Spoon mixture into soft, warm corn tortillas (I like to heat them directly over a gas burner on my stove using a pair of tongs, flipping and heating until they're supple, maybe the tiniest hint of carbon around the edges). Fold in half and eat, optionally topped with your favorite salsa and/or sour cream.

Spaghetti with Potatoes, Green Beans and Basil Pesto

Potatoes (fingerlings, red, Yukon, whatever)

Green beans

Your favorite pesto recipe

Spaghetti or linguine or fettuccine

Boil potatoes in salted water until fork tender; cut into bite sized pieces. Ditto for green beans. Cook your pasta. Combine pasta, potatoes and green beans, add enough pesto to lightly coat all and toss. Taste and season with salt and pepper if needed, then optionally top with grated parmesan or pecorino romano cheese.

Kale with anchovies, olives & lemon

cooked chopped kale (you guys know the drill by now! If not, see other recipes on the recipe database)

smashed and chopped garlic

tin of anchovies in olive oil, chopped

toasted chopped pine nuts

chopped anchovy-stuffed olives

capers

zest of a lemon, minced

juice of 1/2 to 1 lemon

crushed red chilies

cooked pasta (fettuccine, penne, whatever)

grated fresh parmesan

Saute garlic in olive oil from anchovies, add rest of ingredients through crushed chilies, toss with cooked pasta to combine well, then serve topped with grated fresh parmesan. Yum!