



# Live Earth Farm (Com)Post

A weekly newsletter for the Live Earth Farm CSA Community

2nd Harvest Week

April 3<sup>rd</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup>, 2006

Season 11

## What's in the box this week:

### Family Share:

Meyer lemons  
Mixed bunch beets (red & golden)  
Broccolini  
Red cabbage  
Chard  
Fennel  
Lacinato "dinosaur" kale  
Baby leeks  
Lettuce (butter & red leaf)  
Bag of mustard greens (mix of mizuna & red mustard)  
Rutabagas  
Spinach

### Small Share:

Mixed bunch beets (red & golden)  
Broccolini  
Chard  
Fennel  
Baby leeks  
Lettuce (butter & red leaf)  
Bag of mustard greens (mix of mizuna & red mustard)  
Rutabagas  
Spinach

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

### Extra Fruit:

(doesn't start 'til May)

Weather, Crops and Spring Mating Strategies. March was the wettest in recorded history in this area, and it looks like this extended "rinse cycle" will continue. This morning the rain gauge held another inch of water. The silver lining of this extended rain pattern is that the aquifers and reservoirs are being recharged, but for farmers it's a challenging start of the season. In order to keep the strawberry plants healthy, any water-damaged red berries need to be picked before they start molding. Lots of green berries are currently on the plants though (the rain does not harm them), and if we get a little sunshine and dry weather they'll ripen quickly. We are teaming up with other organic farmers to create a share this week. Although we are all affected equally by the weather there is a large diversity of crops among organic farmers in this valley. Some grow citrus and avocados, some have sandy soil to grow lettuce, others have patches of thriving watercress, and from our own fields we are harvesting a mix of tender mustard greens (mizuna and red mustard), a few French breakfast radishes (probably not enough for all the shares), and baby butterhead lettuce. Last week we harvested the last of our mature carrots, so it'll be 3 to 4 weeks before the next crop of carrots currently in the field are big enough to harvest and put in your shares again. I am reminded how our food system is dependent on a balanced and delicate set of climatic conditions. The only controlled environment we have is our greenhouses, where we start our seedlings. When they're ready to be planted in the field, however, we are gambling with Mother Nature's elements. In order to plow, cultivate and plant we need the right moisture level – not too wet, not too dry. When I drove through the Salinas Valley yesterday I looked enviously at a farmer cultivating his fields; the soil he was on was sandy. Ours is a heavier clay loam and takes a week to drain and dry before any tractor can get in.

*"The future might well be one of confidence in the continuing revelation that takes place in and around the Earth..."*

- Thomas Berry

Most of you understand that eating with the seasons is a wonderful way to develop a connection with your food, but it does sometimes require you to be creative and flexible in your cooking. Consider it a culinary adventure: while you may have always hated beets that come from a can, they are no comparison to eating farm-fresh golden or over-wintered red beets. You will love their sweet earthy taste. Their colors are deep and brilliant, and their texture varies depending how you cook them (or don't cook them, as you can even eat them raw – typically grated or juiced like a carrot). Browse the many recipes on our website and find out that being creative by learning to substitute familiar vegetables with more unfamiliar ones is an exciting way to discover new flavors, colors, and textures. And though it may be tempting to buy strawberries at the store that have been shipped here from drier and milder southern climates... just imagine, on the other hand, how good the strawberries you'll eventually be getting with your CSA share will taste when they come freshly-picked from your local farm, after you have waited all winter!

Another delicate act of nature where climate conditions play a critical role is pollination. Right now our Warren pears, peaches and first apple varieties are starting to bloom, and they need to be pollinated in order to bear fruit. Pollination is in fact how plants mate. It happens with the help of birds, bees, as well as bats, flies, wind, and even slugs. Without these "cupids" none of our fruit trees would set a decent crop. In the case of our Warren pears, it is humans that help ensure successful pollination. We dust our orchard with compatible pear pollen by puffing it on the flow-

## Live Earth Farm 2006 Calendar

(see calendar on website for more info)

Sat. June 17	<u>Summer Solstice Celebration</u> field tours 2 - 5 celebrations 5 - 9
Aug 25, 26, and 27	<u>Children's Mini Camp</u> Friday evening to noon Sunday
Sat. Sept. 23	<u>Fall Equinox Celebration</u> 3pm until dark
Sat. Oct 21	<u>Halloween Pumpkin Palooza</u>

ers. It is very labor intensive, and we have to time it with the right weather conditions to ensure successful fertilization. Over the next two weeks we hope to find enough windows of opportunity to engage in a successful "mating" dance with our pears. Then we wait and see whether the ovule swells or the entire flower falls off. Pears are picked in August together with apples. - Tom

## New Farm Intern

Last week we welcomed Maria Cristina from Ecuador to our farm. She joins us through a farmer-to-farmer exchange program sponsored by MESA. MESA is a non-profit organization that sponsors ecological farmer-to-farmer exchanges between participating countries and the United States. Since 1997 over 250 aspiring farmers from 25 different countries have participated in this program, and we are excited to participate in it for the first time this year. Maria Cristina is in her last semester to get her degree in Agronomy at the National University (Universidad Central), and she wants to learn more about sustainable farming practices here in California to share and return with new insights and skills to her home country at the end of this year. 🍷

## Notes from Debbie's Kitchen

Have a recipe you'd like to share? Contact me at [deb@writerguy.com](mailto: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.)

*Though I'm as ready as the next person to start getting strawberries, we should all be thankful for the nice variety of produce Tom has grown and/or garnered for us this week considering the unprecedented wet weather we're having. And for those of you who started last week, he switched strategies on the beets: instead of alternating weeks for who gets red and who gets goldens, he's going to bunch them such that you get a few of each. That's nice because it really is fun to have both! But I'm going to give you some recipes for the other stuff this week, since we covered beets last week! (If you missed it, see the newsletter online. It's posted on our website.) - Debbie*

### Fennel and Baby Leek pasta sauce

from Debbie's kitchen

I made this one up last week, and it was so good I figured y'all would like to try it too!

1 or more fennel bulbs  
your bunch of baby leeks  
a couple cloves garlic, minced  
zest and juice from one lemon  
some butter, some olive oil  
a little salt, a little sugar (optional)  
canned chopped organic tomatoes  
some vermouth or similar white wine  
pasta of your choice (I like linguine)  
freshly grated parmesan (optional)

Cut the stalks from the fennel bulbs, then cut off and reserve a portion of the fronds, discarding any that are yellowed. Discard (compost) the stalks. Trim off bottom of bulb and remove outermost layer only if it looks too brown or bruised. Quarter bulb, then slice it thinly crosswise (it's okay to include the core, as when it sautées down it will become tender). Chop up reserved fronds.

Take your baby leeks and chop off the root ends, removing outermost layer if it is slimy. When the leeks are this small, a good portion of the green stalk is still useable, so I only cut off an inch or two of the ends – use your judgement on what looks 'good.' Carefully slice lengthwise down the leek from the

green end partway into the white, then separate layers and rinse under cold running water to get all the dirt out (they can hold a lot of dirt!). Chop trimmed and washed leeks and set aside.

Melt butter in a large skillet, add some olive oil and heat. Add sliced fennel and leeks and sauté over high heat, stirring occasionally, until brown in places and getting soft. Add some water and cover, maybe reducing heat some (you can leave it over high heat, but keep an eye on it so it doesn't burn!). Check after a few minutes, stir, add more water and keep doing this until the fennel and leeks are soft and golden (maybe 10 – 15 minutes?). Add garlic, lemon zest, and salt to taste and sauté a minute or two more, then add tomatoes, vermouth (1/4 to 1/3 C), lemon juice, and a little sugar (maybe 1/2 to 1 tsp. – it sweetens the tomatoes) and stir in the chopped fennel fronds. Cover, and reduce heat to medium and cook until reduced to desired consistency, 10 to 20 minutes more, depending on volume of sauce and how high you have the heat. Serve over pasta and pass the parmesan!

### Mustard Greens = Salad Greens

Folks who've been members for a couple years have heard my song and dance on this before, but I stand by it. I love using mustard greens as a salad green, either by themselves, or mixed with other lettuces. They have a wonderful peppery/mustardy bite (pick out a vibrant red mustard leaf and chew it to see what I mean – at first, nothing, then \*wow\* yummy flavorful heat!). Since we're getting red leaf and butter lettuce this week, I'd go ahead and mix them together into a huge leafy-green salad. You could even peel and grate up some red and golden beets into the mix (or sometimes I'll use a vegetable peeler to make paper thin slices of raw beet to mix into a salad). Dress with your favorite dressing and voila!

*And here's a variation on last week's mashed-rutabaga-instead-of-potatoes:*

### Rutabaga-carrot mash with lemon

Debbie's kitchen again

Rutabagas  
Carrots (if you still have 'em from last week)  
Lemon  
Salt  
Butter (optional)

Peel rutabagas and carrots (I use a sharp knife to cut off the thick skin of the rutabaga and a veggie peeler on the carrots). Cut them into 1/2" chunks and place in a pot. Cover with water and add a goodly amount of salt (like half a teaspoon or more, not just a pinch). Bring to a boil then reduce heat and simmer 10 to 15 minutes, until they're tender and easily pierce with a sharp knife. Drain well and mash with a potato masher, or if you like a smoother consistency, use a food processor or blender (they won't gum up like potatoes). Squeeze in a bunch of fresh lemon juice and stir to incorporate. Serve just like that, or add some butter (or you can let people add butter at the table).

### Rutabaga Stix

When I was a kid my mom used to do this, and I always liked it. 'Course maybe it was because I liked mayonnaise... but anyway, peel rutabagas then cut into 1/4 to 1/2" slices, then again crosswise into sticks. Serve with mayonnaise for dipping! Actually, you could serve them for dipping in any number of things: favorite salad dressings or dips – heck, I eat carrots and peanut butter, so I bet rutabaga sticks and peanut butter would be good too!

### Hot Salad Redux

My favorite way to eat kale (or broccolini)! One bunch of kale is good for 2 people. Wash leaves, then strip greens from stems (compost stems). Cook greens in well salted boiling water [think seawater] for 3 minutes. Drain well and chop. Divide between two salad plates, drizzle generously with olive oil and squeeze on a bunch of fresh lemon juice. It's good just like that, or try topping with grated fresh parmesan cheese. Yum!