



Live Earth Farm (Com)Post

A weekly newsletter for the Live Earth Farm CSA Community

28th Harvest Week

October 2nd – 8th, 2006

Season 11

What's in the box this

week: (content differences between Family and Small Shares are underlined and italicized; items with a "+" in Family Shares are more in quantity than in Small)

Family Share:

Avocados

Broccolini +

Napa cabbage

Chard or kale

Cucumbers

Green beans +

Lettuce

Potatoes

Sweet peppers +

Tomatoes

Winter squash (sweet dumplings)

Small Share:

Apples

Broccolini

Chard or kale

Cucumbers

Green beans

Lettuce

Potatoes

Sweet peppers

Tomatoes

Winter squash (sweet dumplings)

Extra Fruit Option:

Pears, apples, and either berries or concord grapes!

Compost or Manure what is the difference? I need to clarify my explanation about the role manure plays in building healthy and fertile soils here on the farm, since some questions arose when I wrote about it two newsletters ago. When I mentioned that we do not use manure to build and enrich our soils, I really meant We Do Not Use Manure. However, manure is an integral part of all compost which is applied to the soil. "So what's the difference?" you might ask. I'm likely preaching to the choir for those who love composting, but when I think of compost it is the single most important element to maintaining a healthy soil. Nature has been making compost eons before humans first walked the earth. Life on earth and its greenness is testimony to nature's continuing composting process, a natural process of death and birth that occurs almost anywhere and, like water and air, is essential of life. The road from raw organic material to finished compost is a complex one, because both chemical and microbial processes are responsible for their gradual change from one to the other.

Manure, then, is only one of many important organic components that follows a chain of chemical and biological breakdown until it reaches a biologically stable state

we call humus. Humus is the stable end product of composting, rich in nutrients and organic matter highly beneficial to soil and crops alike. When we apply compost, there is no recognizable trace of its original ingredients (i.e. of the manure, or the rotten tomato that went into it at the beginning of the process). All we are left with is a rich, dark, crumbly, musky smelling substance any organic farmer or gardener considers gold.

*"From each according to his abilities,
to each according to his needs."*

- Karl Marx

Time to early register for next season! The life cycle of the farm is like that of a seed. Just as we harvest seeds in the fall to save for planting again next spring, so too are we asking for your renewed commitment to membership in our Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program. This seed-like commitment we will save during the dormant and slower months ahead as a guarantee of another cycle of growth and abundance next year. This year we experienced such an incredible increase in participation that less than halfway through the season we reached capacity and had to close the CSA to new members. This was a first in our 11-year farming history. It is truly exciting though, since your commitment reflects a growing support for local, sustainable farms that aim to be ecologically sound, socially just and economically viable. These are the three principles our farm is guided by.

However, even though we reached full membership this year, the cost of farming has increased disproportionately to our revenues. Consequently, we need to raise our prices in 2007 by 15-20%. The last time we had a change in price was in 2005, when we began offering a small share, and costs have just not stayed the same. Most of our cost increases result from increasing the wages of our workers, so that they might make a decent living and afford decent and stable housing in Watsonville. Our hope next year is to finally offer them basic health insurance and provide the opportunity for continuing education. Another substantial increase in our operating costs over the last two years has been the increase in prices of fuel and energy, insurance, seed, fertilizer, and packing materials among other things. The good news is, we have expanded our use of renewable energy by increasing our use of biodiesel and by investing in a large solar array to offset the cost of electricity purchased from PG&E. Your commitment is at the core of what Community Supported Agriculture stands for, and is what makes this farm really "A-live" Earth Farm. We encourage you to early register and join us again for another season. See Debbie's blurb on the back of this newsletter for instructions on how to do this. And thank you for your support! - Tom

Live Earth Farm 2006 Calendar

(see calendar on website for more info)

Sat. Oct 21 Halloween Pumpkin Palooza

Nov. 15/16 Last 'regular season' shares!

Nov. 29 First Winter Share delivery

Early Registration for 2007 now available!

I think the most exciting news for many of you will be the fact that not only will we have *more* egg shares next year, but we will also be offering them in half-dozen increments! Many, many people were interested in those fabulous pastured eggs but could not use up a dozen a week, so we conferred with Jim Dunlop of TLC Ranch and he will deliver all our eggs in half-dozen cartons next year. All this means is, if you want a whole dozen eggs each week, remember to order two units!

What else do you need to know? Let's see... we currently have almost 550 members and a waiting list closing in on 200. So in order to treat everyone fairly, we will offer early registration to members only (that's you!) during the month of October, so you all will have 'first dibs' at getting the share combination you want. In November, we will open up the field to everyone on the waiting list as well. Then in December, if we still have shares available, we will open up registration to the general public.

Tom already explained the rate increase; here are the actual new share costs for next year: Small Shares will be \$23/week, Family Shares \$28/week, the Extra Fruit Option will be \$10/week, and the eggs will be \$3.25 per half dozen. We won't be increasing the number of shares (500) or extra fruit (300), but we will have more eggs than we did this year. Jim is significantly increasing his flock of egg-layers, so he has assured us 250 dozen eggs/week. As in seasons past, we will continue to offer payment discounts for members who pay via our One or Two-Payment plans, but you don't need to worry about that right now. All we need now is a deposit.

The deposit required to reserve your share is \$200, no matter what your share combination is. The deposit will be deducted from your balance due next year (i.e. it is not in addition to the cost of your shares). In order to reserve your share, you need to early register and send me your deposit. I will email you a confirmation upon receipt of your check. Now we understand that not everyone can just up and write a check for \$200, especially if you just did so for our Winter Share, so if you are one of these people, you may post-date your check any time between now and the end of December. But please *mail* it to us *now*, so I have it and can then confirm your share. I will not *deposit* it until after the date you have written on your check. Alternatively you may break your deposit into two checks for \$100 each, if you like, dating one now, and one later; just please mail them both now.

Ready to sign up now?? Go to <http://www.liveearthfarm.com/2007EarlyReg.html> and complete/send the form at the bottom of the page then mail us your deposit check. As with the Winter Share, this web page is NOT available to the general public, so you can't just go to our website and look for it. You must either manually type in the URL above, or you can go to the electronic version of this newsletter on our website, and I will make it a live link which you can just click on from there. – Debbie 🍷

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).

Tom tells me the Sweet Dumpling squash are big and wonderful this year, so I can't wait to try them! And also, for fruit share people, we are happy to announce the return of those delicious concord grapes!! Not all fruit shares will get grapes this week, but we should have more over the next couple weeks so every fruit share will get them eventually. Meanwhile, friend and member Mark Stevens made up the following recipe, and although we're not getting beets this week, I'm sure many of you, like me, still have some in your fridge. - Debbie

Hash "Reds"

by member Mark Stevens
serves 4, with leftovers

One share worth of potatoes (about 4 medium to large size potatoes)
One share worth of beets (4 smaller beets)
2 sweet peppers
One medium yellow onion (okay, so I cheated – not from the share)
1/2 stick of butter
Olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste

Chop potatoes into large dice (I sliced the potatoes in half at the widest point, then into slices, then cut up the slices into thirds or halves). The thickness should be

roughly consistent so that they cook evenly. Set aside in bowl with cold water to cover. Chop beets in smaller dice than potatoes (roughly half the size and depth) and set aside in a small bowl. Dice onion and peppers and set aside in a bowl together, covering with plastic if you won't be cooking immediately. At this point, the ingredients can sit for up to an hour while you work on other things.

In non-stick large frying pan with lid (or something that serves as a lid), melt butter and mix with oil. Heat oil/butter mixture until hot, then add onion and peppers. Stir to coat. Stir in beets. Drain potatoes, leaving them a little wet (the water from the potatoes will provide steam for the mixture). Add drained potatoes, stir, then cover. Cook on medium high heat covered, stirring occasionally, until potatoes are cooked through (about 15 minutes). Add liquid (I used some wine because it was easy to grab, but you could use stock, broth, or whatever) in small amounts as necessary to keep steaming the mix without cooling it down. Uncover after ingredients are cooked, and continue to cook uncovered on high heat. Brown to taste (onions and peppers should be nice and browned). Salt and pepper to taste. Serve immediately.

What I'd do with Sweet Dumpling Squash

First of all, if you want to see what these look like, there are pictures in the recipe database on the website. Meanwhile, I'd cook them like I might acorn squash: cut them in half lengthwise, scoop out the seeds, then bake face down on a lightly oiled pan, medium oven (350 – 375 degrees) until soft (maybe 30 minutes?). You can eat them just like this, or turn 'em over and put a jot of butter in the center, and maybe a little salt and bake 'em a little longer, until the butter is bubbly. I sometimes also like to put a small spoonful of brown sugar in with the butter.

On the other hand, I might peel, seed, and slice the squash, steam until al dente, then do a stir-fry with the Napa cabbage, some sweet peppers, onion and garlic, and the squash slices. Add a little salt and pepper, maybe some herbs: sage and/or thyme might be nice!

Or I bet a soup made with tomatoes and sweet dumpling squash would be good. I'd peel and chop the tomatoes and squash, sauté some onion in a little butter, add the tomatoes and squash and cook until all was soft, puree and return to the pot, then season with salt (cream optional)!