



Live Earth Farm (Com)Post

A weekly newsletter for the Live Earth Farm CSA Community

4th Harvest Week

April 17th – 23rd, 2006

Season 11

What's in the box this week:

Family Share:

Strawberries
Beets
Broccoli
Green cabbage
Chard
Fennel
Lettuce
Green garlic
Leeks
Sugar snap peas

Small Share:

(maybe strawberries;
see the binder at your
pick-up location)

Beets
Broccoli
Chard
Lettuce
Green garlic
Leeks
Sugar snap peas

(items in the small share
are sometimes less in
quantity than in the family
share)

Extra Fruit:

(doesn't start 'til May)

Live Earth Farm is making the news! Articles about Live Earth Farm and CSAs are coming out in several newspapers over the next week to the next month. The Santa Cruz Sentinel has been interested in our Warren pears, and their story should be out next week. Our 2 1/2 acre orchard is one of the largest standing orchards in the county. The reason for that is not that pears have never been grown here at a larger scale, but because the niche has been replaced by other more economically attractive crops. Pears, from the time they are planted, take 4 to 5 years to start producing fruit, which under current land prices is no longer feasible as compared to the more lucrative strawberry and raspberry crops. The second reason is that in coastal climates like ours which are more humid, most pear varieties are prone to "fire blight," a hard to control bacterial disease. The Warren variety, as it turns out, is strongly resistant to fire blight. It was eight years ago when we started leasing land from a nearby organic farmer that we inherited an almost mature stand of Warren pears. At that time the farmer mentioned that, even though the trees showed strong resistance to fire blight, he had little luck of getting them to set fruit. Ever since, we have been experimenting with various pollination strategies including grafting other pear varieties into the existing trees, encouraging more bees to work the orchard during their bloom period, and hand applying purchased pollen. We noticed that bees have little interest in the Warren pear flowers, either for lack of pollen, nectar or both. So over the last few years we have focused mostly on applying pollen manually, and experimented with different types of pollen to identify which variety would most effectively ensure a good fruit set. For manual pollination, the weather conditions have to be warm and windless. So I am crossing my fingers this week that we can apply one or two more dustings of pollen, since the bloom is 1/2 to 3/4 open. This is our last chance before the bloom period is over. So when you read this, don't just imagine us trudging around in the muddy soil, but also buzzing around blooming pear trees like bees.

"We must consider it a scientific fact that you are what you eat. The same molecules that make up the food we consume become the molecules of our minds and bodies."

- Tom Willey, of T&D Willey Farm

Joanne Domingue, a fellow CSA member and freelance journalist, is also writing an article about CSAs to be included in several SVCN [Silicon Valley Community Newspapers] weeklies, including the Sunnyvale Sun, Almaden Resident, Rose Garden Resident, Cupertino Courier, Los Gatos Weekly Times and Saratoga News. Joanne says these will be cover stories, so keep an eye out for them sometime in the next month. (And save us a copy if you think of it!) Last week when Joanne called me for an interview she asked me how organic produce from Safeway differs from what we get in our shares every week. The heart of this question, I believe, is really how can we feed ourselves more sustainably? CSA farms are important models that help us move toward this goal. The culture of supermarkets is mostly about centralized control, and is dependent on long distance and large scale production and distribution networks. Currently most of the food grown in this country is controlled by a small handful of folks who are making decisions about how we are fed. This centralized food system has impacted our health, and we are now recognizing that most serious illnesses are diet related. Community Supported Agriculture is about people coming together to

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>

reclaim their right to have access to healthy food. It is about knowing where it is produced, by whom, and at what scale. As a farmer once said to me, "food should have a place, a face and a taste." Many children and even adults are accustomed to the idea that it merely comes from the grocery store, the kitchen or some fast food restaurant. Again I would like to quote farmer and writer Michael Ableman from his latest book "Fields of Plenty," which is full of well-grounded ideas about how to build upon the many wonderful sustainable farming examples sprinkled across the United States. Michael says, "Food should not just be considered fuel, measured in calories and grown out of sight by anonymous people. ... The most important aspect of a healthy food system is relationships - interpersonal, biological, and ecological. ... Growing and eating food are sacred acts; we need to reclaim them from the scientists, and the industrialists, the bureaucrats and the organicrats."

It is during the more challenging periods, like the rainy start of this season, that we recognize how important the network of relationships (members, land, crops, animals, mother nature) is to keep a local food system thriving. So I thank you for choosing to participate in this CSA. Becoming a member of our farm also means that we have the opportunity to learn and engage in a meaningful way to change our local food system. Everyone should have access to healthy fresh, diverse, and locally grown food. - Tom

Fruit Update from Farmer Tom

Strawberries: It seems we are getting a well deserved break in the weather and with a little more sun the long awaited ripe sweet strawberries should appear in your shares. Last week we had to "pick-off" all the strawberries damaged by previous rains, and some of you got a small basket of those that had survived and were spared from mold. Although a far cry from what they will taste like once "normal" growing conditions start (if there is such a thing), it was our very first harvest and I couldn't resist but share them with as many of you as possible.

Our other fruit trees: the Santa Rosa plum trees have only a light to moderate fruit set this year, as they were in bloom during periods of heavy rain and hail. The Satsuma Plums (my favorite), which bloomed about 2 to 3 weeks later, look a lot better, partly because we made sure pollen was applied manually onto the trees. The French plums are just starting to flower, and the young Pluots (a cross between a plum and an apricot) which we planted a couple of years ago all have a very nice fruit set. 🍷

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.)

Celesta Birnbaum, a happy CSA member right here in Watsonville, has emailed me a couple of times with recipes; I'll have to save her rutabaga ideas for when we get those again, but since we've been getting Chard pretty regularly, she tried and recommends the following recipe. She said, "This made our soup and bread meal a real treat." - Debbie

Chard Gratin

from Deborah Madison's cookbook "Local Flavors" (see the end for Celesta's version!)

2 lbs. chard, incl. half of the stems (Add other tender greens if you don't have enough chard.)
4 tbsp. butter
1 onion, finely chopped
salt and pepper
1 C fresh bread crumbs
1 garlic clove, minced
3 tbsp. chopped dill or parsley
1 tbsp. flour
1 C milk or cream or a mixture of cream and stock
1 C crumbled fresh goat cheese or grated cheddar

Coarsely chop the chard. Melt 2 tbsp. butter in wide skillet over medium heat. Cook onion and chard stems, stirring occasionally, until onion has begun to brown. Add the chard leaves, sprinkle with salt, and cook until wilted and tender, about 10 minutes. Meanwhile, preheat oven to 400F and lightly oil a 2-quart baking dish. Melt half the

remaining butter in a small skillet and add the bread crumbs, garlic, and dill. Cook, stirring for about a minute, then scrape the crumbs into a bowl and return the pan to the heat. Melt the last tbsp. of butter, stir in the flour, and whisk in the milk. Simmer 5 minutes and add to the chard mixture. Add the cheese, correct for salt, and season with pepper. Pour into the prepared dish and cover with the bread crumbs. Bake until heated through and golden on the surface, about 25 minutes. Let settle a few minutes before serving.

Celesta's version (she says she used leeks and green garlic, and lots of goat cheese!)

Separate chard leaves and stems. Dice stems and toss in a skillet w/butter and onions (the baby leeks might do well here) and cook until starting to brown (about 20 min). Add roughly chopped chard leaves and salt and cook for another 5 to 10 min. Preheat oven to 400F and lightly oil a gratin dish. Melt butter in skillet and sauté some bread-crumbs w/parsley or dill (add some chopped green garlic to this) for a minute or two and set aside. Make a bit of bechamel using butter, flour and milk (or cream) and add it to chard mixture. Add lots of crumbled goat cheese and mix it up. Pour into gratin dish and top with herby-garlicky bread crumbs. Bake until heated through and starting to brown on top, around 20 min. or so.

And here is a recipe I found online which

uses cabbage, and it sounded good so I though I'd share it! The website credits the recipe to Terra Brockman, the director of The Land Connection Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to preserving farmland and promoting small-scale, diversified, organic agriculture in Illinois. - Debbie

Cabbage with Cashews

(Original recipe was for "Chard and Cashews," but said it was also 'good with kale, cabbage, or other greens' so I modified it accordingly - Debbie)

One head cabbage, shredded
1 tbsp. butter
2 tsp. honey
¼ to ½ tsp. cinnamon or nutmeg
¼ C cashews, chopped
Salt & pepper to taste

Sauté shredded cabbage in butter for 5 minutes. Add honey, cinnamon, and cashews and sauté until cabbage has softened, and/or cover and steam until tender, about 5 - 10 minutes. Season as desired and serve.

Variation for an oriental flavor: Instead of butter, use good lard, unrefined coconut oil, or olive oil. Instead of spices and cashews, splash soy sauce on the sautéing greens and add sesame seeds to taste. Mandarin orange sections add a nice touch.

Variation with an Ethiopian flavor: Use chopped onion and sauté in butter until crispy tender. Season generously with turmeric, a very healthful spice, and toss to blend seasonings.