



Live Earth Farm (Com)Post

A weekly newsletter for the Live Earth Farm CSA Community

9th Harvest Week

May 22nd – 28th, 2006

Season 11

What's in the box this week: (content differences between Family and Small Shares are underlined/italicized)

Family Share:

Strawberries

Avocados

Arugula

Broccoli or cauliflower*

Baby carrots

Celery*

Fava beans

Green garlic

Leeks

Lettuce

Green/young onions

Mystery item (fennel* or chard)

Small Share:

Avocado

Arugula

Broccoli or cauliflower*

Baby carrots

Celery*

Fava beans

Leeks

Lettuce

Green/young onions

Extra Fruit:

2 – 3 baskets of strawberries and more avocados

*from nearby Lakeside Organic Farm

A morning walk with Farmer Tom. Balancing our busy lives by slowing down to make space and enjoy a moment in nature is not always easy. You might think of farming as the perfect job when it comes to staying connected with nature, however, I've discovered it takes a conscious effort to develop and experience a deeper relationship. It is true, I have an advantage. I step out of my four walls and walk the farm. I walk the same paths I have walked for the last 11 years. It's become an important daily ritual for me. Over the years I feel this ritual has helped me hone my senses to read, listen, feel, and taste the land. Every walk is different; things are constantly changing and never the same from one moment to the next.

As I step out of the house to head over to the chicken coop I am reminded why the valley we live in is called *Pajaro*. In spring, the farm is filled with birdlife. A few years ago a passionate bird watcher familiar with the local bird population identified over 40 different types of birds here on the farm. As I walk past one of our rose bushes, a pair of very territorial blackbirds dive for my head. I instinctively duck, and remember that the next 3 to 4 weeks I will need to stay farther away from these bushes. Roosters are crowing and our chickens are already busy scratching and pecking for tasty morsels in the ground. Our five roosters and 80-plus chickens are fun to watch! I enter the chicken coop and notice four hens have started to brood so I mark their nests to avoid taking their eggs. I collect 2 1/2 dozen eggs and place them in the cooler.

Our new greenhouse which is right next to the chicken coop has been an important improvement for the farm this season, especially this spring, when we needed the additional space for the many plants which had to wait before the fields were dry enough for planting. The second crop of pepper seedlings is developing nicely. These are my favorite – the pimento peppers. In two weeks they'll need to be transplanted. I am relieved that most of the greenhouse tables are now empty. Our last big planting was Friday and Saturday of last week, and it feels good to have beat the latest rain, which was enough to have delayed us for another week.

From the Greenhouse I walk through the orchard. For most fruit tree growers this is a terrible year. The latest rain didn't help much either; our apricots and peaches have suffered and are showing a very light fruit set. Also, many of our peach trees are getting older and many more are dying. Given our heavy clay soils, roots have stayed waterlogged for too long and the lack of good drainage has caused root damage. The plums look a lot better and are showing many little fruits. This year the bloom was later than usual – the Fujis, for example, are still blooming. In a normal year they should've finished blooming 3 to 4 weeks ago. But nowadays, what's 'normal?'

I walk over to the blackberries and discover a few ripe ones among our thorny varieties. We grow different varieties some have thorns others are thornless, and each flowers at different stages so that our harvest can be staggered all the way through August. I pop a juicy berry in my mouth I head over to see our mama goat and her three little babies.

"We must draw our standards from the natural world. We must honor with the humility of the wise the bounds of that natural world and the mystery which lies beyond them ... something which evidently exceeds all our competence."

- Vaclav Havel

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>

Maria Christina, our intern from Ecuador, has been tending the baby goats as if they were her own children. The little ones have been suckling preferentially on only one of their mother's teats, causing her to develop a slight case of mastitis (an infection in the udder), which can be quite painful. When I arrive, the babies are frolicking and mom looks at me with curiosity. I check her condition and it seems things are getting back to normal – both teats are equally full of milk indicating the babies are starting to suckle on both.

I then walk up to my favorite place to catch a view of the valley from under the oak tree. The clouds this morning are beautiful; I anticipate more rain, and close my eyes for a minute to smell the fresh air. I don't have to worry about watering today. Finally I head back to the house, and my cell phone starts ringing. It's Juan calling to let me know the gasket on the diesel pump of one of our tractors is leaking. I notice the weeds are starting to explode in our recently transplanted field of peppers, eggplant, squash, and basil, and my watch tells me to hurry as I must get my son to the bus. The day has begun and I am off, thankful to have had a few minutes to enjoy a quiet morning walk. - Tom

Pastured Chickens from Jim and Rebecca at TLC Ranch

Like their eggs? Well you can get meat chickens from them too! If you are interested in getting fresh, pasture-raised, organic chicken, TLC Ranch has two butchering dates coming up soon. The first is **this Thursday May 25th** and the second is 2 weeks later, **Thursday June 8th**. Customers can go to their farm and pick up whole chickens between **4-7pm**. The chickens are fresh, not frozen, so be sure to bring along a cooler or some way to keep them chilled until you get them home. Their ranch is located at 420 Hall Road in Las Lomas, just south of Watsonville. Take the Salinas Rd. exit off Highway 1 and go right on Elkhorn Road, then left on Hall Road. Follow signs to the Triple M Ranch office where they process their chickens. This is also a great opportunity to meet Jim and if you've never seen pastured chickens and pigs, to visit their ranch in Las Lomas.

Rebecca says, "These chickens will be better than any you may have had last year. They are slower growing birds that have been fed raw milk in addition to all-organic feed and pasture. We have white, red, and black chickens available. Price if you pick them up at the farm is \$16 a chicken, and chickens will weigh around 4 lbs. each. You will not find a more succulent, flavorful chicken in any grocery store. Please email us [tasteslikechickenranch@yahoo.com] to let us know how many chickens you want and on which day you will come get them."

In the future, they are looking into the possibility of doing deliveries to a couple of drop-off locations in Santa Cruz and Santa Clara Counties, so that you don't have to travel so far to come get your chickens. They will probably cost a little more (to cover the cost of delivery). If this sounds like something you'd be interested in, PLEASE let Rebecca and Jim know so they can set this up for some time later in the summer. If it works well, they may do regular deliveries this way. 🍷

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).

This week I have a variety of recipe contributions from CSA members. The first one, sent in by new member Elizabeth Alsberg, I think sounds particularly intriguing, and can't wait to try it myself! And the last one would be good with one of Jim and Rebecca's chickens! - Debbie

Sautéed Cauliflower 'Rice'

Elizabeth says, "A friend of mine pulses cauliflower in the food processor until it's the consistency of rice and then she sautées it. I'd never done that before and it sounded good. Anyway, I sautéed some green garlic in a pan, then added the cauliflower and at the end I put in some favas, just for a few minutes, and some salt. It was great. I served it with fat Italian sausages but it would have been fine on its own too."

Barbie Aknin's Ideas for using Fava Beans and Cauliflower

Barbie says, "Hi Debbie, I have to share a few ideas with you for my favorite veggie... fava beans. My kids eat them like peanuts, blanched and cold. My father-in-law is from France and this is what he does: Blanch the fava beans until just tender. Rinse in cold water and drain well. Drizzle abundantly with olive oil; sprinkle with coarse sea salt,

a little minced garlic and "Herbs de Provence." If you don't have them, I like fresh minced thyme and grated lemon rind. These will last in the fridge for 3 to 4 days. He serves them with a good white wine and toothpicks before dinner. I throw them in pasta or smash them and spread on toasted baguette."

"Cauliflower: My favorite way is to break into flowerettes, drizzle with olive oil and salt and roast at 450 until lightly browned. serve, Or: cool and toss with olives and a jar of roasted peppers from Trader Joes. Or: Place in a baking dish and sprinkle heavily with seasoned bread crumbs and grated Parmesan cheese and a little grated lemon rind. Drizzle with olive oil and broil until browned."

Chicken with Leeks

Heather Murdock says, "a lot of folks aren't quite sure what to do with leeks (one of my favorite veggies). I have a recipe that uses lots of leeks, is fairly easy, yet good enough to impress guests. I lost my written copy years ago, so quantities are from habit."

1 chicken, cut into pieces
2 tsp. peanut or vegetable oil

2 lg. shallots, minced [or a few tbsp. minced young onion – Debbie]
2 lg. cloves garlic, sliced [or a green garlic, thinly sliced – Debbie]
3 C leeks, trimmed, washed, and cut into 1-inch lengths
1 C white wine
3 tbsp. Dijon mustard (other mustards, like grainy country-style, also work well)
1 C heavy cream

Lightly season chicken pieces with salt and pepper. In a large, deep skillet (NOT non-stick) on medium high heat, brown chicken well in oil, a few pieces at a time, and set aside. Drain all but a couple tbsp. of oil from the pan, add the garlic and shallots, and sauté briefly, 'til shallots soften. Lower heat and add the wine, stirring to dissolve the browned bits from the bottom of the pan. Return the chicken to the pan, cover and simmer over low heat for about 30 minutes, until the chicken is tender. Increase heat to medium, stir in the leeks, cover and cook 3-5 minutes, until the leeks are tender. Stir in the mustard and cream, (you can add more mustard to taste - my family likes a lot of mustard) and cook over low heat just until the sauce is heated through. Serve over noodles or other sauce-soaker-upper.