



Live Earth Farm (Com)Post

A weekly newsletter for the Live Earth Farm CSA Community

20th Harvest Week

August 13th – 19th, 2007

Season 12

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:

Arugula +
Beets (golden) [loose, no tops]
Broccolini
Eggplant +
Green beans +
Lettuce (romaine and red butter) +
Peppers + (poblano, yellow wax and/or green bell)
Purslane
French breakfast radishes
Spinach
Heirloom tomatoes (3-4)
Dry-farmed tomatoes +
Cherry tomatoes
Strawberries (1 bskt)
(possibly blackberries too!)

Small Share:

Arugula
Beets (golden) [loose, no tops]
Eggplant
Green beans
Lettuce (romaine and red butter)
Peppers (poblano, yellow wax and/or green bell)
Purslane
French breakfast radishes
Heirloom tomatoes (3-4)
Dry-farmed tomatoes
Cherry tomatoes
Strawberries (1 bskt)

Extra Fruit Option:

Strawberries, blackberries, raspberries and 'mystery'

Ever wondered what it would be like to work on a farm? Here is a typical day, in the heart of the summer season:

It is Monday, 6:30am; another day, another week of harvesting is upon us. The morning is foggy and damp, the plants are wet, covered with a heavy dew. Everyone is gathered next to the strawberry plot in our field on Casserly Road. The yellow strawberry boxes are still in the harvest carts, marking the spot in the field where we left off picking on Saturday. For over 20 weeks now (since the end of March), we have been continuously harvesting strawberries – almost daily. Strawberries are best picked in the morning, since the fruit cool down during the night and are easier to snap off the plant. It takes a skilled hand movement – a combined twist, pull and snapping motion – to prevent the green calyx from separating from the berry.

"Variety is the soul of pleasure"

*Aphra Behm,
from the book 'Slow Food Companion'*

Picking strawberries requires bending low to inspect each plant, moving patiently up and down the rows, with focused attention, so as to discern the right quality of each and every berry. In a little over an hour 40 to 50 flats are picked [a flat = 12 baskets]; this is the usual amount we need to pick daily in order not only to stay on top of the continually ripening berries, but also to keep a fresh inventory for our delivery needs: to a local bakery, to farmer's markets, and of course for our CSA shares (which receive the majority of the harvest).

By 8am the green bean plants are still too wet to be picked; the sun won't be burning off the fog for another couple of hours, so the group splits up: some will pick cherry tomatoes, the rest, mostly the women, will pick raspberries. There is an important and often unrecognized benefit of a small scale, highly diversified farming operation such as ours, and that is that the physical labor of fieldwork – although all hard work – is at least varied. In other words, different motions and body positions are required for harvesting different crops (or for performing other tasks such as weeding or sowing), and so by alternating between crops or tasks, the physical strain (on one's back, in particular) is distributed throughout the day.

By 10 o' clock the sun is starting to burn off the fog; the harvest van is full, and the berries need to be transported from the field to the cooler. While Alejandro drives off to unload, the harvest switches to tomatoes. Our heirloom tomatoes are quite abundant right now; the fruit are maturing fast, and need to get picked off the plants. So this week's shares boxes will be heavy, as we will be giving everyone between 3 and 4 of these wonderful summer fruit!

By Noon nearly half a ton of tomatoes have been picked (i.e. fifty 20 lb. boxes), and it's time for a half-hour lunch break under the shady Mimosa trees alongside the field. The rhythm shifts after lunch:

Clemente and Jonathan are off to irrigate a block of lettuce seedlings planted on Saturday as well as a block of freshly sown spinach, arugula, and radishes. (These three crops, incidentally, are typically sown together in one block, because they all germinate and mature within the same timeframe and generally have similar growing needs.) The rest of the group is off to pick green beans, as we'll need approximately 1000 lbs. (50 crates) over the next two days.

Now it's around 4:30pm, and the last harvest of the day is the broccolini, which we

Live Earth Farm 2007 Calendar

(see calendar on website for more info)

Aug 10, 17, 24, 31, Sept 7 and 14

Mataganza Garden Sanctuary

Internship Program

(see week 16 newsletter for details)

Aug 24-26

Children's Mini-Camp

(this is sold out)

Sat. Oct 20

Fall Harvest Celebration

Farm Work Days: 7/27, 8/31, 9/28, 10/26

(see Week 10 newsletter for details)

like to harvest before it gets watered. The plants are waist high, and one gets completely drenched and muddy if we don't do the harvesting and watering in the right order. The broccolini is now tall, so all the shoots are within easy reach; no need to bend over. This Italian heirloom form of broccoli produces a large number of tender side shoots, and can be harvested multiple times over a period of up to 2 or 3 months. The last two years we have increased our plantings of broccolini, because not only does it have a superior taste but also it requires less space and is easier to harvest.

It is almost 6 o'clock now, and for everyone it's time to go home. Well... nearly everyone; two people continue to work: Juanillo is still plowing a field at our site along Pioneer Rd., and Juan is sowing green beans. These two will work until sundown, because it's a good time of day to work the soil – the day has cooled back down, and the soil moisture is 1 to 2 inches below the surface... ideal for sowing beans. - Tom

In e-newsletter...

🌱 Purslane – the 'wild veggie' 🌱 A note from Debbie about Winter Shares and our 2008 Season 🌱 Pictures of the pear harvest

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, member Amoreena Lucero shares her ideas for what to do with the box. Since there is way more than will fit here, please see online newsletter for full content. I've added some purslane cooking info at the end. - Debbie

What I'd do with this week's Box

by Amoreena Lucero

My favorite season is late summer, when sweet peppers, eggplants and summer squash are abundant and tomatoes are in their glory. A few seasons ago, we were getting tons of eggplant, along with my other summer favorites. Looking for a way to use all of these veggies, and stay out of my hot kitchen, I came up with this recipe:

Grilled Vegetable Sandwiches with grilled Eggplant, Peppers, and Heirloom tomatoes

(I'm not going to give you exact quantities because you can vary this recipe for any number of people)

Other ingredients you'll need:

Minced garlic

Olive oil

Balsamic vinegar

Ciabatta (or baguette/focaccia)

Chevre (either herbed or plain; Trader Joe's has a good selection)

Red onions, sliced

Fresh basil leaves (optional)

Salt and pepper

Begin by mixing olive oil and minced garlic in a large bowl or baking dish (no salt!).

Make it as garlicky as you wish! Slice the eggplant into thick (about 1/2 inch) slices, either horizontally or vertically depending on the variety. Seed and then either quarter or halve the peppers, and if you have and/or wish, slice summer squash vertically into 1/2 inch slices. Brush the eggplant with the garlic/olive oil mixture and set aside. You can toss the peppers and squash with the remaining oil. Allow everything to marinate for 30 minutes. In the meantime, thickly slice your tomatoes and red onions and set

aside. Mix some balsamic vinegar with a little bit of olive oil, salt and pepper in a small bowl and set aside. When your barbecue is hot, sprinkle the eggplant & peppers with salt and pepper, then grill them for 3-4 minutes per side, until well grilled and soft. [I'd maybe grill the onion slices too? Either way'd be good. Mmmm... - Debbie]

While your veggies are cooking, slice your bread vertically into the sandwich sized pieces (if needed) and then each piece lengthwise in half. Brush each half with the remaining olive oil and garlic mixture from the veggies, adding olive oil as needed. Grill the bread, olive oil side down, until golden and crunchy. To assemble sandwiches, spread chevre on one side of the bread, lay some optional basil leaves on the chevre, then layer with eggplant, peppers, onions and tomatoes. Drizzle the tomatoes with the balsamic vinegar. Top with the second slice of bread, and press down gently. This sandwich takes two hands!

Deconstructed Arugula salad w/Roasted Beets, Chevre & Lemon vinaigrette

Another favorite combination is arriving in this week's box: arugula and beets. Because I know I'll have chevre left over from the sandwiches, I'll make a "deconstructed" salad of arugula lightly dressed with a lemon vinaigrette (1:2 ratio of lemon juice & olive oil, plus salt and pepper), roasted beets and a wedge of chevre. I plate the salad at the last minute, placing a mound of dressed arugula, with beet wedges and a round of chevre on each plate. The tangy/spicy flavors of the salad counter nicely with the sweet, earthy flavor of the beets and the creamy taste of the chevre.

additional Amoreena recipes in e-newsletter:

• **Green Bean & Cherry tomato Salad**

• **Pomodoro Sauce with Kalamata olives and Fresh Mozzarella**

• **Pavlova - with fresh berries**

What to know about cooking with purslane

[back to Debbie here]

First off, I'd like to encourage everyone to just taste it first, especially if you've never tried it. Pinch off a tender sprig from the end of one of the stems and pop it in your mouth; chew it. To me it is just a little lemony (sometimes more than others) and nutty and crunchy. Ever eat sourgrass when you were a kid? Purslane has a hint of that flavor.

When you go to use it, like anything else, you'll want to go through it and remove any old or yellowed leaves, and cut off any root ends; rinse off any dirt, of course. But other than that, you can use both the leaves and stems. It doesn't keep real long; try to use it sooner rather than later.

So, first thing to know is, you don't have to cook it. You can indeed just eat it raw. I like to pinch off the tender ends (and/or cut the stems, leaves attached, into bite-sized pieces) and use them fresh in salads; just toss 'em in with whatever green salad you're making! Or make it the salad green: chop it up, add a bunch of halved cherry tomatoes, maybe some sliced radishes, then make a simple lemon vinaigrette, toss together and serve! (It doesn't have to be lemon vinaigrette, you could use just about any salad dressing you like.)

The second thing to know is, it cooks quickly. It's a succulent, and so contains a lot of water; it can get mooshy if overcooked. If you're doing a sauté, add it near the end, for the last minute or two. If you're making something baked, like a hot dish, don't think it matters; mooshy is good! Just chop it up and add it with everything else. It'd be good in something baked that had cheese and tomatoes, and maybe a garlicky bread crumb topping!

Don't forget, it's nutritious to boot, so enjoy every bite!