



Live Earth Farm (Com)Post

A weekly newsletter for the Live Earth Farm CSA Community

4th Harvest Week

April 23rd -29th, 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 (bunched)
Red "Ace" beets
Me Quing Choi (3 to 4)
Broccoli (Lakeside)
New spring carrots!
Chard
Fava beans +
Fresh garlic
Lettuce (Lakeside/LEF) (2)
Onions
Spinach (Lakeside)
bunched
Strawberries (2 bsks)

Small Share:

Arugula (bunched)
Red "Ace" beets
Me Quing Choi (2 to 3)
New spring carrots!
Fava beans
Fresh garlic
Lettuce (Lakeside/LEF) (1)
Spinach (Lakeside)
bunched
Strawberries (1 bskt)

Extra Fruit Option:
(starts next week!!)

When our well pump stopped working and our leaky and aging water tank had to be replaced a few weeks ago, the only available water was from a field tank on top of the hill which fed the rest of the farm by gravity flow. Nothing was more important than to get the water back on; suddenly one's survival instinct is on alert realizing there is no substance more crucial to survival than water. Just like humans can't survive for more than three days without water, the same is true for most of the crops we grow. Although we trust that water is available when we want it, we can't take it for granted. The fertility and abundance of our crops is directly linked to the availability of water.

Last week I received an e-mail inquiring whether the lack of rainfall this year will affect the productivity of the farm. It remains to be seen; most of our water comes from the same aquifer everyone else gets their water from, so even though the supply is plentiful at the moment, it may not always remain that way in the long term. More than 80% of our water for the farm comes from groundwater. The rest comes from rainwater collected in a pond. Last year alone we used approximately 50 acre-feet of water. That's a lot of water! Imagine a football field (an acre is a little less than a football field) covered by 1 foot of water 50 times. If one acre-foot is 326,000 gallons, we used over 16 million gallons of water. The amount of water we use in our homes, large though it may appear to be, is only a fraction of water used to produce our food and fiber. It is estimated that in the United States, an average of 1,000 gallons of water are needed to produce each pound of food we consume.

Here at the farm, as in most farms in the Pajaro Valley, the water is pumped from wells, some as deep as 600 feet. The rate of water flow from our most productive well is as high as 300 gallons per minute, which allows us to irrigate 3 to 4 acres at a time. But here at our home ranch, where the flow rate is only 25 gallons per minute, we first have to store the water in holding tanks and then pump it through a network of pipes and hoses to the plants in the field. Cool weather crops such as broccoli, cauliflower, lettuce, and most leafy greens like to be irrigated with above ground moveable aluminum pipe sprinklers, while other crops such as strawberries, tomatoes, peppers, squash, cucumbers, and eggplants we drip irrigate. Sometimes we don't irrigate at all, which is the case with our dry-farmed tomatoes, and this year for the first time most of our potatoes are being dry-farmed. Irrigation is a big job; imagine constantly assessing the thirst of the more than 50 crops we grow throughout the season.

This weekend's half inch of rain that fell on the farm can be translated into more than a half million gallons of free water, spread evenly over our 45 acres of cultivated soil... which means we don't have to irrigate the next 4 to 5 days. I consider that a wonderful blessing, even if it may cause a little bit of rot on our strawberries. We can live with that. – Tom

Morris Grassfed Beef

If you are an omnivore in search of a source of healthy, grassfed, grass-finished beef for your family, search no further. Joe and Julie Morris, of T&O Cattle Company down in San Juan Bautista are your an-

"When the well is dry we know the value of water."

- Benjamin Franklin

Live Earth Farm 2007 Calendar

(see calendar on website for more info)

Fri. May 18	<u>Four Fridays Mataganza Garden Internship</u> (5/18, 5/25, 6/1, 6/8)
Sat. Jun 9	<u>"Outstanding in the Field" Dinner</u>
Sat. Jun 23	<u>Summer Solstice Celebration</u>
July 10-14	<u>Teen Adventure Camp</u>
Aug 24-26	<u>Children's Mini-Camp</u>
Sat. Oct 3	<u>Fall Harvest Celebration</u>

swer. I and many other CSA members and can attest to the quality of the meat and the integrity of the Morrises, who raise the animals and steward the land. As Julie will tell you, "Our cattle enjoy a completely organic diet of fresh grass, forbs and legumes, clean water, and better views than most of us do! We use neither synthetic hormones nor fed antibiotics: our animals grow only as fast as their genetics and the range will allow. Their range, of course, serves also as watersheds and habitat for us as well as other biological communities. We manage our animals so that they enhance the diversity of life on the range, as well as the quality of the water that falls on the range and flows to the towns and sea. We believe this web of relationships we are stewarding is an integral whole, depending for its health upon all its members: damaging the health of any member of the "whole" community, therefore, damages the rest. Our desire is to produce health with all we do. Only when this is done are we satisfied that Morris Grassfed Beef is all it can be—the best there is for all of us." Also, all their Morris Grassfed beef cattle are born and raised by them on their ranch in San Juan Bautista; they do not purchase calves and then just finish them on grass. The animals are under Joe and Julie's care from birth to the time the meat is delivered to you.

Joe is offering a CSA-style beef share this year, i.e. you can sign up for a 'split half' (a quarter of a steer) but then take delivery of your meat quarterly, instead of all at one time. That way, it doesn't take up as much room in your freezer! If you are interested, go to www.morrisgrassfed.com to learn more and to sign up. You won't be disappointed. - 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).

More pointers and more recipes! – Debbie

When to eat fava pods whole, when to shell them (and when to skin the beans inside)

Here's my rule of thumb: while the pods are still nice and green and smooth, and the beans inside are relatively small, eat 'em pod and all (see recipes on website). Even if the beans inside are starting to looking big enough to eat on their own, if the pods are still in good shape, I'm cool with eating the pods (if you prefer to shell them, shell away; it's up to you). Once the pods get big and kind of warty-looking (which they do!), I'd definitely shell 'em.

In a similar vein, the question of whether to peel the beans inside is up to you (and maybe depends on how you're going to use them). I skin 'em or not kind of according to my mood. If they're really big, I generally peel them, but if they're small, I often don't bother. If you're going to be using them whole in a pasta dish or soup or something, it's six one way half-dozen the other. If you're going to be making a puree or spread though, you'll want to skin them first. It's both a texture and a taste thing.

Freezing fresh fava beans

If you'd like to save your fava beans for later use, you can freeze them. Here's what I'd recommend: first shell the beans, then blanch them in boiling water for about 2 minutes (maybe 3 minutes if they're really big). ["Big" to me means about the size of the last joint of my thumb; "small" about the size of the last joint of my pinky finger.] Immediately immerse in cold or ice water to stop the cooking. When completely cooled, peel if you wish (very easy; just pinch one edge of the skin to create an opening and squir 'em out) then blot dry on paper or cotton dish toweling. Spread prepared beans out on a sheet of waxed

paper on a rimmed baking pan and freeze. Once frozen solid, decant to a ziploc bag, squeeze or suck out as much air as you can, seal and return to freezer. This way you can pour out as many or few as you'd like to use at a time.

Mei Quing Choi

Mei Quing Choi look very similar to bok choy, and here on the farm I think we've tended to use the two names rather interchangeably; the only difference between the two is that the stems of Mei Quing Choi are a little more slender, and pale green (similar to the leaves); Bok Choi (sometimes called Pak Choi) stems are white, and the leaves a darker green. And although what we're getting this week is the Mei Quing Choi, the two can be used interchangeably in each others' recipes.

Freezing Mei Quing or Bok Choi

Don't do it. Like lettuce (which I wouldn't freeze either!), chois have a lot of water in the body of the stems, and so the cells will burst when frozen and you'll have mush when you thaw them. Just use 'em fresh!

Crystal City Pak Choi

from "More Recipes from a Kitchen Garden" by Renee Shepherd & Fran Raboff [Debbie's comments in brackets]

2 – 3 bunches Pak Choi
2 tbsp. olive oil
1 clove garlic, minced [or a goodly chunk of green garlic, chopped]
1 red onion, thinly sliced [or some fresh farm onion, sliced]
1 tsp. dry mustard
1 tbsp. soy sauce
1 tsp. rice vinegar
1 tbsp. sake or dry sherry
3 scallions, finely chopped [or the equivalent quantity of green tops from the fresh farm onions]
2 tbsp. finely chopped parsley

salt and pepper to taste
2 tbsp. toasted sesame seeds, for garnish

Cut Pak choi stalks into 1-inch lengths. Shred green tops and reserve. In a large skillet, heat oil, add garlic and onions and stir fry until softened. Stir in Pak choi stalks, mustard, and soy sauce and stir fry until Pak choi is tender, about 10 to 12 minutes [I would think less... maybe 5 minutes?]. Stir in shredded tops, vinegar, sake or sherry, scallions, parsley, and salt and pepper to taste. Cover and cook 2 more minutes. Garnish with toasted sesame seeds and serve immediately.

Swiss Chard with Balsamic Vinegar

from member Farrell Podgorsek

1 stalk green garlic, thinly sliced
1 small onion or a couple of leeks, thinly sliced
1 bunch chard, leaves removed from stems and roughly sliced (stalks saved for another use)
1 small can diced tomatoes (or some fresh tomatoes, cut up, if it's summertime)
Balsamic vinegar - about 1/3 C
oil to sauté vegetables in
salt & pepper
Precooked sausage, sliced into rounds (omit sausage to keep dish vegetarian)
Cooked pasta (we used a large shape to hold the sauce)

Heat oil in a saucepan. Add the onion and green garlic and sauté until softened. Add chard leaves and sauté until they wilt somewhat. Add tomatoes with their liquid, balsamic vinegar and salt & pepper. Cook, covered, stirring occasionally, for about 10-15 minutes. Add sausage and heat through. If the greens are a bit dry, add a couple of ladlesful of the pasta water. Serve over pasta.

Lots more recipes in e-newsletter!