



# Live Earth Farm (Com)Post

A weekly newsletter for the Live Earth Farm CSA Community

9th Harvest Week

May 28<sup>th</sup> – June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 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:**

Basil (Mariquita Farm)  
Beets (Forono or Bull's blood)  
Broccoli (LEF/Lakeside)  
Carrots  
Fennel (3)  
Garlic  
Kale or Chard  
Lettuce (Romaine and red oakleaf)  
Red mustard greens  
Summer squash (Lakeside/LEF)  
Onions +  
Tatsoi  
Strawberries (2 bsks)

**Small Share:**

Basil (Mariquita Farm)  
Beets (Forono or Bull's blood)  
Chinese cabbage OR broccoli  
Fennel (2)  
Lettuce (Romaine OR red oakleaf)  
Red mustard greens  
Onions  
Tatsoi  
Strawberries (2 bsks!)

**Extra Fruit Option:**

4 baskets of strawberries

**"Strawberry Bounty:"**

5 baskets of strawberries!

Most of us enjoy getting away from our everyday hustle and retreating to a place free from interruption, to catch our breath, calm down and find a moment of silence. Here on the farm I retreat to our small forest sanctuary of Coast Live Oak where I can cradle in the branches of an old oak tree. As I entered the forest a few days ago, I noticed a patch of wild Alpine strawberries growing in the understory, dotted with ripe little fruit. I was so excited to be able to savor berries growing wild and not cultivated by any human hand or machine. It reminded me of the wild ancestry that exists for each crop we grow and how, over

thousands of years, humans have selected the few plant families that now serve as the basis of our diet. Today, it is hard to imagine how the local Indian population survived

solely by hunting and gathering to meet their basic needs for food, medicine, shelter and clothes. None of the crops we currently grow existed in this area before. The main plants once used as food sources were acorns, buckeyes, Islay prunes, blackberries, and certain grass seeds. Even the Alpine strawberry I savored beneath the canopy of Live Oak trees was originally introduced from Europe. All the crops in our shares trace their wild ancestry back to Europe, Asia, South America, and the Middle East. Most of us have lost the plant knowledge that was once at the core of every human culture: knowledge about how to grow, pick and use plants. I know I have been unsuccessful in passing this knowledge on to my kids when I see how easily my son David, for his 13th birthday party last week, gravitated towards the lure of today's fast-paced supermarket world, choosing take-out pizza and ice cream cake over treats from the farm. It's not cool anymore to pick strawberries with his friends. So at the end of the day, when he complained about feeling sick and feverish (surprise!), Dad wasn't too worried or sympathetic. In the meantime, while David matures and faces the challenging years of adolescence, I will protect and expand the few wilderness spots here on the farm to encourage more habitat for beneficial insects, birds and wildlife, and most importantly, to continue to have a place to retreat to and search for our own long lost biological roots. Who knows... maybe one day David will want to sit in his father's favorite oak tree, dreaming of ancestors and wild strawberries. – Tom

*"No occupation is so delightful to me as the culture of the earth, and no culture comparable to that of the garden."*

- Thomas Jefferson

## Crop Notes

Garlic and onions are being harvested to dry and cure, and we'll be cleaning the fennel field, putting the last of it into this week's shares. The beets you're getting this week are from a new planting and will be either the cylindrical Italian Forono or the dark red-leafed Bull's Blood. We're leaving the golden beets in the field a little longer so that they can size up and so we can have some for everybody. Tomatoes are growing quickly and already fruiting. Right now, as you can probably tell, we are experiencing a wonderful bounty of strawberries. Many people have asked whether we open the farm for members to pick their own. Although we don't offer a typical 'u-pick' operation, our first community gathering on June 23rd to celebrate the Summer Solstice may be the best time for anyone interested to show up early and pick berries. Please stay tuned to this newsletter for more information and directions as the date draws near. This week's Basil comes from Mariquita Farm, a partner in the Two Small Farms CSA. Andy Griffin and Julia Wiley from Mariquita Farm are our neighbors, living on their own

## Live Earth Farm 2007 Calendar

(see calendar on website for more info)

Sat. Jun 9	<u>"Outstanding in the Field" Dinner</u>
Sat. Jun 23	<u>Summer Solstice Celebration</u>
Aug 24-26	<u>Children's Mini-Camp</u>
Sat. Oct 20	<u>Fall Harvest Celebration</u>

farm right here in Watsonville. Although they live nearby, most of their crops are grown on land in the warmer Hollister area, hence the early basil you are getting this week – a teaser for the summer crops to come!! The pear orchard is getting it's first watering and fruit are starting to size up. The Pineapple Guavas are in full bloom too; we should have a good year, especially with having Steve Demkowski's bees pollinating them. 🐝

## More fascinating bee stories, and how to take action on the 2007 Farm Bill

See both these stories in this week's e-newsletter. 🐝

### Notes from Debbie's Kitchen

Have a recipe you'd like to share? Contact me at [deb@writerguy.com](mailto: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).

#### Growing your own fresh herbs

*I have finally planted my own herb garden!* I've lived here over 20 years and I can't believe it took me this long (I've wanted to do it since forever). Other than the rosemary bush I planted a couple years ago, I've mostly used dried herbs, with the occasional fresh herbs from the farm. Yet I've always mooned over the idea of having fresh herbs growing right out my back door. I mean, how much more fresh and local can you get? Now that I've done it – it was so easy! – I thought I'd encourage you all to NOT wait forever like I did and plant your own now. Although this isn't a 'recipe' per se, I see this as a synergistic adjunct to getting a CSA share: what better way to season your fresh farm veggies than with your own fresh herbs?

Now I'm not a farmer (or even much of a gardener), but having worked for the farm over 6 years now (and been a member for 11!), I am no doubt learning by osmosis about the right way to do these things. And if I've learned nothing else, what I *have* learned is that *it's all about the soil*.

Here's what I did: I used these old chimney blocks (from when we took down our chimney) as planting containers outside. They're in a part of the yard that gets decent sun (they gotta have sun!). I filled them with a mixture roughly 50-50 of soil from my yard and organic compost from the store (there's an OSH [Orchard Supply Hardware store] near my home, but any gardening supply place worth its mettle should carry it. If they don't carry organic compost, talk to management and convince them to change their ways). I also got little starter pots of herbs from the same place; they're only a couple dollars each – as much as you might spend on a jar of dried herbs, so what the hey, no brainer! The only other thing I bought was redwood mulch. That's the second thing I've learned (I'm still learning!): mulch deeply and mulch often! Well, mulch after you first plant things, anyway. A nice thick layer of mulch on top of the soil around your plants helps hold the moisture in and the plants thrive. That's it really; plant the herbs in good soil in a sunny spot, in healthy organic soil, mulch well, water periodically, and oc-

asionally feed. I plan to use a little diluted juice from my worm composter to feed my herbs. What did I plant? Sage, chives, thyme, dill and marjoram. I already had the rosemary, and we get basil, cilantro and parsley periodically in our CSA shares. But hey, grow whatever floats your boat! And by planting the already started herbs, I was able to snip and use them judiciously within a week of planting. Now, a little over a month later, they're growing happily and I can snip from them with impunity!

If you don't have a yard to do this, just grow 'em in pots on a sunny windowsill. Rather than write about this though, I found a good link with step-by-step instructions [see e-newsletter]. The only advice I'd add to this is to make the effort to get organic supplies (i.e. organic potting mix and fertilizer).

**Fava, Feta and sundried tomato:** I did make this last week, but not as a sandwich spread (I'd run out of bread!); instead, I used it like a salad, on top of torn spinach leaves. I just cooked and peeled the fava beans, mashed them coarsely with a fork, then combined them with diced oil-cured sundried tomatoes and crumbled feta cheese. Add a little extra olive oil if it seems dry. If you don't have the oil-cured kind of dried tomatoes, try this: the day before you go to use them, put dried tomatoes into a small bowl, pour boiling water over them, and add a little olive oil and stir. Cool to room temperature, cover and refrigerate. They'll plump up nicely!

#### What I'd do with this week's box

Everybody always makes pesto with their first batch of basil. I'm no different! If you go to my recipe database, you'll see that's the first entry under 'Basil' – a posting from back in 1999! I still make it more or less the same way, except I toast my pine nuts in the toaster oven now, instead of a dry skillet (and either works fine). The fresh garlic in the shares will make the pesto particularly nice! I'll then grill onions, fennel, mushrooms and summer squash, chop coarsely, and throw into some cooked penne pasta with the pesto. If you're a meat eater, grill some chicken while you're at it, cut meat

into bite-size pieces (save the bones for making stock!) and toss them in as well. Later in the summer, when we start getting eggplant and peppers, they'd get grilled and added too! This would be a good meal to accompany with Caesar salad using the romaine lettuce. See last week's newsletter for my version of Caesar dressing, and this week's e-newsletter for my friend Alie's 'toss-at-the-table' version. I'd make French Onion Soup again like I did two weeks ago (it's dead easy – see Sally Fallon's recipe in e-newsletter), and embellish it by adding tatsoi and carrot to the mix (see below). When I get broccoli, I love to make Jane Brody's broccoli sardine pasta [in recipe database]. My husband Ken devours it! If I have the time I'll make a chocolate-beet cake [also in recipe database]. Don't look so aghast – it's great! No one but you knows the beets are in there; they just add moisture and richness, and a certain 'je ne sais quois.' We're getting so many strawberries this week, I just might have to make strawberry daiquiris (or agua fresca for the kids). They'd go well with the chocolate beet cake! Or with the pesto pasta! Hey, what about those mustard greens though? Depending on my mood, I'll either do my usual (use as salad greens with lettuce and a fruity dressing of some sort – see last week's recipes for salad dressings), or I might use them in a simple frittata or quiche. Too much trouble? Try this then: cook them down [steam until they wilt, squeeze out excess water, then chop coarsely] and add them to scrambled eggs (put a little soy sauce into the beaten eggs for salty flavor). Serve with hot buttered sourdough toast. That'll kick-start your morning!

#### Onion Soup with tatsoi and carrot

Using the French Onion Soup recipe in the database (or your own favorite), I just sliced up fresh carrot and added them when I added the stock, cooking about 10 minutes to soften the carrots. Then I threw in a couple handfuls of tatsoi (chopped coarsely if big) and cooked another minute, until the greens had just wilted.

*more recipes in online newsletter!*