



BLUE HOUSE FARM

CSA Newsletter

I Dream Of Greenies

August 12, 2011

The tomato crop is getting pretty close. I expected to have Early Girls by now and definitely cherry tomatoes, which are usually 2-3 weeks ahead of the others. But with the incredibly cool weather we have been having, all the tomatoes are running late. I plan to bring the crew up to the tomato field on Monday for our first picking. I'm crossing my fingers that we have enough tomatoes to put in the CSA boxes. It may, however, be another week; we just have not received the little heat wave needed to kick them into gear. Unfortunately, we do have some Late Blight in the field, the dreaded fungal disease that has plagued us in the past. I moved the tomatoes to the new inland ranch in effort to escape some of the fog that encourages the spread of the disease, but in a year like this even the new ranch, which is 6 miles inland, has been covered in fog much more than normal. I was really hoping to actually make it a whole year without even mentioning Late Blight, but this is not my lucky year. I am pretty confident that we will still get a nice harvest off of the field due to the sheer size of the planting. And the Late Blight does not seem to spread as aggressively at the new ranch, as it did down here in the cooler Cloverdale Valley. A long, warm, dry Fall season would definitely help!

The Gravenstein apples are also about a week away. Evelyn and I went up to the orchard to investigate and check to see if any are ripening last week and found them to be nice and sized-up, blushing red a bit, but still not as sweet as we'd like. The apples in general look nice and big and should be an abundant presence in the CSA boxes through the Fall. The Garvensteins will be followed by Mutsu's, Golden Delicious, Granny Smiths, Pippins, and Asian pears.

Another surprise at the orchard was a single peach tree absolutely covered in ripe fruit. Peaches are tough to grow out here on the coast and are not a very dependable crop, therefore not widely planted. Peach trees bloom very early in the Spring, around March. For a tree to produce fruit, the flower needs to be pollinated by a bee. This sounds simple enough, except for the fact that it is very often raining heavily during much of March and fragile little flower petals can get seriously damaged and bees don't really like to be flying around in the rain and wind. So, not many flowers get pollinated successfully. Unless...we get a perfect little sunny window of time when the flowers are blooming and the bees are buzzing, which apparently we did this year. It is only one tree, so I can't make any promises, but I think we may just be able to harvest enough to put a few peaches in each CSA box next week.

Enjoy the veggies,
Ryan

Anticipated Harvest

English Peas
Red Russian Kale
Baby Leeks
New Potatoes
Broccoli
Butter Lettuce
Basil
Cilantro
Strawberries

Blink and you'll miss them...English Peas are here one week and gone the next. But perhaps this ephemeral quality compliments the character of the English Pea; sweet & buttery, a bright but tiny flash of green flavor that is made all the more special for its brevity. And chances are the peas will hang around your kitchen for a brief time too, before being quickly consumed. Of course, nature is nothing if not balanced, and you'll spend more than a little time removing these peas from their pods. Do yourself a favor and eat some straightaway from the first pod you shell, and that should provide sufficient motivation to take care of the rest! Peas are one of mankind's oldest crops, dating back nearly 8,000 years to the Levant, Turkey and Egypt. In ancient times the peas were consumed dry, like sunflower seeds; but thanks to the wisdom of the ages, we know now that a quick blanching or steaming is the best way to release both the peas' sugar as well as make their nutrients more readily available for uptake. And what nutrients they are! Peas are one of the best fresh vegetable sources of protein around, are extremely rich in Dietary Fiber as well Vitamins A, C, K & numerous B Vitamins to boot. Peas are a dependable source of essential Omega-3 & Omega-6 fatty acids, and also provide a wealth of anticancer phytonutrients and antioxidants.

CSA News & Notes

Recently there has been a spate of CSA boxes disappearing from pick-up sites. Please remember to only take a box if your name appears on the sign-in sheet and to sign said sign-in sheet when you pick up your box. If you think you are supposed to get a box but don't see your name, call the farm at 650-879-0704 and let us know but do NOT take a box; you are not charged if you're name is not on the sign-in sheet and you'll be taking a box that somehow else has paid for (which we will have to refund).

If you are sharing a box and see someone has already signed out the box you thought was for you, please do NOT take a box. Call the people you share a box with and try and work out between yourselves what has happened. Please do not take someone else's veggies because you think you are "supposed to" have a box. Call or email the farm and we can try and figure out what the problem might be. taking someone else's box just creates more problems.

THANK YOU for your support of our farm, and for helping to make this new mode of food distribution possible.



JJ's Farmfried Potatoes

½ lb New Potatoes
1 Medium Red Onion
Other Aromatics (optional, I like using Fennel & Chiles)
2 T Fresh Rosemary
2 T Fresh Parsley
Crushed Red Pepper (optional)
Salt & Pepper
High Smoke-Point Oil (I use Grapeseed)

Chop your potatoes into whatever size you prefer; I normally halve them (or quarter larger ones) then slice them widthwise, though I sometimes cut rounds. Chop the onions and other aromatics as well as the herbs.

Put the oil in a skillet and place over high heat. Add the potatoes when they sizzle on contact with the oil, in a single layer (I will use more than one skillet if need be to maintain a single layer). Cook until golden brown, about 5-10 minutes, then flip, sprinkle with salt, and cook for another 5-10 minutes until the other side browns. Add the onion, aromatics, rosemary and red pepper and stir, cooking for another 3-5 minutes until the onions are glossy but still crunch.

Sprinkle with parsley and serve. Top with two eggs over-easy and some sriracha sauce and you have what I eat for lunch every day.

Arakas Latheros - Greek Stewed Peas

1/2 lb Fresh Peas
1/2 Medium Onion
1/2 C Canned Peeled Tomatoes
OR
1/2 T Tomato Paste diluted
with 1/2 C Water
(tomatoes optional, but recommended)
2 T Butter
1 T Fresh Dill
Salt & Pepper

Shell, wash & drain the peas. Mince the onion, and chop the canned tomatoes (if using).

Melt the butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat, then add the onions and stir to coat. When the onions are shiny and softened, add the peas. When the peas become very lightly browned, add the tomatoes or diluted tomato paste if using (if not, replace with 1/2 C plain water), as well as the dill, salt and pepper. If the peas are not at least half covered in liquid, add more water until they are. Cover the skillet, reduce the heat to medium and cook until only the oil remains and all the liquid has been absorbed, about 45 minutes.

Nuts About Kale Sauté

1 Bunch Kale
¼ C Nuts (Almonds, Walnuts, Pecans, Pine Nuts, or any mixture thereof)
1 Clove Garlic
Olive Oil
Salt & Pepper
Parmigiano-Reggiano (optional)

Destem the kale, then cut it into long strips, then halve them if particularly long. Mince the garlic. Chop the nuts.

Put a dry skillet over medium-high heat, then add the nuts and toast them until they smell nutty, about 2-3 minutes. Add the Olive Oil, let it heat for a moment, then add the kale and a healthy pinch of salt and stir to coat. Cover the skillet, and cook until the kale is soft and dark green, about 5 minutes. Stir the kale occasionally, and if the pan looks dry and a tablespoon or two of water.

When the kale is tender, make a well in the center of the pan and put the garlic in it. Let the garlic become fragrant for a minute (or less!), then stir to combine. Adjust for seasoning, then serve with a shaving of parmesan cheese.