



BLUE HOUSE FARM

CSA Newsletter

Blighted & Benighted

August 18, 2011

To be honest, this was a rough week on the farm, mostly due to the fact that the tomatoes took a dramatic turn for the worse. Since writing the last newsletter, the tomato field has turned from green to brown and I've given up hope for any chance of a harvest. The Late Blight that has plagued our coastal tomatoes in the past returned with a vengeance last week. I was hoping for a heat wave in early August and we got the opposite!

In previous years, when the tomatoes were grown in our cool, foggy Cloverdale Valley, it became necessary to spray the tomatoes with Copper, an organically approved fungicide that protects the plants from fungal attacks. Spraying the plants has always been my least favorite job on the farm. After all, I did not become an organic farmer to sit on a tractor with a spray rig behind me! So this year I was determined to try something different and lease some new land further inland where I would be growing the tomatoes in less foggy, sunnier, and drier conditions. I decided that I was not going to do any sprays and I was confident that at this new location they would not be necessary. Little did I know that we were going to get an inch of rain in early July, followed by the one of the coolest, foggiest summers on record. By the time I realized that blight was present in the field, it was too late logistically to do anything about it. So we are swallowing our losses and focusing on other Fall crops.

I've been talking with a farmer friend of mine who grows tomatoes further inland, East of the bay and we are trying to work out an arrangement where I trade cool-season crops for his tomatoes. So the good news is that you will receive some tomatoes in your CSA boxes and they will taste great. The bad news is that they were not grown here and you will probably not receive them quite as abundantly. But we will be sure to keep your boxes full with plenty of other nice items.

In general, the fields are looking great. We're excited to finally have spinach for you. It is the perfect salad-size and tastes super good because of the cool weather.

We debated over giving more basil in the boxes for the third week in a row and decided that it would probably be well-received, especially since it came on so late in the season and we are making up for lost time. We'll keep mixing up the herbs in future weeks and give the basil a little time to recover.

-From the field, Ryan

Anticipated Harvest

English Peas
Tuscan Kale
Leeks
Kohlrabi
Hakurei Turnips
Spinach
Red Batavian Lettuce
Basil

Gravenstein Apples

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 ample motivation to take care of the rest! Peas are one of mankind's oldest crops, dating back nearly 8,000 years to the Eastern Mediterranean. 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 both release the peas' sugar as well as make their nutrients more readily available for uptake. And what nutrients! Peas are one of the best fresh vegetable sources of protein around, are extremely rich in Dietary Fiber as well as Vitamins A, C, K & numerous Bs to boot. Peas are a dependable source of essential Omega-3 & Omega-6 fatty acids and also supply a wealth of anticancer phytonutrients and antioxidants.



Mario & Leo cleaning kale after harvest.

- You may recall last week Ryan mentioned his hope of providing you peaches in this week's box. Well, apparently there were rain showers at the orchard last week, and the peach tree is toast; all the lovely peaches we hoped to have for you just rotted on the branch.
- The good news is that while checking on the peaches we saw the Gravenstein Apples are ready! They are equal parts sweet & tart, perfect for baking in pies, turning into applesauce, or eating out of hand.
- Going on vacation? Remember that you must contact us by 9PM the Saturday prior to a delivery if you want that delivery held.

The Double English

Potato Salad with English Peas & English Salad Cream

1 lb New Potatoes
1 C Shelled English Peas
3-4 Hardboiled Eggs
½ Shallot or Sweet Onion
½ tsp English Mustard (Dijon works too)
White Wine Vinegar
Cream
Salt & Pepper

Halve or quarter the potatoes (depending on their size), and boil them until fork tender.

While the water is coming to a boil, begin making the English Salad Cream by placing the yolks of the hardboiled eggs in a bowl. Add the mustard, a pinch of salt, a grind of pepper and a splash of vinegar; blend into a thick paste. Next add a bit of cream, slowly and in a small stream, while whisking constantly until the mixture achieves salad dressing consistency. Stir in the shallot/onion and taste to correct for seasoning.

When the potatoes are tender, drain them and then combine them in a large non-reactive bowl with the salad cream and the peas.

Serve warm or at room temperature.

Hakurei Gratin

1 Bunch Hakurei Turnips
1 C Cream
½ C Parmigiano-Reggiano
1 T Butter
3-4 Sprigs Fresh Thyme
¼ tsp Cayenne Pepper
Salt & Pepper

Top & tail the turnips and slice them into ¼" rounds. Mince the thyme.

Melt the butter in a skillet over medium heat, then add the turnip slices in layers. When each layer is complete, sprinkle with salt, pepper, cayenne pepper and thyme before beginning next layer. Cook for 3 minutes.

Pour the cream over the turnips, then cover the skillet and continue cooking for 20 minutes. Remove the cover and continue cooking to reduce the remaining liquid in the pan. When the sauce has thickened, sprinkle freshly grated parmesan cheese on top. You may allow it to melt like that or slide it under the broiler for a few minutes to brown the top.

Farrotto con Avocado E Cavolo Nero

1 Bunch Tuscan Kale
1 Avocado
1 Medium Onion
3-4 Cloves Garlic
1 T Honey
1 C Farro
1-2 C White Wine or Water
Olive Oil
Salt & Pepper
Crushed Red Pepper (optional)
Parmigiano-Reggiano (optional)

Bring a pot of water to a boil. Destem and tear or chop the kale. Chop the onion, mince the garlic, halve the avocado and remove its pit.

Add the farro to the boiling water and cook for 10 minutes, then drain.

While the farro boils, put the onions (and red pepper if using) and oil in a skillet over medium heat. When the onions become shiny, add the garlic. When the garlic is pale gold, add the kale, stirring to coat evenly with oil and sprinkling with salt. Cook until the kale begins to wilt, 3 or so minutes, then add the honey and enough water or wine to cover.

When the liquid has reduced, add the drained farro plus more wine or water to cover. Continue cooking in this fashion for 20 minutes, adding more liquid as needed. After 20 minutes, the farro should be soft but chewy and the kale almost melting. Add the avocado and parmesan and stir until well-incorporated. Adjust for seasoning and serve with more cheese on the side.