



BLUE HOUSE FARM

CSA Newsletter

Making It Rain

09.09.11

We have been moving lots of irrigation pipe lately. After a very long stretch of cool weather, the crops are going through a bit of shock with the warm weather. We're doing our best to keep their feet wet. The tender lettuces, radishes, and the lovely spinach that is included in your box this week are especially sensitive to shifts in the weather. They have very shallow roots and if that top layer of soil gets too dry and the weather is warm, they can get bitter, or in the case of radishes, pithy on the inside and very spicy.

I've always enjoyed moving pipe. It takes a considerable amount of puzzle solving skills, since our pipes and corner fittings have come from several different owners before us. This means that the different pipes have different latches and the different fittings have different slots for the latches. So to run three lines of pipe on a field you need at least two "T"s, one "L", and a gate valve. This sounds simple, except that those "L"s and "T"s only accept certain latches from certain pipe, which we do not have a lot of. Maybe it's my early obsession with Legos as a young kid resurfacing, but I am always eager to configure pipes.

Watering is both one of the dirtiest and most satisfying jobs on the farm in equal measure. It is nearly impossible to move pipe and stay clean. The pipe is wet and dirt sticks to it, then you get mud on your hands, which eventually ends up on your shirt and pants; inevitably your boots get soaked from the wet plants that you are walking through and heavy from mud sticking to the bottoms. When there is time or a significant amount of pipe to move, it is wise to get tall rubber boots. I almost never make time to change my boots and make a mess of myself.

After configuring the pipe and putting it in place comes the fun part, usually. Turning the water on can be extremely satisfying, watching your hard work produce the amazing result of sprinkling water on large amounts of plants: essentially making rain. Or it can be extremely frustrating when your latch combo does not work and pipes need to be swapped, which is not easy when a 3" pipe is full of water; they're heavy, obviously wet and therefore muddy. Now is when you really wish you had the rubber boots!

The peppers are finally here. And the sun is shining. Finally! We're putting a few Gypsy peppers in your box this week. They are still yellow and will develop a sweeter, more complex flavor in the next few weeks as they change from yellow to orange to red. Each week will have more peppers for you, both sweet and hot.

Anticipated Harvest

Cippolini Onions
Sweet Gypsy Pepper
Rainbow Chard
Spinach
Fennel
Beets
Red Radishes
Basil
Cilantro

*While the dainty little onions in your box this week will work splendidly should you use them as a substitute for yellow onions in the base of a soffritto or sauté, the true magic of **Cippolini Onions** is best captured when eaten whole, either roasted in the oven or, if you're still firing up the BBQ post-Labor Day, grilled on a skewer. Indeed, the Cippolinis in your box are not undersized; the best Cippolini is only a couple inches in diameter. Native to the same area of Italy whence hails the King of Cheese (Reggio Emilia being the province, and Parmigiano-Reggiano the cheese), Cippolini Onions have a higher residual sugar content than most storage onions, similar to shallots. In fact, Cippolinis may be used to replace shallots in a dish if shallots are not on hand. Though they are pleasant enough when raw, the true complexity of flavor locked within the onions' sugars needs to be released through the application of heat. Whether roasted or grilled whole or sliced and slow sautéed to a golden-brown caramel, drawing out the Cippolini's sugar will yield the tastiest dish.*

Cippolini Onions are good source of Vitamins A & C, B Vitamins, and Organic Phosphates.



Blue House Farm as seen from the hilltops of Cloverdale Valley.

Unfortunately this is the first week that we are fruitless. The strawberries have gone very dormant and we are in this short window when the early apples are all harvested and ripe pears are all been picked. Fortunately, the orchard is on the brink of having lots of ripe fruit and with the nice weather we have been having, the apples and pears will be back very soon.

From the field,
Ryan

Cippolline in Agrodolce **Sweet & Sour** **Cippolini**

- 1lb Cippolini Onion
- 2 T Balsamic Vinegar
- 2 T Butter
- 1 tsp Honey
- Several Sprigs Fresh Thyme
- Salt
- Pepper
- Olive Oil

Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Drop the cippolini onions into the pot and boil for no more than 30 seconds. Drain the onions and, when cool, peel and trim.

In a large skillet, heat a tablespoon or two of olive oil till it shimmers, then add the butter. When the butter stops foaming, add the onions and cook till golden brown on each side. Mix together the vinegar, honey, a pinch of salt and a grind of pepper and add it to the pan as well as a cup of water and the thyme sprigs. Bring to a boil and cover, cooking until the onions are glazed in the balsamic honey sauce; if the pan looks dry but the onions aren't quite tender enough for you, and another tablespoon of water and continue cooking down. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Peperonata - **Sweet Pepper Spread**

One of the few dishes that is truly "Italian" in that it is prepared throughout the country from north to south. It is served as an antipasti, eaten with sandwiches or spread on bread and can be stored in an airtight jar for weeks. Of course, Italy being Italy, there are regional variations: here are two.

Peperonata Toscana

- 4-5 Sweet Peppers
- 2 Onions
- 2-3 Tomatoes, Fresh or Canned
- Olive Oil

Seed, rib & slice the peppers, blanch & peel tomatoes (if fresh), slice onions thinly. Heat half the onion & oil over medium and cook covered until onion browns. Add peppers and cook uncovered till wilted, then add tomatoes and cook another 10 or so minutes: peppers should not get mushy. Serve warm or cold.

Peperonata Siciliana

- 4-5 Sweet Peppers
- 1-2 Onions
- ¼ C ea. Raisins, Pine Nuts & Capers
- 1 T Sugar
- ½ C Vinegar
- Olive Oil
- Fresh Mint

Prepare peppers and onions as above. Add oil, peppers & onions to a skillet and heat over medium-high. When onions are shiny, add raisins, nuts, capers, sugar and vinegar. Cook over low flame until peppers are soft about 12 minutes. Add fresh mint and cover. Serve lukewarm.

Evelyn's Spinach Quiche

For Pâte Brisée

- 1½ C Flour
- 1 Stick Butter, Cubed Pea-Sized
- 4 T Water
- ¼ tsp Salt

For Quiche Filling

- 3 Eggs
- ½ lb Spinach
- 3 oz. Cream Cheese
- 1/3 C Half N Half
- ½ C Parmigiano-Reggiano
- 1 Cippolini Onion or Shallot
- 2 Cloves Garlic
- 2 T Butter
- Salt & Pepper

For Pâte Brisée: Whisk flour & salt in small bowl. Add butter and rub with fingers into flour, until a coarse mix is obtained. Add water, then work into mix with fingers until dough just comes together. Form into ball, wrap in plastic and refrigerate for 1 hour. Then roll out *pâte brisée* dough and place in 8-in cast iron skillet.

For Quiche: Preheat oven to 425°. Heat butter in a skillet, add onions, cook till shiny then add garlic. Sauté till garlic is golden, then add chopped spinach and pinch of salt, stir to coat and remove from heat and let cool.

Beat cream cheese in a small bowl until smooth. Gradually beat in half n half and eggs. Add cooled spinach, salt and pepper. Pour mixture into *pâte brisée* crust. Bake until filling is set and crust is golden brown, about 25 minutes. Let cool 10 minutes before serving.