



# TWO SMALL FARMS

## Community Supported Agriculture

October 15, 16, 17 2008

### Curly Parsley, by Andy Griffin

We all make mistakes, but I don't like to talk about mine. I like to reassure my CSA box subscribers that I'm up to the task of responsibly spending the monies they've advanced me, and enumerating every one of my witless errors is unlikely to build confidence. Calling attention to mistakes other people make on the farm isn't a very good idea either. I'm the boss and I'm ultimately responsible, so when an employee's performance falls short of perfection it reflects poorly on my skills as an administrator. But Julia insists that I come clean this once, so here goes.

Broadly speaking, there are three forms of parsley: Hamburg, or root parsley, where the harvest of fat, white, carrot-like roots is the ultimate objective, or Italian, or flat-leaved parsley, which is grown for the flavorful, aromatic, green leaves and stems. And then there's the familiar curly parsley.

It's true that over the years I've written some terrible things about curly parsley. I've suggested that curly parsley is best suited to garnish a plate at Denny's, and then be discarded with the dirty napkin and the slice of hard, pink tomato. I've said that I don't care for the texture of curly parsley, and that it isn't as flavorful as the Italian parsley I prefer. I've also said that curling parsley's naturally flat leaves has transformed the plant from a hardy woodland herb into a fussy and delicate plant and is as dubious an example of the breeder's art as the "improvement" that befell the wolf when it was morphed into the poodle. I recognize that some people like curly parsley but I'm standing by my earlier assessments. I'm also harvesting curly parsley for your box this week. Why?

Parsley, like its cousins the carrot and the celery, takes about fourteen days to germinate. Then, for the first month or six weeks all forms of parsley, be they Hamburg, Italian, or curly, all have juvenile leaves which look alike. I wanted to plant a crop of Hamburg parsley to overwinter for next year's first CSA boxes, so we planted four rows at the edge of the field where they wouldn't be in the way. Then I forgot about them and trusted the crew to care for the crop, which they did. When I got around to checking up on it I couldn't help but notice the radical, curly nature of the parsley. This was no Hamburg parsley! But I already had a lot of time and money invested in the crop, so I let it grow.

I'm still not admitting to any mistakes. I've never bought curly parsley seed, so the bag of Hamburg parsley that was delivered to me must have been labeled wrong. See! It's not

my fault! I'm not going to complain to my friend John though, who sells me the seed, because he does me the courtesy of delivering all my seed directly to my house. John has also given me lots of information about farming that he gleaned from years of farming himself, and he's turned me on to numerous new and ancient varieties of vegetables that I wouldn't otherwise have known about. Besides, I'm not really losing any money. The curly parsley crop is healthy, it's beautiful, and I'll sell it.

One of the chefs I work with has told me that in one respect curly leaf parsley is even better than flat-leaved parsley; if you want to make fried parsley leaf to sprinkle on top of a dish curly leaved parsley fries up better than flat leaf, and if you want to dip the parsley leaves in a light batter and fry them

tempura-style, the baroque curlicues of the curly parsley's leaf hold the batter better than the slick. If that kind of cooking is too fancy for you and you want to put a sprig of curly parsley on your plate at home and pretend that you've gone out to eat at Denny's, the plant does have a certain "retro" charm. One tip if you're going to eat the curly parsley though, and this is true for ALL parsley; parsley stems have a lot of flavor, maybe even more than the leaves do, so mince them up like tiny stalks of celery and use them too. It's a waste to only pluck the leaves off and toss the stems. I never make that mistake!

But I did make a mistake. I said once that "I'll never grow curly parsley." Once upon a time I also said that I'd never have kids, and now Graydon is 13

and Lena is 11. I'm old enough to know better than make emphatic, blanket proclamations. I'm better off being cryptic, vague, ambiguous, and evasive about my plans. After all, my mother told me, "Never say never!" And she was right.

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*Storage notes:* Leave the tomatoes out on your kitchen counter. Store the rest of your veggies in your refrigerator. Remove the greens from the beets before storing (the beets stay firm longer without the greens) and use the leaves first as a cooking green.

## This Week

**Parsley** <sup>MF</sup>

**Early Girl Tomatoes** <sup>MF</sup>

**Little Gem Lettuce** <sup>HG</sup>

**Red or Green Cabbage** <sup>HG</sup>

**Sweet Peppers** <sup>MF</sup>

**Gold Beets** <sup>MF</sup>

**Celery** <sup>HG</sup>

**Mystery** <sup>HG</sup>

**Flowers: Mixed Bouquet** <sup>HG,\*</sup>

## Events

Saturday Oct 18, 2008: Community Alliance for Family Farmers (CAFF) presents a Farm to School Event: Farm to School Champion Training, in Watsonville, CA. For more information go to <http://caff.org/champion.shtml> or call (831)454-8507.

## Pick-Up Site Reminders

### Please Fold your Box

We understand that it is not immediately obvious to everyone how to flatten the CSA box without destroying it, and we really do appreciate them not being destroyed. But we also want to have our members leave the pick-up sites as tidy as possible for our generous hosts.

So here is a lesson in *Box Folding 101*:

- 1—Hold the box upside down from the short edges.
- 2—With your fingers holding the box from the sides, reach your thumbs along the bottom to where the tabs are.
- 3—Hook your thumbs in the tabs and gently squeeze your thumb towards your fingers, so that the tab folds up and slips out. Do not rip the tabs or we cannot reuse the box. (The boxes cost \$1.50 each, and they are not recyclable because they are waxed, so we really want to be able to reuse them as many times as possible.)

4—Stack the folded box neatly in the shade with the other boxes. (The boxes hold up well to moisture, but not to sun.)

We understand that folding the box may be difficult for some people for a variety of reasons (arthritis, etc.). If folding the box is a hardship for you for any reason, please do leave it for others to do. And if you are a good box folder, please consider flattening any other boxes you find at your site that need it, as a service to your neighbors and your host.

Thank You!

### Use the Trade Box for Trades

Our drivers try to bring an item each week to 'start' the trade box. *Please only take something from the trade box if you replace it with something from your own box.* That way everyone can enjoy the option of trading items! (You may, of course, leave an item from your box in the trade box even if you don't want to take anything in exchange.)

## Tabbouleh from *Joy of Cooking*

Combine in a large bowl:

1 cup medium bulgur	2 cups boiling water
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Cover and let stand for 30 minutes. Drain in a sieve, pressing with the back of a large spoon to remove the excess moisture, and return to the bowl. Add:

1 cup chopped soup celery	1 cup chopped parsley sprigs
4 large ripe tomatoes, finely chopped	1 cup packed mint sprigs, chopped
1 bunch scallions, finely chopped	1 medium onion, finely chopped

Stir in:

½ tsp. allspice, optional	½ tsp. salt
¼ tsp. black pepper	

Whisk together:

1/3 C fresh lemon juice	1/3 C olive oil (extra virgin)
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Add to the bulgur and toss to coat. Serve at room temperature.

*Everything in your box and the flowers are organically grown. From Mariquita Farm: tomatoes, peppers, parsley, beets. From High Ground Organics: lettuce, celery, cabbage, mystery, flowers. From Thomas Farm: some flowers.*

## Julia's Tabbouleh (when I'm too lazy to open a cookbook)

Cook up some cracked wheat or couscous (couscous is not traditional, but this recipe isn't either!) Dress the cooled, cooked grain with olive oil and lemon juice. Stir in chopped tomatoes, finely chopped onion or green onions, and piles of washed, chopped parsley. I like my tabbouleh to be vibrant green. Throw in some chopped fresh mint if available. Season with S & P.

## Sweet Pepper and Celery Soup

1 TBS Olive oil	1 TBS Butter
8 Sticks celery; chopped	1 onion; chopped
1 sweet pepper; chopped	1 Clove garlic; crushed
2 TBS chopped fresh parsley	1/3 cup raw oatmeal
4 cups vegetable or chicken stock	Salt and freshly ground black pepper
Celery leaves to garnish	

Heat the oil and butter in a pan and sauté the celery, onions, pepper and garlic for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the parsley, stock, oats and seasoning. Bring to a boil then cover and simmer for 20 minutes.

Allow to cool slightly then puree with hand held blender or food processor. If it looks delicious to you without blending, great! Skip that step. In our family, I like smooth soups, Andy likes chunky ones.

Return to the saucepan, heat through and serve garnished with celery leaves.

## Roasted Tomato Soup (from *Super Natural Cooking* by Heidi Swanson)

5 tomatoes, cored (if necessary) and quartered	1 large red bell pepper, seeded and quartered
3 medium yellow onions, peeled, quartered	5 plump cloves of garlic, unpeeled
extra-virgin olive oil	fine-grain sea salt
2-3 cups light vegetable stock or water	¼ tsp smoked paprika

Preheat the oven to 374°F degrees and position 2 racks in the middle of the oven. Line 2 rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper; alternately you can just rub them down with a thin glaze of olive oil.

Arrange the tomatoes, skin side down, on a baking sheet. Coat the bell pepper and onions with olive oil and put them on the other baking sheet along with the garlic, place the pepper skin side down as well. Give both sheets a light showering of salt, then bake until the tomatoes start to collapse and the onions start to brown and caramelize, about 45 minutes. Turn the onions if they start getting overly dark on the bottom. Check on the garlic as well, once the cloves are golden and oozy inside, pull them from the oven.

Peel the garlic, dump all of the roasted vegetables into a big, high-sided bowl, and puree with a hand blender. Alternately, use a conventional blender or food processor and work in batches. Blend in a cup of the stock, and keep adding the rest 1/2 cup at a time until the soup is the desired consistency. I like a little chunk and texture to this soup particularly if the weather has a bit of a chill, but smooth or chunky is your call. Add the paprika and a bit more salt if needed -- adjusting to your taste. Serves 4.