



TWO SMALL FARMS

Community Supported Agriculture

September 3, 4, 5 2008

Back to School, by Andy Griffin

Our children attend Mount Madonna School now, but for several years Julia and I homeschooled both Graydon and Lena. During that time, when he was ten and eleven, I took Graydon with me when I made my restaurant deliveries. Every Wednesday and Saturday I'd root him out of bed at 3:30 in the morning, and he'd ride up to the City with me. At each stop he'd jump out, help me unload the truck, keep the door open for me when I pushed the hand truck into the restaurant, shuttle some boxes inside behind me, and keep an eye on the street for the meter maids. When he got stronger I gave him a dolly to push too.

It didn't take Graydon long to figure out that if he made eyes at the dessert chefs, they'd give him something to ward off hunger. His favorite was Michelle Polzin, a tall, striking, punky, tattooed, red-headed, cookie-baking rock & roller with cat's eye glasses. She always talked to him, asked him questions, and gave him treats. Graydon chatted up the bar tenders too. "You want a cold one for the road?" they'd ask him as we were leaving.

"Yeah," he'd reply. "I'll take a limonata."

People wonder how the kid grew so fast. I wish I could say it was the home-grown organic vegetables, but I suspect it was the lemon tart from Delfina on 18th Street, the cherry fool he knocked back at Range on Valencia, or the hand-rolled bread sticks he inhaled at Incanto on Church.

Graydon learned about food preparation in the restaurants, watching the crew downstairs at Kokkari Estiatorio butcher giant fish, for example, or checking out the guys unloading trucks in the streets of Chinatown at dawn wearing yellow raincoats with dead pigs draped over their shoulders. We were downstairs in a prep kitchen one

day when a cook sparked two blowtorches, one in each hand, gunslinger style, and blasted away at a tray of corno di toro peppers until they were black and smoking. Graydon stopped pushing his hand truck to watch. Why didn't his parents ever bust out the blow torches to make dinner?

"Hey, kid," said the prep cook. "You can really rock that dolly!"

"Yeah," Graydon replied. "I'm helping my papa. What are you doing?"

Renew for Fall Veggies

Our final quarter starts Sept. 24th-26th. If you're paying on the 9-week schedule, send in your \$180 for just veggies or \$234 for flowers too (through Nov 19, 20, 21). Thanks!

Tomato U-Picks at Mariquita Farm

September 6th, 11th, and 13th all from 9am to 1pm. at Mariquita Farm in Hollister:

Tomatoes are 50¢ a pound. We'll have some other produce picked and for sale. Please bring a hat, plenty of water and sunscreen. We will have cardboard boxes for sale, but you're encouraged to bring your own bags, boxes or crates. All are welcome. No dogs, please.

Directions to the Farm: Take 101 South or North to Hwy 25. Go East on 25 towards Hollister until the intersection with Shore Rd. Turn left on Shore Rd. Head north on Shore Rd. to the intersection with San Felipe Rd. Turn left on San Felipe Rd. and go a mile or so. The entrance to the farm will be on your left just AFTER a beautiful old two-story Victorian home which is located at 7210 San Felipe Rd. Please do not go in the yard of the Victorian. Please drive very very slowly on the dirt driveway to keep down dust and protect your car.

This Week

Tomatoes MF

Sweet Peppers MF

Strawberries OR

Apples HG

Gold Beets MF

Lacinato Kale MF

Cauliflower HG

Lettuce HG

Mystery HG

Flowers: Mixed Bouquet HG

"Flaming off peppers."

"Why?" Graydon asked.

"A pepper has a thick, waxy skin," the cook explained, flicking off his torches. "So we burn them real fast with high heat, which lifts the skin and caramelizes the flesh." He tossed the burned peppers into a large, stainless steel bowl. "After they cool, I'll peel off the burned stuff."

Graydon nodded attentively.

"You see all that juice that drips out of them?" asked the cook. "That's nectar. Save it! A splash of that and your sauce kicks ass!"

Graydon peered into the bowl.

"I'd use mesquite," the cook continued. "I like the way the smoke balances the sweetness, but pinche flojo over there is tying up the grill, so I 'borrowed' the dessert station's blow torches and I'm gettin' the job

done. Wanna try?"

Graydon was intimidated by the blue flames, so he stepped back, but he kept watching. Knowing that he had an audience prompted the prep cook to put a little attitude into his roasting, but then attitude is never too far from the surface in a kitchen.

When Chris Cosentino, the chef at Incanto, an Italian restaurant and wine bar in Noe Valley, went up against the Rabelaisian "Molto" Mario Batali, of the famed Babbo Restaurant in New York's Greenwich Village, on the Food Network's Iron Chef show, there was an invitation-only screening party at a bar down in the Mission. Graydon wanted to go. It wasn't exactly legal for me to take him, but the kid was being home-schooled and missing out on Social Studies Class, so some catching up was in order. "Stay cool," I told him, "and try not to get in a fight."

The Double Dutch was crammed and the monitors mounted high over the bar were already blaring by the time Graydon and I showed up. The theme was "Battle Garlic." Chris had done the Iron Chef competition with two compadres, Jonnatan Leiva of Jack Falstaff Restaurant down in SOMA and Ravi Kapur from Boulevard on the Embarcadero, so the room was hopping with line cooks, prep cooks, sous chefs, garde mangers, and dishwashers from all three restaurants, plus their girl friends, boy friends, spouses and exes, half of whom also worked in restaurants. "This would be a bad night to eat out in San Francisco," I told Graydon. "Half the talent in town is down here!" I got him a limonata.

On screen, Chris, Ravi, and Jonnatan hit the stage of Kitchen Stadium, and the crowd in the Double Dutch roared. "Molto" and his posse drew hoots. Actually, the cooks all dug Mario too, but you gotta go with the home-town talent, and besides, these were all working people who spend their days chopping, frying, boiling, grilling, reducing, blanching, and straining. They knew that if "Molto" was head chef at Babbo, Lupa, Esca, Carnevino, Casa Mono, Bar Jamon, etc, etc, etc, he'd already drifted off into rock star heaven. But the next day, when the beer buzz wore off, they'd all be back at their stations, getting it done, and so would Chris, Ravi, and Jonnatan. It wasn't "Chris versus 'Molto'," or "Incanto versus Babbo," it was "David versus Goliath."

Chris led off with garlic crostino with rapini and ricotta. "If the contest were on this side of the world," I told Graydon, "that would be our farm's rapini."

Sizzled diver scallop crudo with pickled garlic followed, and then Spaghetti alla chitarra with snails & garlic butter. But when Chris plated the squab with the claws still on, each foot clutching a roasted garlic clove, the crowd at the Double Dutch roared like English hooligans at a soccer game. Chris advised the judges to eat the bird's brains by sucking them out through the beak. Graydon grinned widely and drained his limonata. But then the judges gave the match to Mario by two points— the contest having been decided by "plating," of all things, and the crowd raged. "That's bull\$#! Flavor rules!"

A prep cook turned to Graydon and me. "Chris outscored 'Molto' on originality by five points," he said. "That's gotta hurt." Clearly, if Chris had been judged by a jury of his peers he would have won, but no one ever said that the Iron Chef Program was run by the Department of Justice. Graydon was bummed, so I ordered him another limonata to wash away his sorrows.

School starts up again for Graydon pretty quick. He's thirteen, so he'll be learning about the Civil War and pre-algebra, and all that's super important, I know. How much of his education he'll remember past the tests is debatable, but I know he'll never forget the savory education he got in the streets, the kitchens, and the bars of San Francisco when he was rockin' the dolly for the family farm.

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Everything in your box and the flowers are organically grown. From Mariquita Farm: tomatoes, sweet peppers, gold beets, Lacinato kale. From High Ground: strawberries, apples, lettuce, cauliflower, mystery, some flowers. From Thomas Farm: some flowers.

More Ways to Get Tomatoes!

Full Flats for canning, roasting, freezing, saucing, and sharing.

1) *Tomato Emergency Day* in Palo Alto on Friday, September 12th from 5–7 pm at our Palo Alto Ross Road Site. By preorder only, email mariquitamystery@gmail.com to make your order. Find the list at Mariquita.com. 4 kinds of tomatoes and High Ground strawberries and padron peppers too.

2) Mariquita Tomatoes are available at the *Redman House Farmstand* by the pound anytime (Wed-Sun 10am to 6pm) or flats by pre-order for pick-up Fridays and Saturdays. Email Shelley at csa@twosmallfarms.com with your order from the list at Mariquita.com.

3) *CSA Piggy-Back deliveries*: Santa Cruz County Thursday Pick-Up only: we can deliver cases of tomatoes to your pick up site: San Marzanos on Thursday, Sept. 4th and we can offer Early Girl Tomatoes on Thursday, Sept. 11th. Each variety is 20 pounds for \$28. Email Shelley to make an order for 9/4 (San Marzanos) and/or 9/11 (Early Girls). Our trucks are full of CSA boxes on our other routes so we can't drop off at other pick up sites this time, sorry about that!

Notes and Recipes

What CSA member, Rebekah would do with her veggies: Depending on what kind of tomatoes they are, they'll go into salad (heirloom), lunches (cherry), or some cooked dish. Last week we had a delicious chicken cacciatore with the tomatoes and sweet peppers, and if there are more San Marzanos, we'll have it again this week. I'll put the beet greens and kale into a very simple soup discovered in Mario Battali's *Molto Italiano*: sauté a sliced onion and a minced garlic clove till soft, add a couple of cubed potatoes, greens cut into ribbons, salt, hot pepper flakes, a bay leaf, and water to cover. Cook till greens and potatoes are tender. We'll roast the beets (wrapped in foil, 75 minutes at 425°, or in a foil-covered baking dish with an inch of water at 400° for an hour) and put them in green salads and in a salad with steamed cauliflower and a creamy dressing made with oil, vinegar, herbs and chopped egg. Berries will go with yogurt and granola for breakfast; apples in lunches.

Marinated Roasted Peppers, from *Chez Panisse Vegetables* by Alice Waters

Roast whole peppers over a very hot wood or charcoal fire (flaming is best), turning frequently to allow the skins to completely blacken and blister. When they're charred, remove them from the grill and let them steam in a container with a tight-fitting lid or on a plate put inside a plastic bag; steaming loosens the skins and makes the peppers easier to peel.

When peppers are cool enough to handle, peel off their skins. Cut off the stem end and open the peppers up. Remove the core and seeds, flatten out the pepper, and scrape off any remaining flecks of skin with the back of a paring knife. Cut the peppers in strips, season with salt and pepper, and marinate in a little olive oil with a few garlic cloves and basil leaves. These make delicious appetizers when served on a freshly grilled garlic crouton, with or without anchovy fillets. [I enjoyed them on crackers with shaved parmesan and a couple of capers on top! - Shelley]