



# TWO SMALL FARMS

## Community Supported Agriculture

September 30, October 1, 2 2009

### What Was I Thinking? by Andy Griffin

I don't often write about my failures as a farmer and businessman but this time the situation is ridiculous enough that I can laugh about it. On Mariquita Farm we plant at least a couple of crops every week of the year except during the last two weeks of November and the month of December. With that many sowings going into the ground there are bound to be failures; Indian corn seedlings eaten by crows, rapini sowings devastated by flea beetles, cucumber plantings ruined by mildew — and that's just a partial list of this year's failures.

Of course a psychologist will point out that each of these "failures" I'm pointing out now were in some way caused by nature. Mother Nature can't be blamed for everything. I make plenty of mistakes all on my own too, like choosing to grow cantaloupes in Hollister when a smaller melon, like Charentais, might ripen better and sweeter. And why did I plant long black Spanish radishes again when I know that nobody but me likes them? (There's an answer to that! Long black radishes are the most ancient vegetable crop still cultivated. Egyptian stone masons ate them for lunch and washed them back with clay flagons of barley beer when they were building the pyramids and I love them for that. Besides, I've read your emails and no, I'm not going to make you gag them down. I'll try and sell them to restaurants.) But today's failure is different.

Every year we like to harvest a crop of winter squash in the fall. Some people will eat the squash right away, and others will let them sit around in the kitchen for a while before they get around to cooking with them. There's nothing wrong with that; some kinds of winter squash are "good keepers." Here's a hint; squash from the Cucurbita pepo group, like Sugar Pie pumpkins or Delicata squash have about as much sugar as they're ever going to have right after harvest. They'll keep well for a couple of months, but after that their starches begin to change to starches and they get to tasting flat. On the other hand, squash from the Cucurbita moschata group, like Butternut, taste starchy right after harvest, but over time those starches turn to sugars and the flavor gets better and better. Butternut squash are great keepers, and if they are stored out of direct sun, and if they aren't cut into or nicked, they can last for a very long time. This year I grew Sugar Pie pumpkins, Delicata squash, and plenty of Butternut. So far so good.

I also grew a lot of Rugosa and Musquee' de Provence squash. "Rugosa" is an heirloom Butternut type squash from Italy that has a wrinkled skin. "Musquee' de Provence" is an heirloom savory pumpkin from the south of France. I sowed these two crops on time, we cultivated them well, watered them adequately, fertilized

them adequately, and sat back to watch them grow, and grow, and grow, and grow. When the foliage died back I was shocked to see the whole field literally cobbled with the fruits. What was I thinking? There were enough hard squash out there to feed all of Central California through next September. I can't put them in your CSA boxes. Most of the Rugosa weigh at least ten pounds apiece, and the Musquee' de Provence start at 15 lbs and go up to 45lbs apiece. These squash won't fit in the box and the drivers would sue me if I made them lug them around. Clearly, the reason these excellent winter squash have disappeared from the marketplace is because they are too big for modern families to choke down.

We had to harvest the Rugosa and Musquee squash and haul them out of the field to make way for our winter cover crop of fava beans. I think we hauled out ten big truck loads of squash and I had nowhere to pile them except in my yard. A little crop failure would have done me some good in this instance. Right now my yard is pretty for autumn in a "Martha on steroids" kind of way, but that could change. I'll offer the Rugosa and Musquee' to the restaurants and hope I sell them all before they rot. That would be a "Martha in hell" kind of mess!

There's one ray of hope. Remy is the kitchen manager at the Zuni Cafe in San Francisco. I've been in a lot of kitchen walk-in coolers in the City and I've seen things that scare me, like when a chef told me that the carrots I'd sent him were rotten, and when I went in the cooler to see for myself I found other bags of carrots they'd lost, plus the fresh ones I'd just delivered. But that never happens in Remy's kitchen. I get the impression that Remy knows how many grains of black pepper he has in

inventory. Remy is a very careful, detail oriented kind of guy, and he told me that last year a farmer gave him a Musquee' de Provence pumpkin. The farmer told Remy that the pumpkin would last a year, so Remy, being the careful, detail oriented fellow that he is, put the pumpkin to one side and waited to see if the fellow's claim was correct. The Musquee' squash is a Cucurbita moschata, so it should keep, and get sweeter over time. A year has passed, and Remy reports that his squash hasn't rotted. For me the good news is that I've got some time to figure out my squash dilemma. We'll keep you posted.

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**This Week**  
**Butternut Winter Squash** <sup>MF</sup>  
**Choggia Beets** <sup>MF</sup>  
**Tomatoes** <sup>MF</sup>  
**Fennel** <sup>HG</sup>  
**Fingerling Potatoes** <sup>HG</sup>  
**Radishes OR Carrots** <sup>HG</sup>  
**Spicy Cayenne Peppers** <sup>MF</sup>  
**Basil (Th/Fr)** <sup>MF</sup>  
**Chives (Wed)** <sup>MF</sup>  
**Mystery** <sup>HG</sup>  
**Flowers: Mixed Bouquet** <sup>TF</sup>

### Recipes and Notes

(also see [www.mariquita.com/recipes](http://www.mariquita.com/recipes))

What Jonathan would do with this week's box: Cayenne peppers, wow! Some people know them as red finger chiles, fleshy, spicy, and yummy. I think many home cooks are afraid

of fresh peppers, especially spicy ones. True, they can bite, and preparing them can be tricky in that you have to keep your fingers away from the rest of your body parts for a while, but there's nothing that can add a little kick to a dish than some fresh heat. Fresh, spicy peppers can also deliver a sweetness that the dried versions cannot, so they are worth seeking out. Try adding a little chopped cayenne to your creations this week, a little at a time. And if you are worried about how much heat it will deliver, just make sure to devein and seed the pepper first. That will substantially cool things down. And no scratching while you do it!

Here's a cool little creation that features the red finger chile, or fresh cayenne: a lemon-chile sorbet.

**Lemon-Chile Sorbet**, from chef Jonathan Miller

½ cup sugar	1 fresh red finger chile (cayenne pepper)
4 TBS simple syrup	¾ cup lemon juice (fresh)

Blend all the ingredients until very smooth. Freeze until firm. Scrape with a fork to serve. Top diced and salted mango with it and garnish with some fresh mint leaves.

**Roasted Beet Lollipops**, from chef Jonathan Miller

Whenever I have chiogga beets, I have to roast them. They have those beautiful red and white stripes on the inside, and I think it's the only way to treat these unusual beets. A cute thing to do with them once they're roasted (375 degree oven for about 50 minutes, covered) and peeled is to slice them thickly. Lay them flat so that you are looking at the concentric circles of red and white. Use a toothpick to pierce the side of the thick beet slice, leaving enough toothpick out of the beet to hold onto it with two fingers. Lightly salt the beet and serve them like lollipops.

**Tomato Butternut Stew**, from *Greens* via Jonathan

2 tsp. cumin seeds	2 tsp. oregano (dry, mexican)
3 TBS sesame seeds	1/3 c almonds
4 TBS mild chili powder	2 TBS corn oil
1 large onion, diced	2 garlic cloves, minced
1 butternut squash, peeled and diced	8 oz shiitake mushrooms, sliced
½ head cauliflower, cut into florets	1 small can hominy, drained and rinsed
2 lb tomatoes, peeled and chopped	1 cup peas
cilantro	

Toast the cumin seeds in a dry skillet until fragrant, a minute or two. Transfer to a mortar and grind (or use an electric grinder). Do the same for the oregano. Toast the sesame seeds and almonds and allow to cool. In a large pot, cook the onion(s) in the corn oil until soft, about 8 minutes. Add the garlic, cumin, oregano and half the chili powder. Cook another minute or two. Add the squash, mushrooms, some salt, and 3 cups water. Simmer about 20 minutes, until the squash is tender. Do not allow to dry out. Add more water if necessary. Grind the sesame seeds and almonds in a food processor and add them to the stew with the cauliflower, hominy, and tomatoes. Check for seasonings and add more salt and/or chili powder if you like. Cook until the cauliflower is tender, maybe another 10-12 minutes. Add the peas and a handful of chopped cilantro. My wife likes hers with a very large dollop of sour cream on top.

**Harvest Fair 2009**

October 10<sup>th</sup>, 10AM-4PM.

Come out for a day of great organic farm fun! Get your organic pumpkins and decorative corn, pick strawberries in the field, and check out our mini-farmstand for other good stuff from High Ground and Mariquita (like some of those great wrinkled Rugosa squash!). The kids can make corn husk dolls, stuff scarecrows, create eggshell people that grow hair, work on a farm mural, or have their faces painted. We'll have a tractor-pulled hay ride, pony and horse rides, and a small petting zoo, plus ever-hungry habitat-restoring goats to feed as you take a self-guided tour of our farm-edge habitats. You can also visit our heirloom apple tasting table, and have lunch from the barbecue, manned by Chef Andrew Cohen.

Entry Fee: \$10 adult/\$5 child (kids 3 and under are free). Entry fee includes all arts and crafts, pony rides, hay rides, face painting, and tours. You will pay additionally for wreaths, pumpkins, strawberries and other produce, and for prepared food and drinks. This event is a benefit—all proceeds go to Linscott Charter School in downtown Watsonville.

**Pinzimonio and Tonnato**, from chef Nate Appleman, of *A16 Restaurant*

¼ cup olive oil	8 oz tuna (canned in olive oil)
3 TBS lemon juice	4 anchovies
2 TBS capers	3 TBS mayonnaise

Process all these ingredients in a food processor. Check for salt and lemon. This is the "dip". Use any variety of vegetables to accompany. Here's some that I've used:

- Fennel, cored and quartered
- Radish, sliced in rounds
- Carrots, quartered lengthwise
- Celery stalks from the inner part of the celery, especially the ones with leaves still on them
- Red Bell Peppers, sliced wide lengthwise
- Green Beans, blanched

I also usually garnish the tuna with small parsley leaves (not curly!) for some color. You could also use some of the basil in your box for this.

**Grilled Fingerling Potatoes**, from chef Jonathan Miller

Fingerling potatoes are great grilling potatoes. They don't mush up easily and most have an interesting shape to them. Try slicing them in half lengthwise and tossing them in some olive oil, salt, pepper, and some chopped rosemary. Grill them on a hot part of the grill, cut side down until they have nice grill marks and slightly golden. Flip them, grill another couple minutes, then move them to a cooler part of the grill to finish cooking through. Throw on some summer squash, corn, and eggplant and you have a nice set of grilled veggies.

**Ladybug Buying Club** (buy peppers and tomatoes in bulk):  
*Thursday, 10/1:* San Francisco, 4:30-7:00. *Friday, 10/2:* Palo Alto, 3:30-5:30. Email Julia: ladybugbuyingclub@gmail.com.

*Everything in your box and the flowers are organically grown. From Mariquita Farm: basil, chives, butternut squash, beets, cayenne peppers, tomatoes. From High Ground Organics: potatoes, fennel, radishes, carrots, mystery. From Thomas Farm: flowers.*