



TWO SMALL FARMS

Community Supported Agriculture

August 11-13, 2010

New Farmland Update, by Stephen Pedersen

Remember that this spring we purchased a new 23 acre farm in nearby North Monterey County? We thought we would update you on how that project is coming along.

After having not been farmed in more than twenty years, large stands of coyote bush had colonized most of the fields and the tree branches along the periphery had grown long and low. We cut down and ground up the coyote bush with a chipper, and dug the roots out with our tractor loader. And we spent a lot of time cutting back low hanging branches around the edge of the fields.

Establishing our water supply was the next order of business. We had tested the well back in January and knew it was strong, but the old turbine style pump was beyond repair. We ended up installing a more efficient 30 horse-power submersible pump at the end of 210 feet of new 4" galvanized pipe. We then brought in an electrician to install a new control panel.

Getting the water where we need it in the field is another matter. Somebody had been thoughtful enough at some point to mark all of the above ground valves, which had largely been overgrown with vegetation. The previous owners had installed a new PVC system of valves and risers when it was last farmed that still appeared to be in good shape. But we had no idea where the buried main-line that tied into the "new" system travelled. After digging some completely unsuccessful exploratory holes on my own, I decided it was time to bring in some outside help. We turned to Bobby Peixoto at Pajaro Valley Laser Leveling who sent over a large excavator. Starting at the pump, George, the operator, expertly dug down close to the pipe and using a probe, we were able to track the line up to where it joined the newer system. We ended up replacing the first section of rusty steel pipe, which probably dated back to the 1950s, with a new 6" line.

Starting off with a blank slate is a real luxury. It is much more difficult to make major changes after a farm has become established. Once we got to know the land we put a lot of thought into the layout of the farm, and again turned to Bobby Peixoto. After passing over all of the fields with a disc harrow and later with a deep-shanked ripper they set about creating three settlement basins along the bottom of the property. These will act to catch any sediment that might wash down during heavy winter rainfall. Then we created terraces on a

four acre field on the western side of the property where we will eventually install high tunnels to extend our vegetable production through the winter and early spring.

Because deer pressure is high in the area, installing a tall fence was our next priority. This involved clearing more brush, using a tractor-driven post-hole digger to dig nearly 100 3½ foot deep holes, and pounding in more than 400 t-posts. All that's left to finish that project is to stretch wire across the posts.

Our plan this season is to finish all of the major infrastructure improvements and to focus on having the land ready to start planting on early next spring. Our next focus will be on improving the soil fertility and ensuring that things are in good shape erosion-wise well before this coming winter. Soon we will start spreading wood mulch on the benches between the terraces and as early as mid-September, we will start watering up cover crops on all the fields and grasses on all of the roadways.

It's been a lot of work already for land we won't produce anything on this year, but we feel that the investments we're making now will really pay off in the long run. With luck, we'll have the land in good shape for early spring crops next year, while the heavy clay soil of our home farm is still mired in muck from the winter rains.

We'll be forever grateful to our realtor, Shane Scott, whose persistence and hard work enabled us to purchase the property and who died suddenly last month. She became a friend through the long purchase process and we'll miss showing her how the property is coming along. In losing Shane, the small farm community has lost a great amount of knowledge and experience in helping small farmers acquire suitable land. She will be greatly missed.

This Week

Celery ^{HG}

Chives ^{MF}

Tomatoes ^{MF}

Strawberries ^{HG}

Carrots OR Sweet Corn ^{MF}

Beets (Gold OR Chioggia) ^{MF}

Mixed Summer Squash OR

Potatoes ^{HG}

Broccoli OR Cauliflower OR

Cabbage ^{HG}

Flowers: Mixed Bouquet ^{TF}

Recipes

(see www.mariquita.com/recipes for more recipes)

Broccoli Soup, from Chef Jonathan Miller

1 onion, diced	3 TBL olive oil
1 garlic clove, chopped	1 bunch broccoli, diced, stems peeled, ½ cup florets reserved
3 cups vegetable stock	½ cup cream or half and half
1 red bell pepper, roasted and quartered	2 tsp. tapenade (store bought is fine)

Sauté the onion in the olive oil until it is softened, about 8 minutes. Add the garlic clove and the broccoli stems and non-reserved florets. Cover and sauté slowly for about 5 minutes. If your pot dries out, add a few tablespoons of stock. Meanwhile, blanch the reserved florets in salted boiling water for about 30 seconds. Drain and cool under cold water. Drain again. Add enough stock to just cover the vegetables and simmer until the broccoli is completely cooked, probably another 8-10 minutes. Cool slightly, then puree in a blender until smooth. Return to a saucepan, add some salt and the cream and warm through. Taste to make sure it tastes good. Ladle into 4 bowls. Into each bowl drop some broccoli florets, then top each with a quartered bell pepper. Top each bell pepper with a ½ teaspoon of tapenade and serve.

Tomato Soup, from *Penzeys Spices*, via CSA member, Christine G-S

4 lbs tomatoes	2 tsp. sugar
3 TBL butter	1 small onion chopped
1/3 cup flour	½ tsp thyme
½ tsp salt	½ tsp pepper
½ tsp minced garlic	2 cups milk
a few minced basil leaves or ½ tsp. dried	

Cook tomatoes and sugar over medium heat for approx 10 minutes or until skins start falling off. Add the baking soda. The mixture will foam up. Cook for a few more minutes, until the tomatoes are tender. Strain through a sieve to remove skin and seeds. Set aside. In a soup pot, sauté onions in butter until soft. Add flour, salt, pepper, and thyme. Cook for 3 minutes, stirring constantly. Add milk, whisking until smooth. Cook until mixture thickens. Add strained tomatoes slowly to this mixture. Heat it up but do not let the soup boil. Stir in the basil. Dig in. It's a great make-ahead soup as it reheats well. With a grilled cheese sandwich, it's heavenly.

Mustard Butter Pasta with Broccoli, from *The Tassajara Recipe Book* by Edward Espe Brown

5/8 cup butter (may be part olive or soy oil)	4 TBL Dijon mustard (or your favorite)
2 cloves garlic	2 TBL parsley, well minced
2 TBL chives, finely sliced	salt & pepper
1 TBL oil	¾ lb fettuccine or linguine
2 cups broccoli, cut into small flowerettes (or cauliflower or zucchini or carrots or combination!)	

Set out the butter early to soften up. When it's soft, blend in the mustard. Slice the garlic and pound it in a mortar with a healthy pinch of salt. When it is fairly pulpy, add the parsley and chives and continue pounding for a short while to release their flavors.

Blend this mixture into the butter, along with a few twists of black pepper. Use a large pot to boil a generous amount of water with a teaspoon of salt and a tablespoon of oil. Fan the pasta into the boiling water. If you are using fresh pasta, add the broccoli at the same time. When using dried pasta, add the broccoli the last couple of minutes of cooking. As soon as they are done, scoop out the pasta and the vegetables with an oval strainer, or drain in a colander. Put the pasta and broccoli in a 12-inch skillet, allowing some of the water to dribble in with it.

Add the prepared butter and, over moderate heat, toss the pasta with tongs until it is evenly coated. Keep the heat low

enough that the butter does not bubble or fry--that will change the flavor. Check the seasoning and add salt and pepper if necessary. Serves 4.

Roasted Beet & Wax Bean Salad, from Chef Jonathan Miller

1 bunch beets	4 leeks, halved lengthwise, and sliced crosswise thinly
large double handful green or yellow wax beans, trimmed	2 summer squash, sliced thinly
2 small shallots, minced	small handful basil leaves, julienned
sherry vinegar	olive oil
small bunch chives, chopped	

Roast your beets for about an hour at 375 in a small water bath, covered. Cool, peel, then slice into thin rounds. Blanch the beans in salted boiling water for about 2 minutes, then cool under cold water and drained. In a large skillet, sauté the leeks in some olive oil for about 4 minutes. Do not brown. Add the summer squash and continue to sauté until the leeks are soft and fully cooked. Add some salt and taste to make sure you like it. Make the vinaigrette by whisking the basil and about 2T sherry vinegar with some salt and pepper. Add about 5T olive oil in a stream, whisking, until emulsified. Taste to make sure you like it.

Arrange the leek/squash mixture on a serving plate. Toss the beans with a little of the vinaigrette, just enough to give it a light coating, then mound the beans on the leeks. Toss the beets with a little of the vinaigrette, just enough to coat them lightly, then top the beans with them. Drizzle the remaining vinaigrette over the entire salad and serve.

Northern Italian Minestrone, from Chef Jonathan Miller

Olive oil	1 onion, chopped
½ lb green beans, trimmed and diced	1 lb zucchini, diced
2-3 carrots, diced	2-3 celery stalks, diced
2-3 potatoes, diced	2 tomatoes, chopped
¼-½ head cabbage, chopped	1 bunch scallions, chopped
small handful parsley, roughly chopped	

Heat the oil in a large saucepan and add the onion. Sauté without browning until the onion is soft, about 6-8 minutes. Add the green beans, stir, cover, then sauté over medium-low heat for exactly 2 minutes. Add the zucchini, stir, cover, then sauté over medium-low heat for exactly 2 minutes. Continue in this fashion until you have added the scallions and cooked them for 2 minutes. Then remove the lid, add enough water to cover the vegetables and bring to a low simmer. Simmer for anywhere between 5 minutes to 30, depending on how soft you like your veggies cooked. I like mine to be done around the 7-10 minute mark, but this is your soup, so do it how you like. Add salt and pepper, the parsley, and taste for seasoning. Serve warm with some good bread.

From Mariquita Farm: tomatoes, corn, chives, beets, carrots. From High Ground Organics: strawberries, celery, summer squash, potatoes, cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli. From Thomas Farm: flowers.