



TWO SMALL FARMS

Community Supported Agriculture

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A Dog's Tale, by Andy Griffin

Writers who cover agriculture have many issues to address these days, from water shortages and immigration to environmental degradation and genetically modified organisms so it's no surprise we forget to write about dogs. But dogs matter too. After all, almost every farm has a dog, and like the farmers they serve, the canines of agriculture make up a diverse group of problem solvers.

There are pick-up truck dogs, for instance, like my neighbor Bobby Peixoto's Golden Retriever. Peixoto is a Portuguese name. There are a lot of Azorean Portuguese here in Watsonville. Bobby Peixoto runs a laser leveling company that flattens and shapes agricultural fields. Laser leveling is a process of smoothing and leveling land by using huge tractors to pull drag buckets that are equipped with global positioning systems and laser-guided instrumentation so that the earth can be either shaved or filled by mere centimeters to create the desired level or slope. Fields that have been leveled drain well so that farmers can better manage their water use and control runoff. Bobby's work requires that he zoom from field to field in a dually diesel Ford 350 that looks like it's on steroids. The truck comes equipped with auxiliary fuel tanks, a super heavy duty tow package, tool boxes....and a dog. Bobby's dog rides in the back of this turbocharged beast everywhere it goes and makes certain that nobody, but nobody, even daydreams about stealing Bobby's expensive surveying tools or siphoning off his diesel. If some joker even tried to lift a screwdriver, I'm sure the Golden would "retrieve" it, even if it was still in the thief's fist. When I see Bobby booming down the highway with his proud dog standing high in the back of the truck, nose to the wind, ears flying back, I'm reminded of a heroic Portuguese mariner from the Lusians at the bow of a caravel bucking the Atlantic swell. Of course there's one problem with my aqueous metaphor; Bobby's Iberian ancestors rejoiced in the curve of the globe, while today Bobby busies himself flattening the planet.

Farms need "killer dogs" too, like "Peewee" and "Lazy." Peewee is a compact dog of dubious pedigree that nominally belongs to Ramon's daughter, Chava. But every day, when Chava steps up into the big yellow school bus and sets off for town, Peewee heads out to the fields with the irrigators to continue his obsessive search and destroy mission against gophers. Peewee is no retriever; if you throw his dead gopher away he'll go get it again, but he won't bring it back to you. Instead, he'll keep it locked in his jaws, even as he hunts for his next victim. Lazy is another extremely kinetic dog, but tiny, with perhaps some Jack Russell terrier in his genealogy. Lazy is too small to accompany an irrigator because he might drown in a puddle, so he makes

himself a tireless shadow to the tractor, and a heartless enemy of any mice or gophers the plow might uncover.

My friend Linda has passels of dogs. She raises beef cattle, goats, pigs, and sheep with the help of so many "ranch dogs" you'd think at first that she has a dog ranch. Her son keeps a pack of off-brand hound dogs to hunt wild boar, there are Border collie mixes to herd cattle and she also has a fluffy, white Great Pyrenees Mountain dog to guard her sheep and goats. Livestock guardian dogs don't "herd" their charges; they watch over them and chase off potential predators. The rancher gains a guardian dog's trust with a daily bowl of dog food, and the guardian needs to be tame enough for the rancher to catch if veterinary treatments are necessary, but a guardian dog cannot be a pet. A guardian dog forges emotional bonds with the herd it protects, not with the

rancher. When I was visiting Linda the other day she opened the corral gate so that her goats could trail up the mountain into the brush. "Go to work," she said, and the goats headed out with the Pyrenees in their midst, overseeing them like a teacher on playground yard duty.

And then there's my dog, Red. Red has enough Pyrenees in her to look like a livestock guard dog. In fact, I originally got Red to be a livestock guard dog because I was losing so many lambs to bobcats, coyotes, and mountain lions. Fully trained guardian dogs cost a lot of money, but Julia found Red for free on the internet— all she had to do was go to Texas and pick her up. I should have suspected that this was a ruse to justify a "road trip" for Julia and her mother, who is a notorious "dog person." Red arrived from Texas, skinny and full of parasites. She was also very fearful of men. I guess she'd been beaten. She was also

afraid of sheep. When Red wasn't running up vet bills, or running away and causing mischief at the neighbors, she was barking. I had to tie her up. I'd never been too crazy about dogs anyway.

Then one day I had to go to Big Sur to pick up a cow and calf. Julia begged me to take Red with me so that the poor dog wouldn't be on a chain all day. I wasn't keen on having dog hair in the cab of my pick-up truck, but I had to put Red in the front seat because she'd have jumped out of the truck bed. The two of us headed south. I stopped at Monastery Beach, just outside of Carmel, where Highway 1 meets the coast, so that Red could pee. The breakers were big on the white sand beach, but not as big as Red's eyes; they don't have oceans in the Texas Hill Country. Then Red got a whiff of rotting seaweed and her tail began to wag. After a walk down the beach we took off again, ending up at Deetjen's Big Sur Inn, where a string of extremely cute little cottages sit at the foot of towering redwoods amid banks of lobelia, carnations, and fuchsias.

The cows were at little homestead cabin high on the hill behind Deetjens. I left Red locked up in the truck so she wouldn't cause problems at the inn, scare the cow, or get hit by a car on Highway

This Week

Lettuce ^{HG}

Celery ^{HG}

Strawberries ^{HG}

Parsley Root ^{MF}

Chantenay Carrots OR

Eggplant ^{MF}

Romanesco OR Fennel ^{HG}

Mystery ^{MF}

Flowers: Mixed Bouquet ^{TF}

One. A half hour later I returned, this time leading the cow on a halter with the calf trailing behind. A woman stepped out of one of the cute cottages. Her husband was loading their luggage into the trunk of their silver Benz 450. The woman saw the placid cow and freaked out, as though she'd suddenly been thrown into the streets of Pamplona for the running of the bulls. The shrieking scared the cow and she began to run. I held tight on to the lead. As I got dragged past my truck I looked up to see Red's face framed by the pick-up side window, showing a look of deep concern I've come to know well.

I got the cow and calf loaded and we headed back up the coast. Red looked out the window for a while, but around Carmel she began nervously turning in her seat. I couldn't stop for a walk. After a bit she lay down on the seat, and very tentatively, she laid her head in my lap. I looked down, saw her big liquid, brown eyes looking up at me fearfully and I stroked her head reassuringly. – POP– that was it; Red became a pet and a treasured friend. Now she sleeps on a lamb's fleece by my bed. She's in good shape. She gets fresh whey in her dog food from Julia's cow's milk and goat's milk cheese projects, and a couple of times a week Red gets a fresh, free range hen's egg from Elias's flock of chickens to keep her coat glossy.

Red goes with me everywhere now. Julia sent me up to San Francisco late last winter to look at a potential CSA pick-up site in the Castro. I found a good parking spot so I decided to take Red on a walk so that she could stretch her legs. We walked around the Castro, me admiring the charming Victorian homes, Red sniffing the fire hydrants. We came to a stop at a red light next to a couple of gentlemen, each with a small Pug dog straining on a leash. Red was poised, gracious, and calm, but the two pop-eyed Pugs were frantic and spastic, hopping, growling, yapping, sneezing, choking, and snorting. Their owners looked embarrassed.

"Excuse us," said one of the men. "We're such excitable boys this morning."

"No worries," I replied. "Red is a very nice and understanding girl."

"She's lovely," said the other gentleman. "Is she a Great Pyrenees Mountain dog?"

"Sort of," I answered. "She was rescued from a dysfunctional hog ranch in Texas but she clearly has some Pyrenees in her. And she is a great companion. But she's a mix of some sort, not a purebred, so I think of her as a 'Fabulous Pyrenees.'"

That's Red the farm dog, and the problem she solved was me.
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Recipes

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

Parsley Root and Corn Salad

4 dry shiitake caps	4 ears corn
olive oil	1 shallot, minced
1 small garlic clove, minced	1 tsp. lemon zest
1 TBL lemon juice	4 parsley roots, washed well
6 TBL parsley leaves, chopped	juice from 2-3 lemons
2 TBL white wine vinegar	6 TBL olive oil
6 thick slices from a large tomato	

Soak the mushrooms in boiling water for 15 minutes, then drain and chop finely. Over a large bowl, grate 2 of the corn all the way to the cob on the coarse side of a box grater. Into the same bowl, cut the corn off the other two ears and scrape any juices you can get off the corn into the bowl. In a skillet,

heat some olive oil and cook the shallot, garlic, and shiitake over low heat until very soft, about 10 minutes. Do not allow to brown. Increase the heat and add the corn and all juices in the bowl. Sauté until the corn thickens a bit, a few more minutes. Add the lemon zest, juice and some salt and pepper and allow to cool. Check for seasoning.

While the corn cools, shred the parsley root on the fine side of a grater and toss with the parsley leaves.

Make a vinaigrette using the juice from the 2-3 lemons, the vinegar, and the 6T olive oil. Check for salt and pepper, then fold into the parsley root. Check again for seasoning. To serve, put a slice of tomato on a plate and sprinkle a little salt on top. Top the tomato slice with some of the parsley root, then the corn, garnishing with a couple parsley leaves. Repeat with the remaining salad.

Padron Pepper & Summer Squash Sandwich

Sauté peppers in a hot skillet with oil and salt. Allow to cool, then slice thinly, discarding stems. Thinly slice summer squash and either roast or sauté it until soft and lightly browned. Season with salt and pepper. Now make a simple sandwich using soft, mild bread, mayo, a few slices mortadella, some julienned basil, and the squash and peppers. This will be a moist sandwich, so don't let it sit wrapped up too long. Omit the basil if you like or substitute an herbed mayo for the plain mayo and basil. A couple very thin slices of tomato might not hurt either, just try not to overpower the mortadella.

Bolognese

2 onions, finely chopped	2-3 carrots, finely diced
2 celery stalks, finely diced	2 lb ground beef
½ cup red wine	2 lb tomatoes, peeled and pureed (canned is fine)

In a large saucepan, sauté the onions, carrots, and celery in about 4TBL butter until soft but not browned, about 8-10 minutes. Add the beef and cook, stirring to break up the meat, until the meat is no longer pink. Add the wine and reduce down for a few minutes. Add the tomatoes and 1½ cups of water, stir well and bring to a low simmer. Partially cover the pot and simmer slowly for about 2 hours, until thick and delicious. Season with plenty of salt and pepper and serve over your favorite pasta.

Tomato and Avocado Salad with Lime and Cilantro

juice from 3 limes	olive oil, maybe 6 TBL
2 jalapeños, seeded, de-veined, and finely diced	1 sweet onion, sliced into very thin rings, rings separated into individual rounds
4 tomatoes, cut into large bite sized chunks	very small handful cilantro, chopped
2 avocados, diced	

Whisk the lime juice, jalapeño and some salt and pepper together, then whisk in the olive oil. Toss this dressing with the onions and tomatoes, then gently fold in the avocado. Finish with the cilantro and serve.

From Mariquita Farm: carrots, eggplant, parsley root, mystery. From High Ground Organics: strawberries, lettuce, celery, romanesco, fennel. From Thomas Farm: flowers.