



# TWO SMALL FARMS

## Community Supported Agriculture

June 30-July 2, 2010

### Truck Farm, by Andy Griffin

The office at Organic Matters was scuffed and drab. Dorothy managed the company. She had a caustic wit she kept tamped down in an effort at professional courtesy. Russell was slouching against the counter. He drove the bobtail delivery truck for OM. Russell had that rock band roadie look; black Jack Daniels T shirt, pony tail, mirrored shades, blurry tattoos and a cigarette. He'd gotten the job through a government program that subsidized employers who were willing to take a chance and hire people who were on parole, but lately Russell had been in a series of confrontations with OM's customers. Organic Matters distributed fresh organic produce to a string of natural food stores and juice bars from Monterey to San Francisco, little hippie joints that smelled of incense like McDharma's, Sunflower Natural, and Community Foods. I worked in the refrigerated warehouse as a forklift driver. Dorothy had kept her license to drive big rigs current, but she was in no mood to get back behind the wheel. It was time for a serious talk with Russell.

"So what I'm hearing you say, Russ, is that you don't really like driving."

"Wrong again, honey," Russell replied. "I love driving—I just hate to stop!"

"That's sad," said Dorothy, "because the 'stops' are what produce delivery is all about."

So I got a battlefield promotion that afternoon out of the cold box and up into the cab. I could sympathize with Russell's attitude though. When I'd first gone to work on farms I'd been attracted to the notion of being out in a field, far from any peering, poking supervisors. A life in the dirt with the wind and the weeds seemed like an even trade for "freedom."

But farmers have to make money just like anybody else. I was legal and I didn't have any DUIs, so it was inevitable that I'd end up driving the farmers' delivery trucks. I was fine with that at first. Driving has its own romance. I liked the idea of rolling across the green San Joaquin past corn fields and alfalfa, watching the dairy cows in their pastures give way to range cattle, seeing the oak trees fade into pine forests, then revving up the engine to crest the Sierras before gearing down for the long descent into Nevada and the Great Basin, freewheeling with all the wild west out ahead of me and the boss no more than a speck in the rear view mirror.

In the early eighties I worked five years at Star Route Farm in Bolinas, and I drove the produce truck down Highway One to San Francisco. But the coast highway is all curves and cliffs and majestic ocean vistas, so I needed to concentrate on the white lines to avoid ending up in the drink. And then there was driving in the City; getting dogged by meter maids, dodging taxis and bike messengers, breathing bus exhaust. One day there was a traffic accident half a block ahead of me on Stockton Street and I

### *Tempus Fugit! Time to Renew!*

Can you believe it? We're almost halfway through the CSA season. For those of you on our quarterly renewal schedule, the second 9 week cycle ends July 16th. We need to receive your check no later than July 17<sup>th</sup> to secure your spot, as some sites are full or nearly so. (9 weeks veggies=\$198; 9 weeks veggies & flowers=\$270) Make your check out to Two Small Farms, and send to P.O. Box 2065, Watsonville, CA 95077.

had to back the truck downhill through Chinatown while the crowds swarmed around me. The truck was a manual transmission that you needed to double clutch— not an easy truck to drive in downtown traffic! Every time I let out the clutch and slipped into reverse somebody would step behind me and I'd have to stop. Eventually a cop helped me by swatting pedestrians out of my way, but by the time I rolled backwards into Columbus Avenue my right leg was so stressed it was as stiff as rebar.

"What am I doing here?" I asked myself. "I got into farming because I wanted to be in a field with the birds and the bees and now I'm running with the busses in the shadow of the Transamerica Pyramid?"

Stops! I was making stops. But I didn't want to "stop," so I quit.

I worked on other farms down in Santa Barbara County, Monterey County and in Santa Cruz County. At every farm I ended up making stops. It slowly sank into my skull that if the stops stop, the farm stops.

The seventies, eighties and nineties were interesting years to be in organic farming.

At first, little organic farms could sell anything they grew to the little organic food stores. Then the farms grew and multiplied, and the stores grew and multiplied. There were more stops. Then the bigger stores started to gobble up the smaller stores. When I was working at Organic Matters in the late 80s the bigger produce distributors began gobbling up the smaller ones. I got back into farming as a partner with another farmer. Then the littlest farms began to fail and the biggest farms began to gobble up the medium farms. Then the biggest chains began to gobble up the smaller chains which meant even bigger sales for the huge farms but even fewer stops for the little farms. The buying public benefited, I guess; there was a general trend towards more access to organic food for more consumers.

I was a partner at Riverside Farms in the Pajaro Valley in 1997 when we sold out to the company that became Natural Selections, America's largest organic grower/packer/shipper. I wonder now if the Darwinian tone to their name was intentional, but I was happy to sign a non-competition agreement and Julia and I got enough money to start our own little farm. Julia and I didn't even want to "compete" with Natural Selections. We farmed using a new business model; community supported agriculture, CSA, where a

## This Week

**Hamburg Parsley (Parsley Root) MF**

**Strawberries HG**

**Romaine Lettuce HG**

**Red, OR Gold Beets HG**

**Bianco de Maggio Onions MF**

**Cherry Tomatoes MF**

**White Cauliflower OR**

**Savoy Cabbage HG**

**Mystery MF**

**Flowers: Mixed Bouquet TF**

group of people support a farm (or Two Small Farms) and the farm supports the people.

I was thinking about all this the other day because my CSA route driver had asked for the day off and I was covering his route through San Francisco. I rolled into the City on 19th and down the foggy streets of the Sunset, through Golden Gate Park into the outer Richmond, then the Inner Richmond and up into the Haight, geared down for Masonic and over the hill into the sunny Castro with the rainbow flags flapping in the breeze, and all along I made stops, lots of stops; on to Soma, the Mission, Noe Valley, Glen Park. Every stop made me feel good. I know what I'm doing here now and I can remember all the other farmers who gave up or went broke. I want to stay on my farm with the birds and the bees and the wind and the weeds and I've learned that the City is the other half of my life's equation. I'm grateful for all the people who've chosen to support my farm, especially the people who lend us their homes and businesses so that we can make our stops. Freewheeling across Nevada is a fantasy, but I'll stick with the stop and go of farming; they don't call small farms like mine "truck farms" for nothing.

Copyright 2010 Andrew Griffin

## Recipes and Notes

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

*How I would Cook Up This Box...by CSA member and host, David Forer: It's the Fourth of July weekend - grill grill grill!*

Grill the onions—just peel what you need to, olive oil, salt and pepper and to the side of a hot grill. Same with the squash, which you can let cool after sprinkling on some herbs and some fancy vinegar. The beets can get trimmed, washed, quartered, and wrapped in foil with some salt, pepper, balsamic and olive oil and thrown at the side of the grill. Yummy roasted beets!

Yes, even the cherry tomatoes can get put on the grill. Really hot grill for literally just 20-30 seconds. Put them on top of whatever meat you've grilled and splash on some top quality olive oil and you'll feel like you've gone to Italy!

Cauliflower is also Fourth-able - separate into florets and blanch in (heavily salted) boiling water for a minute. Cool in ice water, drain dry and serve with a dipping sauce of your choice - bagna cauda anyone?

Romaine means caesar, no? And make it from scratch - it's not so hard. It's sort of like homemade mayonnaise with anchovies, garlic, and parmesan cheese. Just cut it down with lemon juice to get the consistency you want. You'll never buy it anywhere again once you've made it yourself. Well, except for Zuni - nobody tops Zuni's caesar!

Strawberries on the Fourth are all about whip cream - come on, you've eaten so much already - let it go and live large!

### Parsley Root, from Chef Jonathan Miller

If you haven't tried parsley root, you're in for a treat. Good ones taste like parsley on steroids, and you can really make some intensely flavored dishes with it using both the roots and the leaves which are usually still attached. Nice ways of using both the tops and roots in the same dishes include a parsley soup or a parsley risotto that would incorporate both ends of the plant. Roast the roots until nice and soft and incorporate them into the risotto in a creamy mash, then finish the dish with both chopped leaves and a drizzle of parsley oil.

### Mashed Potatoes and Parsley Root, adapted from *Uncommon Fruits and Vegetables* by Elizabeth Schneider

¾ pound parsley root (weighed with leaves)	1 ¼ pounds potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks
Butter to taste	A few TBL hot milk or to taste
S & P (can use white pepper if you like)	

Cut off parsley root tops and reserve for use in any recipe calling for parsley. Scrub roots with a brush, then cut into ½ inch slices. Drop parsley root and potatoes into a pot of boiling salted water. Return to a boil and cook until tender – check after about 15 minutes. Drain well. Add butter and hot milk and then mash with an official potato masher. Season to taste with S & P.

### Braised Cabbage, from Chef Jonathan Miller

This simple way of preparing cabbage is a staple in our house. Warm, humble, comforting, affordable, and versatile. I top mine with a hard cooked egg—my favorite way. Other nice toppings are sausage or any pork cut. I also love it reheated in the morning with a runny, fried egg on top and a piece of bread or toast to mop it all up.

1 head cabbage, cored and chopped	butter
1 yellow onion, halved and sliced thinly	handful parsley, chopped

Put the cabbage in a strainer and toss with a generous tablespoon of salt. Put the strainer in the sink and allow the cabbage to sit in the salt for at least 10 minutes, and not more than about 20 minutes. While it rests sauté the onion in about 4TBL butter in a large saucepan over medium low heat until the onion is soft, about 10-12 minutes. Do not allow the butter or onion to brown. Bring about 2 cups of water to a boil and pour it over the cabbage in the sink. Give it a good shake and toss it into the saucepan. Stir well, cover, and braise slowly until the cabbage is tender, about 15 minutes. Stir occasionally, but don't worry too much - just make sure the heat is low and everything will be good. Also, don't add any more salt until tasting it at the very end, as there could be a fair amount of salt that doesn't get washed off by the boiling water. When the cabbage is cooked to your liking, toss in the parsley, heat through, taste for salt, and serve warm. Yummy!

### Grated Sautéed Beets, from *the Victory Garden Cookbook*, Marian Morash

4 medium beets	4 tbsp. butter
Fresh lemon juice	Salt & freshly ground pepper
Chopped fresh dill or parsley	

Wash, peel, and coarsely grate beets. In a covered frying pan, melt butter, add beets, and stir to coat with butter, then sprinkle with lemon juice to taste. Cover and cook over medium to low heat for approximately 10 minutes, checking occasionally to see that the beets don't burn. (You could add a few spoonfuls of stock or water to prevent sticking.) Cook just until tender, then season with salt, pepper, and additional lemon juice if needed. Sprinkle with dill or parsley. Note: Grate other vegetables, such as cabbage, carrots, and parsnips, cook separately, and arrange in mounds on a vegetable platter.

*From Mariquita Farm: onions, Hamburg parsley, cherry tomatoes, mystery. From High Ground: strawberries, lettuce, beets, cauliflower, cabbage. From Thomas Farm: flowers.*