

Two Small Farms Newsletter
Issue Number 332 August 31, 2005

In your box this week: Strawberries, Fennel, mix of Blue Lake and Wax Beans, Carrots, Basil, either Celery OR Summer Squash. Wednesday deliveries: Eggplant and San Marzano tomatoes. Thursday deliveries: sweet peppers and Early Girl Tomatoes.

Preliminary Vegetable Notes:

Everything but the basil, tomatoes and strawberries should each be stored in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Remove the carrot tops to help store longer. The tomatoes, basil and strawberries should NOT be stored in the refrigerator but rather on your counter. Store the basil in a jar of water on the counter, just like a small flower bouquet.

To eat first: Strawberries, within a day. To eat second (within five days): tomatoes, eggplant, fennel, peppers, beans, basil, celery, squash. To eat with two weeks: carrots.

The Egg Ranch by Bill Englander
(enthusiastic 2 Small Farms C.S.A. customer)

I grew up among avocado groves in a rural area, east of San Diego in the 1950's. My Uncle Stuart owned and operated an egg ranch (a place where there were many hens who laid many eggs that were sold to markets and eventually wound up on breakfast tables accompanied by ham or bacon). The egg ranch held many more attractions for a young boy than a bunch of old avocado trees.

Uncle Stuart was an amazing man. He was descended from Dutch royalty. Among many jobs over his lifetime, he served as personal assistant to A. P. Gianini, founder of Bank of America. At one point, he measured the hottest temperature ever recorded in California. He was so good at reading people and situations that he easily made money in Real Estate, even during the Great Depression.

My uncle's real passion, though, was hard work,

really hard physical work. And, as Andy can tell you, anything Ag-related involves plenty of it. Uncle Stuart started the egg ranch with about 5,000 hens and increased it over time to around 20,000. He operated the entire egg ranch with just four people: himself, my aunt, my grandmother and a worker named Ramón.

As a child, I occasionally got to stay on the Ranch for a week or two and "help". I loved to drive the electric cart among the hens' cages and deposit the grain that they so eagerly consumed. I also got to stand in front of the egg-sorting machine (in total fascination) and pack the eggs that remained unbroken into large cartons for shipment. It was really fun when the baby wanna-be hens would arrive at the ranch. They were cute little balls of yellow fuzz that you could hold in your hand and hear go "peep peep".

Ramón, who spoke no English, took a liking to me. Once in a while, he would let me join him when he went up to the hill where he and his fellow workers from other ranches and farms would spend their evening sitting around a fire and swapping stories. At the time, I didn't understand a word of Spanish, but I had a wonderful time, hanging out with the guys.

In my youthful ignorance, I thought working all day at the fascinating ranch and then sharing a campfire with your buddies in the evening was the ideal life. Little did I know that Ramón had asked my aunt to mail his entire wages to his family in Mexico each payday or that the stories that they were swapping were often about how much they longed to be with their loved ones. I also didn't realize that if you counted up all the hours that my uncle worked each week, it was probably in the vicinity of 100.

As an adult, I've reflected on how incredibly hard everyone connected with the ranch worked and how my naïve, blissful, child's-eye view of things bore little relationship to the reality. On the other hand, my uncle Stuart who loved hard work and who reveled in the satisfaction of "a good job well done" died a very old and very happy man.

A short bio Bill wrote about himself:

I grew up in rural surroundings but moved to the "big city" (San Francisco) after college. I discovered computer programming along the way and had a successful career in it. This was probably a good thing given my marginal ag skills. Today, Alice and I are retired and thoroughly enjoy being CSA members, especially since our gardening skills still haven't kicked in yet.

-Bill E.

Nine Week Renewal Time Coming Up....

For those members who started the season out on our nine week cycle of renewal, this is a reminder that the fourth and final session is creeping up. Your last delivery will be September 14th and 15th! Please confirm with us that you would like to renew so that we can be sure to schedule in your veggies.

Nine more weeks is \$180 veggies only, or \$234 veggies and flowers. Call Zelda at 831-786-0625 or send an email to csa@twosmallfarms.com. You can call with credit card info, or mail a check to P.O. Box 2065 Watsonville, CA 95077-2065. Please don't leave checks at your pick up site!

Fall is the time of year with the most variety! Tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, strawberries and herbs continue and we'll start having more cooking greens like kale, chard, bok choy as well as winter squash, apples, cabbage, leeks, beets, turnips, carrots and salad mix.

Anyone can sign up for the CSA at any time. Let your friends and coworkers know — contact Zelda if you would like to receive brochures or flyers. Thanks!

2 more Tomato U-Picks scheduled

This Thursday, Sept. 1st from 10am to 2pm and Saturday: September 10, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Mariquita Farm in Hollister

What I'd Do With the Box This Week by Gabriela Forte

Julia's note: Gaby is our friend and a pickup site host in Pacific Grove. She is a French-trained professional chef (yes, our other pickup site host is chef Brandon Miller of Stoke's Restaurant, what talent PG has!). Her Website

First thing I do with my box is put my basil in a very beautiful crystal vase with little water and place it in the center of my dining table. I read somewhere that herb smell is supposed to stimulate your appetite so I always have it on my tables and go "picking" from it as I need. I change the water every day and always put just a bit in the bottom. Now I am ready to think dinner:

First night I will dice my eggplant and onions (and sweet bell peppers if I have them), and add to them walnuts and currants. Sprinkle it all with salt and pepper and extra virgin olive oil. Then bake it in the oven until the eggplant is cooked, remembering to toss them once in a while as it bakes and add little tads more of olive oil if needed. Whenever I am in a hurry I start it off on the stove, on a pan that can go straight to the oven, and finish it off there. We enjoy it on crostinis (toasted bread), alongside a giant green salad. This eggplant dish is good both hot and cold, and it makes a great sandwich for lunch on pita bread the next day.

Then, since we had a light dinner, we are entitled to dessert :-). So I would top the strawberries with crème fraiche, add a tad of crème de cassis and broil in the oven, just until they bubble happily and start changing color and consistency. I usually keep my oven door open, and watch it like a television. It's fun, trust me!

Second night I will do a salad as a first course with the tomatoes and generous sprinkles of "Fleur de sel", a jewel-like French salt, which I consider with tomatoes a true marriage made in Heaven. Then I will make a carrot gratin and serve it with brown rice. I cook the sliced carrots in very little water (the idea is to have it evaporate as it cooks, so you don't lose flavor

or vitamins throwing that water away) with a pinch of salt and sugar. Then toss them with a béchamel sauce(melt a generous tablespoon of very high quality butter, add to it a tablespoon of flour, stir for a minute or two, then add to it warm milk, very little in the beginning then increase the quantity until you reach the consistency you want in the sauce. You will probably use around 2 cups. Season with salt, white pepper and a tad of fresh nutmeg if you like), and place it in a gratin dish. Sprinkle a little grated cheese and bake it until it bubbles and the top starts to golden.

Third night I would make a light celery and fennel gratin. I would cook very thinly sliced fennel and celery in chicken stock (or vegetable stock if I have vegetarian guests). I always have homemade chicken stock, but, if you are not as crazy as I am, by all means do use store bought (try the organic low sodium one). Then strain them(save that chicken stock in the refrigerator for some soup later) and toss it with a generous amount of grated Parmigiano cheese or any other you would like, generous shower of fresh black pepper and a tablespoon of butter and/or crème fraiche. If you don't want the tablespoon of butter or crème fraiche, to make it lighter, use a bit of that chicken stock you cooked them in. Bake it until the cheese starts to golden. Here I think I used every cheese on the planet and it always taste good. Feta or Goat also work very well, just use less of them as they are very strong. You could also choose to do the same recipe for the carrot gratin with them. It works well with almost every vegetable under the sun. Then we will have that with grilled chicken breast and the leftover rice from the night before.

Finally, fourth night I will sauté salmon fillets(I like them rare), remove them from the pan, toss in that same pan, still in the fire, pieces of ginger (just slice skin and all, as you will strain it before serving), stir, then deglaze it with some of that chicken stock you reserved from the night before, add lots of basil(whole), bring it to a boil, reduce, then strain on top of the fish. To accompany it I would simply sauté in great butter/or olive oil loads of minced or sliced

garlic, the blue lake and yellow wax beans, and thinly sliced bell peppers if I still have some. Add a tad of pepperoncino(red pepper flakes) on top to finalize and ENJOY!

by Gaby Forte of Pacific Grove, CA

Recipes gathered by Zelda

Roti With Black Beans and Basil

The Good Herb, Judith Benn Hurley

- 1 Tbsp. plus 1 tsp. olive oil
- 1 small onion, thinly sliced
- 1 clove garlic, mashed through a press
- 1 medium tomato, medium-chopped
- 2 tsp. good-quality yellow curry powder
- 1 tsp. dried hot red pepper flakes, or to taste
- 1/4 cup dry sherry or mirin
- 2 1/4 cups cooked rice
- 1/2 cup cooked black beans, rinsed if canned
- 1/4 cup minced fresh basil (any type)
- 4 pitas (whole wheat are tasty)
- 2 tsp. Dijon mustard

Heat a large saute pan, then pour in 1 tbsp. of the oil. Add the onion, garlic, tomato, curry powder, and hot pepper and saute over medium-high heat until the onion is just wilted, about 3 minutes. Add the sherry, rice, and beans and continue to saute until the rice is warmed through, about 3 minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in the basil.

Spread each pita lightly with the mustard. Scoop equal portions of the rice mixture onto one-half of each pita. Fold each pita over into a half-moon shape.

Wipe out the saute pan and heat the remaining 1 teaspoon oil until hot and fragrant. Set the roti in the pan and let them sizzle over

medium-high heat until mottled brown, about 2-3 minutes on each side. Serve hot. Makes 4 entree servings.

BASIL PESTO

3 Tablespoons pine nuts or almonds, lightly toasted
1 Cup lightly packed basil leaves
2 Tablespoons Italian parsley leaves
1 lg. clove garlic, thinly sliced
1/3 Cup olive oil
parmesan cheese
salt

In a food processor (or blender), combine nuts, basil, parsley, and garlic. Pulse, until well chopped. With motor running, add oil in a stream. Transfer mixture to a bowl and stir in cheese and salt to taste. Store with a thin layer of oil to keep fresh and green. (The parsley helps keep the bright green color too.)

Green Beans with Tomatoes and Basil

From *Asparagus to Zucchini*, Madison Area CSA Coalition

1 1/2 pounds green beans, cooked
1 garlic clove, diced
1 small onion, thinly sliced
1 TBS olive oil
2 tomatoes or 1/2 basket of cherry tomatoes, coarsely chopped
Salt & pepper to taste
1 TBS chopped fresh basil
1 TBS chopped fresh parsley, or 1 tsp. dried

Cut beans into 1-inch lengths; set aside. Saute garlic and onion in oil in skillet until soft. Add tomatoes, salt and pepper, and cook 2 minutes. Stir in basil and green beans. Cover, reduce heat to low and simmer 3 minutes. Remove from heat, stir in parsley, and serve immediately. Makes 4-6 servings.

MA'S GREEN BEANS

2. 1 lb. green beans, trimmed and cut in 3" lengths
2 tbsp. butter or olive oil
1 cup onions, coarsely chopped
1 cup celery, coarsely chopped
1 cup water

2 tbsp. basil, finely chopped

Saute onions and celery in butter or olive oil until tender (approx 5 min). Add beans and water; cover (I actually add less water, or none, but this method calls for close monitoring). Add basil as it finishes cooking.

Green Beans with Peppers, *Bon Appetit*, February 2001

6 bacon slices, coarsely chopped
1 pound green beans, trimmed, cut in half
1 large red bell pepper, cut lengthwise into thin strips
1/2 cup canned low-salt chicken broth

Cook bacon in heavy large skillet over medium-high heat until brown and crisp. Using slotted spoon, transfer bacon to paper towel and drain. Pour off all but 2 tablespoons drippings from skillet. Add green beans and bell pepper to skillet. Toss vegetables over medium-high heat until coated with drippings, about 1 minute. Add broth. Cover and cook until vegetables are crisp-tender, about 5 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Transfer to serving bowl. Sprinkle with bacon and serve.

Updoc Carrot Sauce, from CSA member Matt Wall

2 medium-sizeish CSA carrots, white or orange or yellow or purple

4 ounces rice wine vinegar, unseasoned

1 tsp fresh ginger, finely diced or zested

1 TBS light brown sugar

1 TBS premium soy sauce

1 TBS peanut oil

1 tsp. thai hot pepper -or- 1 TBS finely chopped hot pepper of your choice -or- 1 TBS "normal" hot pepper flakes

2 small or 1 large shallot, diced finely -- may substitute small onion, spring garlic, or scallions

Dice the carrot very finely. Combine all the ingredients except for the shallot(s). Use blender or food processor to puree the mixture

roughly -- it doesn't need to be smooth, just consistent. Empty into a container and mix in the diced shallots. May be prepared in advanced and chilled in the fridge, take out about a half hour before serving.

This may be used as a sauce for gyoza/dumplings (yum!) or with satay-styled meats. We like making this with a peanut sauce and alternating with the carrot sauce and peanut sauce for dipping. This also serves as a sort of tapenade that can be spread on crackers, bread, etc. Also good over rice noodles, especially if served cold, for a quick lunch or side dish with the evening stir fry or veggie spread.

Roasted Eggplant, from *Chez Panisse Vegetables* by Alice Waters

Eggplant roasted in the oven requires little oil and therefore remains sweet and light-tasting. Take large globe eggplants (or any eggplants provided they are fresh, glossy and firm), trim off the stems, and cut the eggplants in half lengthwise. Cut the halves into generous wedges, again lengthwise. Small eggplants should be cut only in half: if the eggplant pieces aren't thick enough, they will dry out before they cook through. Salt the wedges generously and let them stand a few minutes. Meanwhile preheat the oven to 400 F and oil a baking sheet or a shallow baking pan. Lay the wedges out flat on the pan. Oil the exposed side of the eggplant and bake for 20 to 35 minutes. The eggplant is done when the wedges are soft all over and brown on the underside. Remove them from the pan with a spatula. If the eggplants sticks to the pan, let it cool for a few minutes and it will be easier to detach. Serve the eggplant warm or cool, with an interesting vinaigrette.

Spicy Eggplant Relish

from the *Moosewood Cookbook* by M. Katzen

Serve this as a condiment to almost anything--especially curries, humus, felafel, or Tabouli salad. Or, use it as a dip or spread.

2 medium-small eggplants, cut into ½ inch cubes

3 Tbs. olive oil

1 cup chopped onion

1 cup chopped green pepper [use your wax pepper as a substitution]

1 tsp. cumin

salt and lots of cayenne

juice of one lemon

Cook onions and eggplant together in oil, with a little salt. Cook slowly, over low heat until soft. Add remaining ingredients, and season to taste. Serve hot or cold.

Eggplant Gratin "Almodrote de Berenjen" adapted from Joyce Goldstein's *Sephardic Flavors*

Those of you who enjoy eggplant might want to check out Joyce Goldstein's book *Sephardic Flavors*. It is a fascinating look at the foods and culture the Jews took with them into the Arab world when they were expelled from Spain by the Catholics in 1492.

4 pounds largish eggplants 2 cloves garlic, minced 4 slices country bread, soaked in water, and squeezed dry 4 eggs 6 ounces fresh white cheese, crumbled (such as ricotta or feta) 1/2 pound gruyere or kashkaval cheese, grated 1/3 cup sunflower or olive oil 1 to 2 teaspoons salt black pepper to taste 3 Tablespoons freshly chopped parsley

Bake the whole eggplants on a baking sheet in a 400 degree oven for 30-45 minutes. You can also broil them for 20 minutes, turning often. Transfer to a colander.

When cool enough to handle, strip away the skin and remove the large seed pockets. Place the pulp on a cutting board and chop coarsely. Return it to the colander and let drain for 10 to 20 minutes to release the bitter juices. You should have 2 to 2 ½ cups pulp.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Oil a 7 x 11 baking dish. Transfer the eggplant to a bowl and mash well with a fork. Add the bread, eggs, crumbled

cheese, and all but 1/4 cup of the shredded cheese, and all but 2 Tablespoons of the oil. Salt and pepper to taste. Spread mixture in the prepared baking dish. Sprinkle evenly with the remaining 1/4 cup shredded cheese and the remaining oil over the top. Bake until golden and set, 30 to 40 minutes. Serve hot directly from the dish.

Preparing Fennel, *The Wellness Encyclopedia of Food and Nutrition*, Shelden Margen, M.D.

Baking: First, braise the fennel for about 5 minutes. Transfer to a baking dish and add just 1/2 cup of the cooking liquid. Cover tightly and bake at 350 degrees until just tender and beginning to brown. If desired, uncover toward the end to allow any excess liquid to evaporate, then sprinkle with breadcrumbs and grated Parmesan cheese, and brown under the broiler before serving. Cooking time: about 1 hour.

Braising: Braise fennel in broth, tomato sauce, vermouth or sherry (diluted 1-to-1 with water); add lemon zest, garlic, or onion for extra flavor. Braised fennel is delicious hot, warm, or chilled. Place fennel slices, or halved or quartered small fennel bulbs, in a sauce pan and add just enough boiling liquid to barely cover the vegetable. Simmer uncovered, turning occasionally, until the fennel is tender, adding more liquid if necessary. Cooking time: 25 to 40 minutes.

Sauteing: Cut fennel into slivers and heat in a small amount of stock, tossing and stirring it frequently. For extra flavor, cook chopped onion and garlic along with fennel. A sprinkling of lemon juice and zest makes a nice finishing touch. Cooking time: 10 to 15 minutes.

Steaming: Fennel steamed until crisp-tender can be covered with your favorite sauce or marinated in a vinaigrette, chilled, and served as a salad. To steam it, place whole or halved bulbs in a vegetable steamer and cook over boiling water until just tender. Cooking time: 20 to 30 minutes.

Some Fennel Ideas from *The Victory Garden Cookbook*

Sprinkle chopped fennel leaves on hot baked oysters or clams.

Add cooked fennel to omelets, quiches, stuffings or sauces.

Add stalks to stocks for their flavor.

Add sliced sauteed fennel to fish chowders.

Cook fennel in your favorite tomato sauce.

Place stalks and leaves on barbeque coals as they do in France. The fennel scent permeates the grilled food.

Slice steamed or blanched fennel, cover with a vinaigrette and serve chilled.

Chop raw fennel and add to tuna fish sandwiches.

Slice fennel thin and layer with raw potatoes, cream and cheese to make a potato au gratin.

Greek Style Fennel

from *More Recipes from a Kitchen Garden* by Shepherd and Raboff

1 large fennel bulb
2 TBS olive oil
1 clove garlic, minced
2 large tomatoes, diced
1/4 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. pepper
2 tsp. fresh chopped herb (basil, marjoram...)
Garnish: 1/2 cup feta cheese, reserved chopped fennel tops

Cut off the stalks and feathery leaves of the fennel. Chop and reserve some of the leaves for garnish. Cut fennel bulbs vertically into 8 sections.

In a skillet, heat olive oil, add garlic and fennel, and sauté for 3 to 4 minutes. Uncover, add salt, pepper and the fresh herb and cook over low heat until most of the liquid is reduced. Serve sprinkled with the garnish of feta cheese and reserved fennel tops.

Fennel and Pepper Coleslaw

1 medium fennel bulb, very thinly sliced
2 medium red and/or yellow bell peppers, thinly sliced
4 scallions, finely chopped
2 TBS mayonnaise, regular or light
1 TBS grated orange rind
1 TBS cider vinegar

Combine all the ingredients in a medium bowl; toss well. Let stand at least 10 minutes to blend the flavors.

Fennel, Tomato and Feta Salad, from *Gourmet*, April 2002

1 large fennel bulbs
4 tomatoes (1/2 lb total), seeded and thinly sliced lengthwise
2 teaspoons drained bottled capers
1/3 cup crumbled feta (1 1/2 oz)
1/2 teaspoon finely grate lemon zest (optional)
1 to 1 1/2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice (to taste)
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper

Trim fennel stalks flush with bulb and discard stalks. Quarter bulbs lengthwise, then cut lengthwise into paper-thin slices (a mandoline is helpful). Toss fennel with remaining ingredients in a large bowl. Salad can be made 1 hour ahead.

Easiest Peppers: an antipasto recipe from Andy

1-2 large colored sweet peppers, cut into strips
olive oil
chopped garlic to taste
salt and pepper
chopped fresh mint or basil (optional)

Cook sliced peppers on medium in olive oil with chopped garlic, salt and pepper until soft (10 or 15 minutes). Remove from heat, toss briefly with a fresh herb such as mint, basil or parsley, and serve. This dish can successfully be served

at room temperature too, add the herbs right before serving.

Fresh Tomato-Basil Sauce, from CSA member Amy Snell

3-6 tomatoes
handful of basil leaves
1-2 cloves garlic
olive oil
vinegar
salt
pepper
shaved Parmesan cheese

Core 3-6 tomatoes and de-seed them by cutting them in half crosswise, then squeezing them over the sink (like squeezing the juice out of an orange). Then chop them into 1/2" pieces. Place them in a bowl and salt liberally. Chop a handful of basil leaves finely and add those, 1-2 minced cloves of garlic, a dash of pepper, 1-2 tablespoons or so of olive oil and 2-4 teaspoons of balsamic or other vinegar. Mix and then let the mixture sit at room temperature for a couple of hours so the tomatoes start to break down. Before serving, mix in a spoonful or two of shaved parmesan. Serve at room temperature over pasta, or on rounds of French Bread.

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