

Two Small Farms Newsletter

Issue Number 293 - Sept. 8th, 2004

In your box this week: Basil, Sweet Peppers*, Cherry Tomatoes, Tomatoes, Red-Gold & Carola Potatoes, Leeks, Strawberries

* We have several varieties, but the peppers in your box will be sweet, that is not spicy, this week. Pepper Recipes

CSA News & Events

Next week, Sept. 15th/16th is the last paid share of this session, please let Katie know if you're continuing on Sept. 22nd. Thanks. csa@twosmallfarms.com or call: 831-786-0625

Tomato Upick Thursday, Sept. 16th, 10am-3pm. Come to Mariquita Farm in Hollister to pick your own tomatoes, basil also available. If you just want to come down for a tour, that's fine too. Your friends and family are also most welcome. [More Info Here](#)

Can't come to the upick days but you want lots of tomatoes? We're selling our popular

****15# flats of early girls for \$15.00****

Call or email Katie to make an order...
csa@twosmallfarms.com or 831-786-0625

Dust by Andy Griffin

At dawn on our farm the air is cool and still. We haven't had rain for months here in San Benito County. The sun burns down every day so everywhere we don't irrigate the ground is dry. Muddy furrows bake and crack in the heat so the silty-clay soil curls up like pot shards. On the dirt road that

divides the land into blocks for easy management daily trucks and tractors have pulverized the dirt to a dust finer than flour. Before the sun warms the air and stirs it into breeze the blanket of dust on the road can be read for animal tracks like a logbook that marks the night time visitors. Let's take a walk down the road and see who visited last night.

The plume of dust rising behind that pickup truck Jose is driving is like a smoke signal telling of loss; dust in the wind means soil has been lost to the earth and clarity has been lost to the sky. On our farm we try to minimize wind erosion by sowing every acre we don't plant out in vegetables with a cover crop. This tall green stuff that looks like corn is Sudan grass we have planted for a cover crop. With enough heat and water Sudan grass will grow eight feet tall. Pheasants love to take cover in the dense thatch of Sudan grass. Those rusty squawks you hear scratching the early morning calm are the cries of pheasants talking to each other in their leafy hideout. The big chicken like footprints you see crossing the dusty road are the tracks pheasants left when they slipped into the tomato patch at dusk to peck dinner.

Yesterday a rubber gasket on our three inch aluminum irrigation pipe blew out and a quantity of water spilled down the furrow before Jeremias was able to turn off the pump and replace the gasket. Water puddled up in the ditch next to the road. You can see where last night a racoon took advantage of the tiny pool to take a drink and maybe wash the dust off some morsel it found where the crew takes its lunch. Those prints that look like little human hands are the racoon's front paws, the longer paw prints is its back foot prints. The smaller rat-like paw prints you see in the road are possum tracks. I'm not much of a detective but, who knows?, maybe the possum found something good to eat by the picnic table first then the racoon stole the treat and went to the water to wash the possum smell off. Racoons are cute but they are fierce like little bears.

Pacheco creek is right over there, just a hundred yards off. That steep bank is the levee that protects our fields from winter flooding. It's hard to see the levee because its shoulders are cloaked in tall hemlock and thistles. Quail like to make their nests in the weeds that have sprung up the levee. Big families of quail come down off the levee and cross the road to peck for ants and seeds in the field. The confusion of tiny chicken-like prints are quail tracks. The inch wide trails worn smooth and straight through the dust are ant roads. Ant armies invade the field to forage for seeds. Some ants arrive bearing aphids which they put to pasture on our crop plants, then they milk them for the honey dew they secrete.

Where ant trails and quail tracks cross the ants lose. But the karma of biology evens the score. If you look carefully over here you will see weasel tracks. I saw a little reddish weasel with a spotted tail just a minute ago out of the corner of my eye making a loopy dash from the Bell peppers to the tomatoes. Weasel's bodies are so long and their legs so short they have to comically arch their backs to run. Weasels aren't funny to quail; they eat the little birds like popcorn and rob their nests of their little speckled eggs. In the end weasels die too and the ants will hollow out their bodies if some thing else doesn't get to them first.

Did you feel that warm breath of breeze puffing up just now? It's only nine a.m. By one in the afternoon the breeze will be a wind. Already the animal tracks are being sifted away. The animals themselves are all safely tucked away in their nests waiting for the cool of the evening. The day is getting hotter as the sun climbs higher. Only we humans are unnatural enough to work under the full sun and stir up the dust. When evening comes and we're long gone home to our dinners and families the critters will emerge again and sniff at our tracks. They will want to see who we were that visited their field this hot day and discover what we've left behind.

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Recipes from Julia

Basil Recipes

Cherry Tomato Recipes

Potato Recipes

Leeks!

Leek Noodles

Ten Minute Cuisine by Green & Moine

In a wok, heat 2 tablespoons olive oil. Add 2 shredded leeks and 1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves. Add cooked noodles of any shape (about 1 pound when uncooked) and stir-fry until heated through. Season with salt and pepper.

Creamy White Bean Soup with Leeks

three 19-ounce cans white beans, rinsed well
in a
sieve
1/4 teaspoon dried tarragon
2 cups chicken broth
2 cups thinly sliced washed white and pale green part
of leek
3 garlic cloves, minced or 3 stalks green
garlic, chopped
1/4 teaspoon dried hot red pepper flakes, or
to taste
3 tablespoons olive oil
3/4 cup half-and-half or milk
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

In a blender purée the beans in batches with the tarragon and the broth and strain the purée through a fine sieve into a bowl, pressing hard on the solids.

In a large saucepan cook the leek, the garlic, and the red pepper flakes in the oil over moderately low heat, stirring occasionally, until the leek is softened and begins to turn golden. Add the purée, the half-and-half, the lemon juice, and salt to taste and simmer the soup, stirring, for 5 minutes.

FRESH HERB, POTATO AND LEEK SOUP

Julia's note: I make my potato leek soup much like this, and I've never added cream as it's never in my fridge except for Thanksgiving pies, when I'm not in a potato-leek soup mood! I often saute the leeks and potatoes over medium heat for 15 minutes or so first... Adapt as you like.

A creamy "comfort" soup that has plenty of richness without a lot of cream.

3 pounds russet potatoes, peeled, cut into 1-inch pieces
5 cups canned low-salt chicken broth
3 cups water
3 large leeks (white and pale green parts only), chopped
1/2 cup whipping cream
1/4 cup minced fresh chives or green onion tops
2 tablespoons minced fresh basil or 2 teaspoons dried, crumbled
1 tablespoon minced fresh dill or 1 teaspoon dried dillweed
Hot pepper sauce (such as Tabasco)

Chopped fresh chives or green onion tops

Bring first 8 ingredients to boil in heavy large pot or Dutch oven over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until potatoes are very tender and soup thickens slightly, about 1 hour. Transfer 2 cups of soup to blender and puree. Return puree to pot. Season with salt, pepper and hot pepper sauce. (Can be prepared 1 day ahead and refrigerated. Reheat before continuing.)

Ladle soup into bowls. Garnish with chopped chives and serve.

Makes about 12 cups.

Bon Appétit

Soft Polenta with Leeks

3 tablespoons butter
3 large leeks (white and pale green parts only), thinly sliced
2 1/4 cups (or more) water
2 cups canned chicken broth
1 bay leaf
1 cup polenta*

1/3 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese

*Sold at Italian markets, natural foods stores and some supermarkets. If unavailable, substitute 1 cup regular yellow cornmeal, and cook leek-cornmeal mixture for about 15 minutes rather than 35 minutes.

Melt 2 tablespoons butter in heavy large saucepan over medium heat. Add leeks; stir to coat. Cover and cook until leeks soften, stirring occasionally, about 10 minutes. Add 2 1/4 cups water, broth and bay leaf. Bring to boil. Gradually whisk in polenta. Reduce heat to medium-low and cook until mixture is thick and creamy, stirring often and thinning with more water if necessary, about 35 minutes.

Remove pan from heat. Discard bay leaf. Stir in remaining 1 tablespoon butter and Parmesan cheese. Season polenta to taste with salt and pepper. Divide polenta among plates.

Serves 4.

Bon Appétit

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