



High Ground Organics Community Supported Agriculture

Week 3, March 29th and 30th, 2017

Rebirth, by Stephen Pedersen

One of our favorite things to do when we want to get off the farm is to throw our bikes in the back of the truck and go down to Ford Ord for a ride. With its amazing network of paved and gravel roads, along with single-track—all off-limits to cars—it's easy to find a ride that fits our level of ambition or lack thereof. It's a vast open space with rolling hills and tablelands, wedged in between the Big Sur Mountains to the South and the farm fields of the Salinas Valley to the North. Because the soils are mostly sand, which doesn't retain moisture well, the oak woodlands and shrubs that dominate there took the drought hard. Dead oaks are common and those that survived looked stressed.

This past Saturday, however, the scene was remarkable. All of the oaks are tipped with vibrant green new growth which makes the hillsides practically glow. Ceanothus and sage are in bloom and wildflowers abound. And everywhere there is water. Creeks are flowing and vernal pools and ponds, many of which hadn't seen standing water in years, are filled to capacity.

This rebirth is evident here on the farm as well. Our hedgerows and buffer strips are lush with new growth as are the oaks on the hillsides. The grasses and herbaceous plants on the open spaces and field margins are growing with remarkable vigor. And this vigor will undoubtedly work its way up the food-chain in a cycle that we haven't fully witnessed in a while. The abundant vegetative growth provides food and habitat for rodents, frogs, insects, and song birds which, in turn, provide food for the bobcats, coyotes and raptors whose numbers are sure to increase.

One of the good things about farming is that for all of the challenges that nature can present us with, there are often commensurate rewards. From a farming perspective, this has been a challenging winter to be sure. Many of the soils here at our home site hadn't fully dried out from the previous round of rainfall by the time the unexpectedly strong storms hit last week. As a consequence, we are behind in our production schedule as are most farms in our area. These late rains make harvesting and cultivating difficult as well.

But when the air is fresh, the hillsides impossibly green and the songbirds are flitting about on all sides, it's difficult to feel anything but upbeat about this season.

Veggie Notes, by Jason Johnson

Always rinse produce before use. Everything should be refrigerated.

Roasting is by far the most approachable, and probably most ancient, way to prepare large amounts of veggies. Here are a few thoughts.

I tend to roast things uncovered and on high heat. This ensures the outside gets nice and crispy while leaving the inside al dente. I will chop the **delicata** in quarters lengthwise, seed them, and place them in the pan skin side down. I will cover them in olive oil, using my hands to ensure the oil is evenly coated including the bottoms, then salt and pepper to taste. I'll just pop those in to the oven at about 425 degrees and let them cook until they are soft, about 15-20 minutes. The great thing about roasting is that it is not an exact science.

Furthermore, I like roasting **delicata** because the whole process takes under thirty minutes. I often find myself cooking them for breakfast; they pair great with eggs and kale.

Carrots and **asparagus** I prepare much the same. The trick with both of these veggies is that less is definitely more. With **carrots**, I simply chop off the greens, leaving about an inch of the stalk so they look nice and carroty, then oil, salt, pepper, and roast just like the squash at 425 or so. You want to remove them from the oven as soon as the skin blisters and caramelizes, about 10-15 minutes, so they stay nice and crispy in the middle. The same is true with the asparagus. Just snap off the woody bottoms and prepare the same as the carrots. The great thing about cooking these veggies whole is that they look fabulous on a plate. I would also argue that leaving the vegetables intact and the insides lightly cooked helps retain the nutrition of the vegetable itself by not exposing it to prolonged heat, which is known to break down micronutrients in plants.

My favorite thing to do with **cabbage** is--surprise!-- exactly the same as the **delicata**. I cut it in quarters, cover it evenly in oil, salt, and pepper, then roast for 15-20 minutes. The result is a beautifully, lightly charred wedge that adds color and substance to any plate. Just chop some **green garlic** for garnish and plate it next to all those other veggies you just roasted!

Chef's Notes, by Andrew Cohen

The spinach this week is used in one of my favorite activities --dragging the dessert station into the savory station. Here, a flan is made using **spinach**, with a little **green garlic** or roasted garlic to add a touch of sweetness. The recipe calls for finishing with olive oil and lemon juice, which will make the **spinach** sing. If you want to gussy the dish up, or make it more dessert-like, cut some **Delicata squash** into 3/8th inch

In The Box

Spinach

Cilantro

Mei Quin Choi

Delicata Squash

Green Garlic*

Asparagus*

Red Or Savoy Cabbage*

Carrots*

All produce is certified organic. Green garlic is from Everlasting Gardens. Carrots are from Heirloom Organics. Asparagus and cabbage are from Coke Farm. All other vegetables and fruit were grown by High Ground Organics. Note: last minute substitutions may be made.

rings, toss with oil and roast until done and a bit caramelized. Put some on a plate and top with a spinach sformato, then drizzle with a simple syrup made with Meyer lemon juice. You could add a few drops of extra virgin olive oil as well.

For a variation on the theme - cut the **squash** into ½ inch squares, and roast while you cook some farro. Sauté **carrots** and **spinach** and combine them all when cooked. Season with freshly cracked coriander seed (use a pepper mill or mortar and pestle) and **cilantro**, with a squeeze of lemon juice or lime. Make a Thai inflected soup with coconut milk, ginger, **green garlic** sliced diagonally, **carrots**, flash seared **mei-quin**, and **spinach** cooked in the soup. The **red cabbage** would be good cut into thin wedges and browned a little bit, then braised with lots of the green garlic and sautéed oblique cut carrots. Add some red wine and peppercorns and maybe a sausage or chicken thighs and braise. Throw in some small potatoes and you have an all-in-one-pot meal.

Remember, you can freeze **cilantro** stems for pureeing for a dressing or an infused oil later if you don't use it all. Cut the **squash** into smallish squares and roast until just done, then combine with some puréed **cilantro stems**, a little chili, lime and orange juice. Toss with diced onion, dried coconut shreds and **squash**, and maybe cashews, and use on fish or chicken.

I also love grilling **asparagus**. Use 2 skewers to prevent them spinning around the skewer. Slice off the very bottom, then peel the skin from the bottom 2 inches, rub with oil (add truffle oil for a treat), use some chunky/flaky salt and pepper and grill until just done.

Basic Simplest Asparagus, from Chef Andrew E Cohen, who learned it from his wife.

This yields moist, perfectly textured asparagus, tender without being the least mushy, slippery, or thready/stringy on the outside. This also works for asparagus cut into pieces.

Place asparagus into a pan with a snug lid, big enough to hold the asparagus without having to stack them more than 2-3 high. Add enough water to come halfway or a bit more up the asparagus. Put the top on and bring the asparagus to a boil. As soon as it boils, pour off all the water, return the lid to the pan, and allow asparagus to steam 2½ minutes for skinny spears, 3 minutes for average to large spears.

“Creamy” Asparagus Soup (with no cream), from Chef Andrew E Cohen

1 pound thick asparagus	1 med onion, finely sliced
1 stalk green garlic , white and palest green part only, finely sliced	1 stalk of celery, finely sliced
1 smallish carrot , finely sliced	1 large gold potato, peeled and cut into medium dice
1 quart rich vegetable stock	A few sprigs of fresh thyme
1 bay leaf	Salt & White Pepper to taste
Minced chives if you have them for garnish	Grape seed or other neutral flavored oil, as needed

Trim the bottom off the asparagus and peel the lower 2 inches of the spear. Snap the bottom ends of the spears where they naturally break. Cut the rest of the spear into smallish bits (1”), reserving the tips for garnish.

Heat the stock over medium heat, and when it is hot, add the peeled bases to the stock. Reduce the heat so the stock is at a

bare chuckle and cook the bases for 20 minutes or so. This is to build the flavor of the asparagus into the stock.

In a pot large enough to hold the finished soup, heat a small amount of oil. When hot, sauté the onion, green garlic, celery, and carrot in the oil over medium heat until translucent. Be sure to not let the vegetables color. When the vegetables are translucent, add the potato and sauté until all are quite soft.

Strain the hot stock into the pot. Add the chopped asparagus and simmer (Do not boil the soup!) for 5 minutes.

Carefully, puree the vegetables in the blender. Use just enough of the liquid to get it moving. (Remember- Hot liquids in the blender want to explode out when the machine turns on. Only fill the machine partway and cover the lid with a towel.)

Strain the puree into a fresh soup pot, and add enough stock to the puree to give it a nice smooth texture. Season with salt and pepper. Slice the tips lengthwise in half and blanch just long enough that they are no longer raw (30 to 60 seconds), and garnish the soup with them.

Sprinkle the soup with chives if you have them. The soup is also good served cold, although when seasoning you want to be a bit more aggressive. When serving a soup like this (or anything really) cold, you lose around 33% of the flavor, so just remember to turn up the seasoning. Serves: 4

Carrot and Spinach Sauté with Green Garlic and Roasted Almonds, from Chef Andrew E Cohen

1 bunch spinach , thick stems removed, washed thoroughly and drained	6 medium carrots , trimmed, cleaned, and sliced diagonally 1/8 th inch thin
1 small onion, halved through the root and peeled, sliced across into 1/8th inch slices	2-3 green garlic stalks, white part only, thinly sliced
¼ cup heaping roasted unsalted almonds, chopped	½ tsp. white balsamic vinegar
1 tsp. orange juice	1 tsp. hoisin sauce
1/8th tsp. Mexican or Korintje cinnamon (or less as needed)	Grape seed, or other high temp neutral flavored, oil
Salt as needed	

Bring 1 quart of water to the boil. Salt the water generously, then add the carrots to the water. Cook just long enough so the carrots are no longer raw, but no soft at all. Drain and rinse with cold water to stop the cooking. Drain again and reserve.

Mix the hoisin, orange juice, vinegar, and cinnamon, whisking to ensure they are thoroughly combined. Heat a large heavy bottomed frying pan (10-12 inches) over medium heat. When the pan is hot, film with oil. When the oil is hot, add the onion and green garlic, and toss to coat with oil and separate the strands of onion and garlic. Add the carrots and toss to combine. Cook, tossing frequently to prevent the alliums burning, until the carrots soften a little and pick up some color.

Add the hoisin, orange juice etc. mixture to the pan and swirl the pan to spread the mixture around. Add the spinach and use tongs to turn the spinach in the liquid to coat and mix with the rest of the vegetables in the pan. Cook gently to wilt the spinach. When it is wilted, use tongs to transfer the vegetable to a platter, letting any liquid drip back into the pan.

Turn the heat up to high. Swirl and stir the pan as the liquid reduces until it is thickened a bit or there is only a spoonful or two left. Drizzle the pan sauce over the vegetables, scatter with the almonds, and serve right away. Serves: 4