



High Ground Organics

Community Supported Agriculture

Week 4, April 6th and 7th, 2016

Eagle News, by Jeanne Byrne

One of the perks of farming where we do is that we live in a birder's paradise. Our home farm is on a hill perched above Harkins Slough, a freshwater wetland that is host to copious waterfowl. We regularly see great blue herons, egrets, terns, ducks, geese, coots, grebes, white pelicans, marsh wrens, kingfishers, and night herons. Add to these the hawks, kites, owls, falcons, grackles, swallows, phoebes, meadowlarks, hummingbirds, and songbirds that populate the uplands, and we could spend all our days just watching birds.

In the last century the slough was pumped out in the summer, and parts of the slough bottom were farmed. Since the late 1990s, however, the slough has not been pumped out (except for some groundwater recharge efforts to combat saltwater intrusion) and the water level has remained high. This has no doubt contributed to increasing the carp population in the slough, and the fish have made the area hospitable for some top fish-eating predators to move in.

First came the ospreys, who've been nesting on a pole in the slough for about 6 years. When they first came, power lines crossed the slough along the submerged Harkins Slough Road and they built a nest on one of these power poles. That ended badly, with the nest catching fire – the ospreys were OK but did not produce chicks that year. PG&E put a dummy pole next to that one with a large crate on top and the following year the ospreys came to the new pole and have been nesting on it every year since. I've seen at least one chick in the nest now. Local birders are very excited about the ospreys, as they hadn't been recorded nesting in Santa Cruz county since the 1940s. Another pair of ospreys started building a nest last spring further up along Harkins Slough road, but abandoned that nest. PG&E put an extension on that pole to provide a safe place for the nest, but it's a busier area and they may not come back there. But it's exciting that there is more than one pair of ospreys attempting to nest in the area.

Then came the bald eagles. Like the ospreys, bald eagles nearly disappeared in California by the 1960s due to the effects of the pesticide DDT (banned in 1972). Efforts starting in the 1980s to restore the population throughout California have slowly paid off. The first pair seen nesting in Santa Cruz County came to Pinto Lake in Watsonville in 2012 and started building a nest there, but they did not stay there. Then in 2014, they (probably the same pair) came here to Harkins Slough,

built a nest in a eucalyptus tree and successfully raised and fledged one chick. In 2015 they were back to the same nest and raised two chicks to adulthood. Then last fall, tragedy struck. Our daughter found one of the adult eagles dead in our apple orchard. It had apparently hit the power lines, touching two lines at once with that great 6 foot wing span. (PG&E has since come out and widened the distance between the power lines.)

We sadly watched the remaining adult when we saw it this spring, assuming there would be no nest this year. Then, last week, my daughter called out to me that the eagle was sitting in a nearby tree and I went out to look. I was beyond delighted and amazed when I saw not one adult in the tree, but two adult

bald eagles--the eagle has found a new mate! It is an enormous privilege to be able to look out my farm office window and see bald eagles sitting in the tree just on the other side of the strawberry field. We wish the new couple much happiness and many children!

This Week

Strawberries

Oregano

Red Radishes

Mei Quin Choi

Lacinato Kale

Arugula

Bacon Avocados*

Broccoli* OR Cauliflower*

Everything is certified organic. Broccoli is from Coke Farm. Cauliflower is from Phil Foster Ranches. Avocados are from Marsalisi Farm. All other vegetables were grown by High Ground Organics. Note: last minute substitutions may be made.

Veggie Notes, by Sarah Brewer

Always rinse produce before use. Everything should be refrigerated (except the avocados -- until they are ripe, then refrigerate).

The Sweet Anne **strawberries** are a newer variety, born right here in Santa Cruz, CA in 2005 by a breeder named Jimmy Bagdasarian. They are characterized in their patent (which was published in 2012) as "vigorous plants which produce high yields of large to very large, sweet fruit with an excellent flavor". Yep, from the size of the sweet fruits coming out of the fields, that description sounds right on target!

The fresh herb of the week will be **oregano**. Oregano is the quintessential herb of Italy, sending a pizza-like aroma to whatever is on the menu. It is different from other fresh herbs in that you can add it in the pot early on instead of waiting until the end of the cooking process. Also, unlike other fresh herbs, its flavor intensifies when it is dried, so it may be more appropriate to hang it to dry instead of adding it to a glass of fresh water in terms of preservation.

Remove the **radish** greens right away, then swish the greens in water to remove any particles of sands and add them to your salad. Keep the **radish roots** fresh and ready to roll in a jar of water in the fridge. That way, you can easily go to them in a snack attack instead of the less-healthy options you may be inclined toward.

Crisp, jade-green **Mei Quin Choi** can also serve in a snack-attack. Those long stems can be slathered with some peanut butter or hummus, chopped fine in a salad, or served traditionally in a stir-fry or soup.

Spread the Word

Please help us grow by inviting your friends to try the CSA! New members can use the coupon code, "LOCAL" to get \$10 off their order of 4 deliveries or more! Have them mention your name in the sign-up notes and you will be rewarded with a \$10 bonus in the web store! You can offer them this link to sign up:

<http://csa.farmigo.com/join/highgroundorganics/csa>

Another way you can help spread the word is to tag High Ground Organics in your facebook posts showing off your box or delicious meal or tag #highgroundorganics if you tweet or instagram. Thanks for helping bring our communities together and for supporting your local family farm!

Lacinato kale and **arugula** will be your leafy greens this week. I have to say that my biggest pet peeve lately is when people quit the CSA because they "don't eat greens". To me, this is like saying, "I don't drink water" or "I don't breathe air". Why anyone would not eat greens can only be attributed to not knowing how to cook them or not knowing how they benefit your health. Vitamin K is one of the many vitamins and minerals associated with leafy greens and is usually present in large amounts. It is most famous for being the mastermind behind blood clotting, but also helps to bind calcium to bones, prevent heart disease, and prevent certain types of cancers. It helps in the absorption of Vitamin D.

These **Bacon avocados** from Marsalisi Farm are not flavored like bacon, but are named after a man who first cultivated them, named James Bacon. They have a light green skin that is flexible and easy to peel and their flesh is pale.

Your **broccoli** or **cauliflower** is ready for a quick simple steaming, stir fry, roasting, curry, or chomping raw with a dip or dressing.

Enjoy your veggies!

Cooking Notes, by Andrew Cohen

Sometimes all my ideas will fix around one ingredient in the box. This week all my ideas centered around two; the **lacinato** or the **radishes**. Or both. **Radishes** get quickled or dropped into ice water for a while to tame them and remove some of the bite, and add to the crunch. Try them with smoked salmon and cream cheese on bagels in lieu of capers. Early **strawberries**, with their light acid and sweetly fragrant scent, make a nice match for nutty spicy **arugula** and slightly sharp crunchy **radishes**. A recipe that did not get committed to bits and bytes was for another **kale** salad with **lacinato**, **radishes**, a creamy yogurt poppy seed dressing with garlicky well-cooked bread crumbs and ribbons of P'tit Basque or ricotta salata cheese. Squeezing the **kale** makes it tender and sweetens it. **Lacinato** also featured in the un-typed recipe for cooked **kale**, white beans, barley or farro, seasoned with plenty of **oregano**, red wine, and green garlic.

Oregano is a classic for Italian, Middle-Eastern, and American South Western foods, so keep that in mind. This week it shows in a simple "fusion" sauté of **mei-quin** and **radish** (Chinese inspired) with white wine, leek or onion, and the oregano (Mediterranean), as well as a salsa verde variant to dress toasts topped with **rocket (arugula)**, **avocados**, and **radish**. **Oregano** could be made into a simple syrup for

adding an unusual note to cocktails or tonics-try it with rye or bubble water. You can infuse oil with it or make a brush of it and use it to baste things on the grill. Grilled lemons and **oregano** are a nice combo as well. Oregano oil, avo, and smoked salmon make a nice breakfast or lunch, or use oregano, garlic, and onions mashed together with lemon juice for Mid-East inspired fare.

Note: We can't print them all, but Chef Andrew's recipes are always available in full at highgroundorganics.com.

Salad of Arugula, Radish, and Strawberry with 2 Balsamics Dressing, from Chef Andrew E Cohen

Early crop strawberries have a tart edge while still being sweet. This creates an interplay with nutty spicy arugula, and the sharpness of the radish is first mitigated by a short ice-water bath, and then the sweetness of the berries.

1 bunch radishes, rootlets removed, stems cut so 1-inch remains as a handle for slicing, sliced very thinly on a mandolin	1 bunch arugula, cleaned and dried, torn into bite-sized pieces
½ large clamshell (1 pound) strawberries, topped and cleaned	Optional- ½ cup heaping shelled roasted unsalted pistachios
Salt and pepper to taste	1 cup, or as needed, Double Balsamics dressing (See recipe below)

Toss the radish slices into ice water, and chill for 30 minutes. Drain and dry, and toss into a non-reactive bowl. Add arugula leaves and toss to mix.

Using a mandolin such as a Japanese Ben-Riner or a very sharp knife, slice the strawberries thinly into the bowl.

Drizzle in just enough dressing to lightly coat the ingredients, then gently toss to mix well. Divide equally amongst four plates, chilled preferably, then season with salt and pepper to taste, then scatter the nuts, if using, over the salads. Serve immediately.

Chef's Notes: This is one of the simple recipes where everything depends on the quality of ingredients. Use high-quality vinegar and oil for the dressing, the strawberries are best if they are early season, but ripe and not showing lots of green or white. You could tart this up a bit with a little well-cooked finely diced bacon, or you could sub pine nuts for the pistachios. Serves: 4.

Double Balsamic Dressing, from Chef Andrew E Cohen

1½ TBS balsamic vinegar	2½ TBS white balsamic vinegar
Salt and pepper to taste	¼ tsp. fresh oregano, chopped
Optional- ½ tsp. shallot, finely minced	¾ cup neutral flavored oil

Put the vinegars into a non-reactive bowl with the salt, pepper, herbs, and shallot if using. Allow flavors to marry for 5-10 minutes.

Drizzle in the oil while whisking like mad until the dressing is fully emulsified or the oil is used up. Taste and adjust seasoning if needed.

Dressing will keep 4-5 days. Yield: Around 1 cup.