



High Ground Organics Community Supported Agriculture

Week 5, April 12th and 13th, 2017

Farm Notes, by Stephen Pedersen

This “winter” just doesn’t want to go away—another storm is forecast for tomorrow. We are up to nearly 40 inches of rain this season, which is nearly double what we get in a normal year. This is how I imagine it is to farm on the East Coast, where they get rain throughout the spring and summer. It really is a different mind- set, you have to take what the weather gives you and busy yourself with other tasks until things dry out again. In a normal year, when the tap shuts off around now, us Western farmers make a big push to get ground worked up and ready for planting—spending long hours on the tractor. Now these hours come in a mad dash whenever the ground dries out enough.

These weather enforced “breaks” have allowed me to get off the farm more than I would at this time of year in a normal season. Last Sunday I went for one of my favorite bike rides, a loop around Elkhorn Slough via a combination of levees, farms and back roads. It gave me the first real chance to survey the damage done by this winter that we are still in the midst of. Downed trees are everywhere along with a huge amount of erosion and multiple closed roads. The mouth of the Pajaro River meandered nearly a half mile South of where it was the last time I saw it, and in one place it jumped its banks just North of Zmudowski Beach. It really makes me thankful that we came through as well as we did.

I am also thankful that we have had gaps between these latest storms that have allowed us to get things planted and to work up enough ground so that we are not too far off our planting schedule. The cooler-than-normal weather has meant that the things we have already planted are growing more slowly, throwing things off further.

Next week, however, we will start to have much more coming in—bunched green, lettuces, green onions, herbs and most importantly strawberries, which after having grown slowly and unevenly through the winter, are now showing amazing vigor. The fruit that some of you will get in your box this week may not be cosmetically perfect and will need to be washed before eating for sure. Rainfall from the storms we have been having can splash grit onto the fruit. The large strawberry farms in our area call these early berries “mud-fruit” and usually dump them in the bottoms of the furrows. We figured you all would rather deal with a little grit than to let these sweet, spring treats go to waste.

Veggie Notes, by Jason Johnson

Always rinse produce before use. Everything should be refrigerated.

Lately, our Sunday market stand has been thin. It has been, more than anything, a booth where I explain weather’s effect on agriculture and apologize for our lack of abundance. The heavy rains have been particularly hard on the two crops that have become synonymous with the city of Watsonville: the mighty lettuce and the all-powerful berry.

People’s entire lives are shaped by the cultivation of these two crops. One of those people is Steve. It is amazing to talk to people at the market who, in a parking lot full of berry and lettuce vendors, will go home without either because ours aren’t ready. It speaks to the character of our customers and the skill of our farmer. I am convinced the man was never born, but instead rose from the soil with the eternal wisdom of the lettuce and the ability to speak directly to strawberries. It has been a long winter, but our berries are here.

With my first batch of **strawberries**, I want to do something special. Treat myself, you know? I deserve it. I deserve it because I live in a world where deserve and want are the same thing. So, I’m going to use a recipe I learned from my good friend, Ina Garten. It’s as easy slicing the whole pint of berries in half, then adding a splash of balsamic vinegar, about a teaspoon of sugar, and a small pinch of black pepper. Just mix all that together, put it on top of some vanilla ice cream, garnish with maybe a twig of rosemary, and serve with coffee. Since it is not advisable to drink coffee in the afternoon, it only makes sense that you prepare this dish for breakfast.

Strawberry desserts and spring time had me thinking of a few more of my favorite things, and I just had to delete a whole paragraph about tacos because I realized I did the same thing last week. God, do I love tacos.

So, since we aren’t going to wrap a corn tortilla around some flaky fish and a slaw of **cabbage, carrots, and spinach** (grate **carrot**, thinly slice **cabbage** and **spinach**, refer to last week’s notes), then I guess we’ll have to put those veggies in a salad with that beautiful **lettuce** you are getting. Lately, my partner, Hayley, has been making a fantastic creamy balsamic dressing. It seems to me that she mixes about a ¼ cup of balsamic, a couple spoonfuls of plain yogurt, a little bit of honey, a splash of olive oil, and a small squirt of Dijon mustard in a bowl, then adds salt and pepper to taste. The result is a dressing that goes great with ‘kitchen sink’ type salads and that’s exactly how I will use it this week. The base of my salad will be equal parts **cabbage, spinach, and lettuce**. I’m going to top that with **carrot** strings, sliced **radish**, a few

In The Box

**Little Gem OR Salanova
Lettuces**

Mei Quin Choi

**Strawberries OR
Artichokes***

Purple Carrots*

Green Cabbage*

Savoy Spinach*

Black Spanish Radishes*

All produce is certified organic. Spinach and Radishes are from Heirloom Organics.

Artichokes, carrots, and cabbage are from Coke Farm. All other vegetables and fruit were grown by High Ground Organics. Note: last minute substitutions may be made.

halved **strawberries**, bleu cheese crumbles, and drizzle it with that creamy balsamic. The result will be a colorful salad that pairs easily with most entrees or stands alone quite nicely. Mine will be served in a liberal pile with steamed **artichoke** as a side. Enjoy your veggies!

Easy Ohitashi (Japanese Spinach Bundles, easy version), from Chef Andrew E Cohen

Ohitashi are a classic of Japanese cuisine. Typically, they spinach is marinated in a broth based on “dashi”, which is a broth made of dried smoked bonito flakes and seaweed. This is a simpler version using water.

1 bunch of spinach, root crowns snipped off and used for another dish, stems trimmed even	2 TBS toasted sesame seeds
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Seasoning

2 cups water or light vegetable stock	4 TBS mirin (sweet cooking sake)
4 TBS soy sauce	

Place the seasoning ingredients together in a jar or bowl and mix well.

Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil.

Keeping the spinach in a bundle, wash in plenty of cold water until clean. Use a piece of kitchen string to tie the spinach in a bundle around the stems.

Hold the spinach by the leaves and submerge just the stems into the boiling water, cooking for 2 minutes or until just tender. At this point, submerge the rest of the bundle and cook just until the leaves wilts. Drain and rinse in cold water.

Remove from the water in a bundle and drain, squeezing gently to remove as much water as possible. Pour the seasoning over the spinach and marinate 30 minutes.

Remove from the seasoning and transfer the bundle to a bamboo sushi-rolling mat. Cut stems from the leaves and set aside. Roll the leaves to form a 1 to 2 inch log. Slice the log into 1½ inch lengths. Do the same with the stems.

To serve, dip one end of the bundles into the sesame seeds and stand on the other end in a bowl. Pour some of the seasoning into the bowl and serve chilled or room temperature. This keeps in the refrigerator for a couple days.

Chef’s Tips: If you want to keep this really simple and quick, just trim the crowns from the stems and blanch the spinach as instructed above. Instead of rolling the spinach, just cool it and drain it, and then cut the whole bundle into 1 inch lengths. Pour the seasoning over the spinach and marinate 30 minutes. To serve, just pinch some of the spinach up and drain off the liquid and transfer to a bowl. Garnish with sesame seeds and serve. The high-speed version is to cut off the stems, wash the spinach and cook it in the microwave until wilted. Rinse to cool, wrap it in a towel and squeeze out excess moisture, then season. Serve as above.

“Salad” of Black Spanish Radish with Horseradish, from Chef Andrew E Cohen

Although called Spanish Radish, these are well-liked in places like Russia where the winters are harsh and the ground is cold. These radishes store really well if kept cold. This salad would be a nice accompaniment to gravlax, borscht, or braised beef.

2-3 small to medium Spanish radish, trimmed and peeled	1 small shallot, peeled and minced finely
1 tsp. minced fresh dill	3 TBS white wine vinegar
salt and pepper to taste	1-2 TBS prepared horseradish (Use a nice strong one)
¾ to 1 cup heavy plain yogurt, or labne, or whipped heavy cream	

Put the vinegar into a non-reactive bowl, and add the shallot, thyme, and salt and pepper. Macerate while you cut the radish.

Grate the radishes using the largest hole or use a mandolin to cut them into shreds, or slice them in half from top to bottom and then slice into 1/8th inch half-moons. If the radish is really firm and you want something more tender, toss the cut radish with 1 tablespoon of salt and allow to wilt for 15 minutes or just until softened a bit. Rinse well and blot dry on paper towels.

Add the horseradish to the vinegar, whisking to mix in well.

Whisk the vinegar mixture, then add a ½ cup of the dairy of your choice, whisking to mix well. Add another ¼ cup of dairy and whisk in. Taste by dipping a piece of radish in and trying it. The dressing should be creamy, but not cloying, and the vinegar should be enough to cut the richness of the dairy product. The horseradish should be a definite presence with the radish and dairy just mitigating the heat. If the dressing seems to be quite tart, add a couple pinches of sugar at a time and whisk in until you get the right balance.

When the dressing is right, add some to the cut radish and toss to cover all the radish with dressing. Allow the salad to rest at least 10 minutes for the flavors to marry.

Serve cold or at room temperature. Serves: 4, at least

Savoy Spinach with Garlic and Lemon, from Chef Andrew E Cohen

Savoy spinach has a slightly more robust flavor than the flat kind, is well suited to cooking. However, the folds mean you need to be more attentive to washing it. Not a big deal really. Just use a large bowl to swish the leaves around in, then lift them from the water into a colander. Repeat as needed. To check that, look at the bottom of the rinse bowl for dirt, and bite a piece. That should let you know.

1 bunch spinach, stems removed and washed thoroughly	1 small onion, diced finely
1 tsp. fresh thyme, minced	2-3 large cloves of garlic, minced
Light flavored olive oil as needed	2-3 TBS fresh lemon juice, preferably Meyer
1-2 TBS unsalted butter	Salt and pepper to taste

Heat a 10-inch sauté pan over medium-low heat. When hot, film liberally with oil and wait for it to heat up. Add the onions and thyme, and toss to coat with the oil. Cook, tossing every few minutes, until very soft, but not colored.

Add the garlic and stir to combine. Cook until garlic is softened and aromatic, but don’t let it color. Lower the heat to low. Add the butter and when it stops foaming add the spinach, turning with tongs to coat with the butter. Cook gently to just wilt the spinach. When it is ready, drizzle with the lemon juice, and toss to combine all the ingredients. Serve hot.

Serves: 4