



High Ground Organics

Community Supported Agriculture

Week 7, April 27th and 28th, 2016

Companion Planting: Sweet Alyssum and Brassicas, by Jeanne Byrne

I've always liked sweet alyssum flowers. We planted them back in our San Francisco community garden plot before we moved out of the city to start farming, and they made a lovely delicate ground cover that attracted the most beautiful little crab spiders. The spiders are experts at camouflage, and can turn different colors depending on the color of flower they are on. The ones on the white alyssum would be white, but those on yellow flowers would be a bright yellow instead. They were welcome predators in the garden plot.

For the past couple years we've been planting sweet alyssum in the rows with our broccoli, kale, and lettuce plantings to attract beneficial insects that can keep the aphids in check. Predatory wasps, lacewings, and ladybugs love the sweet alyssum, and so do syrphid flies. The syrphid fly larvae are voracious predators of aphids and other pests. The adults have a striped back and look a bit like yellow jackets—they feed on nectar and pollen. (At right is a picture of a syrphid fly on one of our pear blossoms.) The alyssum next to the broccoli provides a perfect habitat for the syrphids—the alyssum provides flowers for the adults, and the broccoli provides aphids for the larvae.

Aphids are one of our biggest pest problems. They absolutely love broccoli and the other brassicas, but lately red aphids have taken out some of our lettuce plantings too. (Sometimes it seems that there is a different colored aphid for just about everything we grow.) The aphid problem waxes and wanes with the time of year, the weather, and even what is planted at the farm next door.

We count on our insectary hedgerows on the farm perimeters to provide habitat for many beneficial insects. But planting the alyssum directly in the rows with the broccoli or lettuce makes sure that the predators are right there where we need them most. Several years ago, a graduate student from UCSC conducted a study on our farm and others with hedgerows to see how far the beneficial insects penetrated into the farm field from the hedgerow. The results showed that the insects were most certainly visiting the crops, but the number of beneficials found decreased the farther away from the hedgerow she tested. Our hedgerows provide stable ongoing habitat for our beneficial predator population. But the alyssum is a targeted crop-specific approach that brings the syrphid flies and other predatory insects right to where we need them when we need them.

(This article was originally printed in April 2014.)

Veggie Notes, by Sarah Brewer

Always rinse produce before use. Everything should be refrigerated.

Last week, Steve touched on the most recent report of the Environmental Working Group's "Dirty Dozen" who have updated their list this year to include conventional strawberries as the #1 item of produce to buy organically due to the amount of pesticide residues found in USDA test samples even after washing before use! According to the special strawberry report, some of those pesticides are considered benign to humans, but others, not so much.

For example, *carbendazim*, which was found on 40% of the samples, is a fungicide which has been banned in Europe due to its hormone disrupting effects on the male reproductive system. *Bifenthrin* and *Malathion* were also found on a good percent of the berries, both suspected carcinogens, and both considered harmful to aquatic life and bees. The EWG feels that the Environmental Protection Agency's tolerance for these pesticides are far too lenient, as the standards were put in place before many recent studies came out claiming dangerous health effects of some of these chemicals, even in small doses, not to mention the effects in combination with other chemicals.

Aside from strawberries, other fruits and vegetables on the "Dirty Dozen" list that we grow organically, without the use of pesticides, are: apples (#2), celery (#5), spinach (#8), tomatoes (#9), sweet peppers (#10), cherry tomatoes (#11) and cucumbers (#12). The list also expands beyond the dozen to include hot peppers (#13) and kale/collard greens (#14).

A brief rundown of our list this week includes peppery **arugula** and **red leaf lettuce** as our "salady" greens as well as **Scotch kale** as our more "hardy" greens. **Green onions** appear again, representing the allium (onion) family.

Cilantro is your fresh culinary herb. We are also

bringing in the fabulous **shiitake mushrooms** from our friends at Far West Fungi.

And there will be **fava beans** from Everlasting Garden. If you are new to the CSA, you might look at those fava beans like, "Whaa?" If these giant bean pods are totally unfamiliar to you, please consult the Basic Fava Bean Prep recommendations or try grilling them as Andrew suggests this week. You *can* go wrong here. For example, you don't want to eat the pods, and most recipes require blanching the beans and popping them out of their whitish skins and just using the jade green beans, although some recipes and the smaller of the beans do not require this treatment.

Enjoy your veggies!

Strawberries
Arugula
Green Onions
Red Leaf Lettuce
Scotch Kale
Cilantro
Shiitake Mushrooms*
Fava Beans*

Everything is certified organic. Mushrooms are from Far West Fungi. Fava beans are from Everlasting Garden or Coke Farm. All other vegetables and fruit were grown by High Ground Organics. Note: last minute substitutions may be made.

Chef Notes, by Andrew Cohen

Favas are harbingers that spring is here. To me, **favas** have a slightly cheesy, very “green” flavor I find hard to resist, especially with nice olive oil and young romano cheese. If young and tender they are great raw or just blanched and eaten with olive oil and lemon. Stewed in oil, tossed in salads, mashed, added to soups, added to pastas—all good, just don’t overwhelm them. For a real dose of spring, try shaving asparagus and small artichokes into 1/8th inch slices and scattering with blanched **favas**, then drizzling with good oil and Meyer lemon juice and shaving a little pecorino romano over the lot. A strange alchemy happens and flavors become something else entirely. Remember, if favas are young enough, you do not need to remove the skin around the bean, only the pod. You can, however, grill the whole pod and eat the whole thing if the beans are young and the pods are still soft. Grilling is also a way to cook the beans inside and it makes opening the pods a breeze.

Favas go well with **scallions**, and a sauté of farro, favas, and scallions would be nice, and if you cooked the farro the day before this could be really quick.

Not so quick, but a great light dinner or a brunch item is an Egg Bake. Wilt the **arugula** and **kale** with some garlic and **scallions** in lots of olive oil, then add to oiled 12 ounce ramekins. Scatter with slivers of oil cured olives, then break an egg or two into each ramekin and bake in a bain-marie for 20-25 minutes lightly covered for a great breakfast. **Shiitakes** and **kale** with **cilantro**, garlic and ginger could be quite good as well. If you find **shiitake** stems too chewy to eat, steep them with some water, soy sauce, and a little ginger and garlic to make a seasoning with. Use this “tea” to sauté with or to add flavor to braises.

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

Basic Fava Bean Prep, from Chef Andrew E Cohen

This is the basic prep for most fava bean recipes.

However many fava beans you have, in the pod	2 TBS salt
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Bring a pot of water to a boil that will be at least twice the volume of the shelled beans you will have. Once boiling, add the salt.

While the water comes to a boil, slit the fava pods and remove the beans.

When you are ready to blanch the beans, half fill a bowl with ice and then add water and salt. Stir in the salt. (Salt will lower the temperature even beyond what the ice will do.)

When the water is boiling add the favas and blanch briefly (large favas about 60 second, little ones for 30 seconds). They will turn brighter.

Drain the beans and immerse in cold water to arrest the cooking.

Use a thumbnail to break the skin of the bean a little and then “pinch” the bean to eject it from the skin. Place the beans in a bowl and set aside.

They can now be used or you can store them in a tightly sealed container in the refrigerator. Use within 24 hours.

Yield: 2 pounds of favas will yield between ½ to ¾ pound of favas, or around 1 cup.

Arugula Fava Salad, from Chef Andrew E Cohen

Simple, basic, and full of flavors. Eat this as a salad off a plate or pile it onto very hot crostini so the heat can melt the cheese a little and wilt the arugula. Using oil with a soft bite but big fruity flavor is a good idea here so it softens the bite of the arugula and doesn’t mask the nuttiness of the favas.

1 bunch arugula, stemmed and washed, spun dry	2 cups fava beans, shelled, blanched, and skinned if needed (if the pods are young, the skins of the bean may be tender enough to not warrant peeling. Try one and you decide)
6 scallions, white and pale green only, thinly sliced on the diagonal into ½ long pieces	¼ pound piece of young pecorino romano cheese
Flaky salt and pepper	1 cup, or as needed, Real Simple Red Wine Vinaigrette (see recipe)
¼ cup pine nuts, if you wish	

Lightly oil the favas in their bowl, and toss to coat. Add a pinch of flaky salt and gently toss.

Put the arugula and scallions into a non-reactive bowl and lightly dress, just to coat. Gently toss to coat and combine.

Mix half the favas into the arugula and toss to mix. Divide amongst four chilled plates.

Scatter with pine nuts, touch with salt and pepper to taste—but not too much or you will lose the taste of the favas.

Drizzle a little more dressing over the salads.

Scatter the rest of the fava beans over the salads evenly.

Using a swivel peeler, cover the top of the salads with paper thin strips of the cheese. Serve right away.

Chef's Notes: You can also serve this as an appetizer.

Follow the above instructions, but do not add the second drizzle of dressing until you have evenly distributed the salad over 8-12 pieces toasted sturdy bread. Drizzle with dressing so it runs into the bread, add nuts and then scrape the cheese over the toasts last. Place on a platter and serve. If you wish, you could just drizzle Meyer lemon juice or good quality red wine vinegar and an Extra Virgin olive oil (not spicy, but big flavor with fruity buttery qualities) on the salad before setting it up.

Serves: 4

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!