



High Ground Organics Community Supported Agriculture

Week 9, May 11th and 12th, 2016

Organic vs. Conventional, by Jeanne Byrne

I was listening to the radio recently and heard a brief “debate” between a supporter of conventional agriculture and a supporter of organic agriculture. The conventional agriculture supporter’s main argument was that organic growers use pesticides too, just organic ones. The organic supporter (not a farmer) wasn’t able to address this point but talked about wanting to eat vegetables without pesticides on them. Her support for organic ended up sounding a bit simplistic, while the conventional supporter made it sound like organic and conventional agriculture are practically the same thing. It was not an enlightened or enlightening debate.

There are very concrete and specific differences between organic and conventional agriculture. To be certified organic, a farmer must meet very strict rules concerning materials that can be applied, inputs that can be used, techniques for combating weeds, diseases, and pests, types of seed that can be used, and products used in post-harvest handling of the crop. Organic farmers are prohibited from using genetically modified organisms, sewage sludge fertilizers, synthetic (petroleum based) fertilizers, soil fumigants, and toxic pesticides, fungicides, herbicides, and defoliants.

Here is one example of how conventional and organic farming systems differ. Conventional farmers often use herbicides to kill weeds so that the food crop can grow without competition. For instance, the GMO crops Roundup Ready soybeans and corn are genetically modified so that they are not killed by the herbicide Roundup (glyphosate). Roundup is applied directly to the growing crop to kill the weeds around it. The use of Roundup has skyrocketed from 11 million pounds in 1987 to nearly 300 million pounds in 2012. As so much farmland is blanketed with Roundup, weeds are developing resistance, resulting in even more of the product being applied in order to be effective. While not considered an acutely toxic product, use of glyphosate at this high level is concerning. Last year, the UN’s International Agency for Research on Cancer classified glyphosate as a “probable human carcinogen,” and it has been linked to antibiotics resistance and hormone disruption. Amphibians may be particularly sensitive to glyphosate. In addition, this massive use of herbicides is killing off the milkweed that used to thrive on farm border areas, threatening the survival of the Monarch butterflies, which lay their eggs only on milkweed plants. This is just one example of the habitat destruction happening around farms with this kind of management.

Extra Strawberries Available on Webstore

Strawberries are abundant! You can now order flats or half-flats of strawberries from the web store to be delivered to your pick-up site with the CSA delivery. Stock your freezer with fruit for smoothies, make jam or fruit leather, dehydrate berries for granola, or make some strawberry-rhubarb pies! Honey and single flower bouquets are also available.

Strawberries
Blueberries
Summer Squash
Escarole
Broccoli
Red Leaf OR Red Oak
Leaf Lettuce
Lacinato Kale

Everything is certified organic. All vegetables and fruit were grown by High Ground Organics. Note: last minute substitutions may be made.

An organic farmer uses different methods to combat weeds, often using many practices in conjunction. We seed many of our crops in the greenhouse, so that when we plant them out to a prepared farm bed, they are big enough to outcompete the new weeds that will come up when we water. When we’re seeding directly into the ground, we will sometimes prepare a “stale seed bed,” watering it (or letting the rain do it) and letting the weeds sprout. A pass with the tractor cultivator kills the weeds and then we plant the seed for our crop. A similar method used with crops that take a long time to germinate like carrots or cilantro, is to plant the crop seed, wait until it is just about to sprout and flame the top of the seed bed to kill the weeds that have emerged first. Mechanical cultivation both with tractors and hand weeding with hoes is generally necessary as the plants and weeds grow.

Combating weeds is a labor-intensive activity for organic farms and often accounts for much of the increased cost of growing organically.

Organic rules take away the option to just kill everything with herbicides, so organic farmers have to be more thoughtful about how we address the problem.

One of my favorite book titles is *What Are People For?* a collection of essays by Wendell Berry. This is a question worth asking, and I think part of the answer is that people are for doing good work, thoughtfully, making the extra effort to understand and own the consequences of the work that we do. In a way, organic agriculture is about asking questions like this and finding answers that cause the least harm to the world around us.

Veggie Notes, by Sarah Brewer

Always rinse produce before use. Everything should be refrigerated.

You will be receiving the first **blueberries** of the season this week! We have four varieties in the blueberry patch: Southmoon, O’Neal, Misty, and Jewel. The idea was that they would ripen sequentially so that the harvest would be

staggered over a longer season. Sometimes it works that way. Sometimes they all become ripe at once and are out in a flash. This week we've got a lot of the Misty and Jewel varieties.

The presence of **summer squash** is also a good indicator that the season known as "summer" is starting to creep in again. Time to pull out your summer squash recipe database. Luckily, these babies have a diverse repertoire, from the charred flavors of the grill to the sweet teeth-sinking sweetbreads of the oven. You know, humans and squash have been friends for a long time. Archaeological evidence from Mesoamerica suggests that we have been grilling squash over the coals for up to 10,000 years! Squash was probably one of the first steps in the agricultural revolution, at least here in the Americas, that has made us the humans what we are today. Well that, and the other "Sisters," Maize (corn) and beans. Thank you, zucchini, and your rich abundance!

Escarole might be a question mark for some of you who haven't prepared it before. Escarole is in the endive family, so think of it as a sort of giant lettuce-looking radicchio. Feel free to use some of the tender inner leaves as part of your salad, as illustrated in Andrew's incredible salad offering this week, but a whole salad of escarole might be a bit brave for a first-timer. You can tame the bitter by cooking it, and, by the way, the texture turns to pure silk! Bitter is often a good balance for richness, so work with creamy, cheesy tones (like the bleu cheese and port dressing in Andrew's salad) or maybe lighten it up with something sweet and fruity, like apples.

Enjoy your veggies!

Chef Notes, by Andrew Cohen

This week features a more restaurant level recipe that plays with **broccoli**, using cooking, textural, and temperature variations to explore this often overlooked vegetable. The recipe (see website) has a lot of words, but it also has three sub-recipes to it, any one of which could be broken out and used on its own with the entirety of the broccoli. Once you break it down into the three parts, it is easy to execute. Parts of the recipe, like the fricco and cutting up the broccoli, can be done ahead of time. The time actually spent cooking is not a lot actually, and it is fun to see all these different aspects of broccoli all on one plate. It is funny to me how people think it is fine to put a lot of time into an elaborate dish featuring meat, fowl, or fish, but a vegetable? So, invest your time in this vegetable dish, and fire up a simple piece of fish or other protein for a twist on the usual.

The salad featured this week is **escarole** and other bitter/sharp greens such as rocket and frisée. The broccoli microgreens mentioned are grown by New Natives in Corralitos, and add a great flavor. The salad calls for a Port Wine Vinaigrette, which makes this a good time to mention wine in cooking. If it is something you wouldn't want to drink, don't cook with it. When you cook wine down, you are concentrating flavors. "Cooking" wine starts with inferior wine, and then it is salted. The idea is that it would keep cooks from drinking it. So-use only decent wines to cook with, preferably what you are drinking with a meal. When it comes to port, cheap port can be awful, and expensive ports might be a waste. Also, port is a wine, and is not really meant to be left for years open on the shelf. Drink your port within a month, at the most, of opening it.

The dressing for the salad could be good on the **lacinato kale**, or with **strawberries**. I have been having **blueberry** parfaits for dessert of late layering **blueberries**, vanilla yogurt, granola, yogurt, berries, granola, on up. Be sure to leave at least an inch of space at the top or when you put your spoon in stuff will overflow onto the table. Try cooking some shallots and ginger, and then adding **blueberries** and cooking them a little to make a chunky sauce for roast chicken. For the early **summer squash**, cut it into chunks using a roll cut, then sear the faces and braise the squash with the **lacinato**, some olives, and wine. You could add **broccoli** in as well. Quickle it as a *mezze* or *antipasti*.

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

Escarole with Crisped Potatoes and Onions, from Chef Andrew E Cohen

This recipe contrasts the slightly bitter silkiness of escarole with the nutty sweetness of potatoes that have been sautéed crisp, with onions forming a bridge. This dish makes a nice side with sausages, ham steaks, and other sweet and rich meats.

1 head escarole, chopped and washed, some water left on leaves	2-3 cups of potatoes, such as Yukon Gold or other starchy type, boiled until just tender and sliced ¼ inch thick
1 small onion, cut into medium dice	1 TBS butter
Oil as needed	Salt and pepper to taste
1 tsp. fresh thyme, savory, or basil, chopped	

Heat a large sauté pan over medium high heat. Coat pan bottom with oil, and when hot, add the butter. As soon as it stops foaming, swirl to mix in with oil and add the potato slices. Toss to coat evenly with oil/butter mixture, and season aggressively with salt and pepper. Cook, shaking the pan and tossing potatoes occasionally, until they are golden and crisp. Remove from pan and keep warm.

Add the onions to the pan and sauté until "clear", adding oil if needed. Add herbs and toss to distribute. Add the escarole, combining with the onions and herbs, and season lightly. Cook until wilted.

Add the potatoes to the pan, combine with the escarole, and cook to heat through. Taste for seasoning, adjust if needed, and serve. Serves: 4

Chef's Notes: If you wish, you could sauté bacon until crisp and use the fat for cooking the potatoes, etc. in. Add ¼ cup of diced bacon at the end for garish. If the idea of bacon appeals, but not actually eating it, add some Pimenton de la Vera Dulce into the cooking oil for the spuds and stir it in.

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!