



High Ground Organics Community Supported Agriculture

Week 14, June 14th and 15th, 2017

A Word about Blueberries, by Stephen Pedersen

We've had a lot of people ask us if we plan to have a blueberry U-pick this year and, sadly, the answer is no. Similar to many deciduous fruit trees, blueberries can enter into an alternate bearing cycle where they fruit heavily one year and very lightly the next. Unfortunately, we are in an "off" year and there is very little fruit out there. The good news is that the plants look fantastic. They loved the heavy winter rainfall we received and put on lots of new growth. And since blueberries only fruit on wood that is at least a year old, we should have plenty of fruit next year.

As with any new agricultural endeavor, there has been a steep learning curve with the blueberries. One of the ways growers of deciduous fruit trees can balance out this alternate bearing cycle is by heavily thinning the fruit when it is still in its early stages. This allows the trees to keep putting some of their energy into growing vegetatively instead of expending it all on a very heavy crop of fruit. Since it is impractical to thin blueberries—they are much too small and numerous—you can accomplish the same thing with selective pruning. Blueberries will start to set fruit on wood that is in its second year, but that same wood will continue to produce fruit for years to come. If you don't prune at all, the plant becomes choked with older wood and will expend almost all of its energy on producing fruit.

The trick is to prune off enough of the older wood so that the plants have energy to put into producing new canes for future production while at the same time producing a decent crop of fruit for the current year. After a very heavy fruit set last season, the plants were overdue for a heavy pruning, and that's what we did. We will take a hit in the pocketbook, but in the long run I feel the plants will be better off. It's a balancing act for sure, and one that we are still trying to get the knack of, but going into the future we hope to avoid down years like the one we are going through.

On the other berry front, as you know the strawberries came in very late this year but they are finally picking up steam. Please keep an eye out in the newsletter for at least one strawberry u-pick in July!

Veggie Notes, by Jason Johnson

Always rinse produce before use. Everything should be refrigerated.

Summer is my favorite season to snack. It seems like everything is easier to cook when it's warm outside. From fresh salads to barbeque, there is something about the variety and availability of this time of year that gets me really excited. It feels like all winter, dinner was an arduous task requiring ovens and recipes. But right now, all you really need are condiments.

When it comes to condiments, hummus is king. The texture and flavor, not to mention the health benefits, makes well-made hummus second to none. The problem is trying to find great hummus outside of your favorite Mediterranean spot. To buy hummus at a grocery store is to navigate a minefield of additives and preservatives, just to place a half-hearted bet on the prettiest package. Making hummus at home is a more sensible option, but all who have done so know that it is just as likely to come out a garlicky, chunky glob. The trick to good hummus at home is to treat it like a sauce and start with a rue. In your food processor, start with a ¼ cup of tahini, the juice of one lemon, and a clove of garlic. Blend that until it is completely smooth. Keep in mind that it is usually the garlic and tahini that cause chunky hummus. When that is ready, slowly add in one cup of drained and dried garbanzo beans and a handful chopped **green beans**, along with a couple tablespoons of olive oil. Add a bit, blend, add some more. Then salt and pepper to taste. The result should be nice and airy and green. Place in a bowl and top with some parsley or cilantro, then serve next to raw **carrots** and **choi**. The great thing about eating the **choi** raw is that they are fun to pull apart and each leaf has a different flavor. The smaller leaves can actually be quite spicy.

Speaking of healthy afternoon snacks, sometimes the best thing for you is a little vodka. One of my favorite summer cocktails calls for 4 or 5 **strawberries** and a slice of **fennel**. Muddle them in the bottom of a rocks glass (or just smash them up with a wooden spoon in the bottom of a mason jar) and add an ounce of lime juice, an ounce of bitters, a teaspoon of brown sugar, and two ounces of vodka. Add ice and garnish with a **fennel** sprig. Happy snacking!

Enjoy your veggies!

A Practical Guide to This Week's Box

Fennel is in the carrot family and has a nice, subtle licorice flavor. Its aromatic qualities make it great in soups, braises, and salads. It is a great source of potassium, vitamin C, and dietary fiber. It also provides vitamin A, calcium, iron,

In The Box

Carrots

Strawberries

Little Gem Lettuce

Salanova Lettuce

Mei Quin Choi

Fennel

Green Beans*

Broccoli di Ciccio*

All produce is certified organic. Green beans and broccoli are from Coke Farm. All other vegetables and fruit were grown by High Ground Organics. Note: last minute substitutions may be made.

magnesium, and protein. Rinse the bulb well before chopping and using. Save the tops to use like parsley.

One **strawberry** contains vitamin C, potassium, dietary fiber, and protein, though not substantial amounts. The reason strawberries are so good for you are the antioxidants. They contain high amounts of the flavonoid anthocyanins and weigh in at 4 calories.

The **carrots** in the box this week are still what we call “winter carrots”, having a sweet and approachable flavor profile. Wash them the same as radishes, with cold water. Carrots are a great source of vitamin A and beta-carotene. They also contain potassium, calcium, vitamins C and B-6, and almost a full gram of protein. They are a bit more substantial than some other roots, containing 25 calories per serving.

Broccoli is one of the healthiest veggies out there. It is surprisingly high in protein and each serving has two days’ worth of vitamin C. It is also high in fiber, potassium, vitamins A and B-6, calcium, iron, and magnesium. All for a measly 50 calories.

Mei Quin Choi is very low in calories and very high in vitamins A and C. It is also a good source of vitamin B-6, calcium, iron, magnesium, and potassium. To thoroughly wash, cut in half from root to tip, then rinse each half in cold water, paying special attention to base of the veggie.

The **lettuce** this week will have a light, slightly bitter flavor profile that pairs well with sweeter dressings. Wash it by completely submerging it in water. It is an excellent source of vitamin A and high in fiber, potassium, and vitamin C. It weighs in at 15 calories per serving.

Fresh **green beans** have a fibrous strand along one side. To remove it, grasp the tip of the pod firmly with your forefinger and thumb, then snap it towards the seam. Pull downward to remove the strand. Green Beans are high in fiber and protein, as well as vitamin C.

Caramelized Strawberries with Vanilla and Cinnamon, from Chef Andrew E Cohen

2 cups strawberries, hulled and halved lengthwise	1 TBS vanilla sugar -OR- 1 tablespoon sugar and 1 tsp. vanilla extract
1 tsp. powdered cinnamon	Butter as needed

Place the berries into a non-reactive bowl. If using the vanilla sugar, just sprinkle it over the berries and toss to coat evenly. If using vanilla and sugar, sprinkle the berries with the vanilla and toss to coat. Then add the sugar and toss to coat.

Place the berries cut-side up, and lightly dust with cinnamon.

Place a 10-inch non-stick pan over medium-high heat and get hot. Lightly butter the pan, using just enough to film the pan.

Place the berries cut-side down in the hot butter. Cook until the surface is caramelized.

Turn the berries and cook just enough to caramelize the tops a bit.

Serve hot.

Chef’s Notes and Tips: Try these at breakfast on their own or on waffles and pancakes. They are good for dessert with ice cream, with or without whipped cream. They are also nice with a creamy vanilla yogurt.

Serves: 2-4

Garlic Green Beans, from Chrissi Brewer

This is quick and yummy. Kids even love it!

1 TBS butter	3 TBS olive oil
1 medium head garlic – peeled and sliced	1 lb. beans left long
salt and pepper to taste	¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese

In a large skillet over medium heat, melt butter with olive oil; add garlic, and cook until lightly browned, stirring frequently. Stir in green beans, and season with salt and pepper. Cook until beans are tender, about 10 minutes. Remove from heat, and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.

Carrot Fennel Soup, from Chef Andrew E Cohen

This is a pureed soup, so it is smooth and “creamy” feeling, although there is no cream.

1 bunch carrots, such as Chantenay, topped, scrubbed, and sliced ¼-inch	1 medium fennel bulb, thick stalks reserved, fronds saved for oil or pesto (See recipe on site), bulb and stalks sliced thinly
2 leeks, white and pale green only, sliced thinly, washed, and drained	1 small garlic clove, finely minced
Salt and white pepper to taste (you can use black pepper if you wish)	1 TBS Herbes de Provence or 1 scant tsp. Mexican cinnamon (your choice)
Neutral flavored oil as needed	6 cups vegetable stock* or water, or as needed
½ cup fennel pesto or ¼ cup- or to taste- fennel oil	¼ cup crème fraiche or labne if you wish

Heat a 4 quart pot over medium heat. When hot, add oil to film well and heat oil. Add the leeks and stir into the oil. Cook, stirring frequently to prevent coloring, until leeks are “clear”.

Add the fennel and carrots and toss to coat evenly with oil and distribute the leeks. If needed, add a little more oil. Lower heat to medium low, and when pan is cooler, put a lid on and cook until the vegetables are tender and just beginning to color. Stir occasionally to ensure the vegetables do not scorch, or even brown. A little golden color on the carrots is okay, but avoid browning anything.

Once vegetables are tender and their flavors are more pronounced, around 15-25 minutes, make a well in the center of the vegetables and wait for oil to accumulate there. If none shows up, add a small amount and heat it up. Add the garlic and the cinnamon or Herbes de Provence. Carefully cook so the garlic doesn’t color at all. When softened, season with salt and pepper and add 4 cups of stock or water. Bring to a simmer.

Purée the soup at this point, adding stock as needed to take the soup to the desired texture. The soup should have a creamy texture, and should coat a spoon bottom lightly. (Remember to start on low with a 2/3rds full blender with hot liquid to prevent it from blowing out under the lid and hurting you.) If the soup is too thick, add liquid and heat through. Taste for seasoning and adjust as needed.

When ready to serve, put soup in warmed bowls, and drizzle with fennel oil or place a dollop of fennel pesto in the center. Add a bit of crème fraiche or labne if you wish, and serve hot.