



# High Ground Organics Community Supported Agriculture

Week 15, June 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017

## Old Coastal Dairies, by Stephen Pedersen

In the Ag History Museum at the County Fairgrounds here in Watsonville there is a picture of our home ranch back in its heyday as a grade-A milk dairy, probably from sometime in the 1940's. The picture was taken at some distance, and visible in it are the house we currently live in, the old milk cooler that we now use for an employee break room, and the loose-hay barn that had mostly fallen down by the time we moved in. An occasional visitor from the Midwest will recognize our packing shed for what it truly is, or was, a six-stall herringbone milking parlor. When we bought the property in 2000, it hadn't functioned as a dairy for nearly 15 years and by all indications had been in decline for some time before that.

At the time the picture was taken ours was only one of dozens of dairies in operation here close to the coast along the Monterey Bay. And a better location for a dairy would be hard to find. Abundant wintertime rainfall and good soils meant lush grass for the cows to graze on, and the strong maritime influence meant the cows stayed cool and comfortable throughout the year. But people liked it here too, and as they flocked toward the coast the price of land inevitable rose. Even when measure "J"—a controlled growth initiative that effectively preserved Ag land—was passed in 1978, the conversion to higher value crops was well underway and so was the exodus of the dairies. Only a few commercial dairies remain here in the Monterey Bay. Most have moved into the Central Valley where the summer temperatures are so hot that they have to use misters and fans to keep the cows from being overly stressed. Mostly these are confinement dairies where the cows aren't allowed onto pasture but lead their entire lives on piles of their own manure. They produce heavy environmental impacts.

Occasionally, on warm Sunday afternoons, we ride our bikes to the beach from here—almost entirely on dirt farm roads. Alongside one of these, appropriately named "Dairy Road", is an abandoned farmstead that at one time must have been one of the premiere locations in the Pajaro Valley. The old house sits on the top of a ridge and would have commanded a supreme view of the Watsonville Slough and the Pajaro River below were it not for the invasive eucalyptuses that have now grown up around it. The windows have all been broken out and it is partially covered in vines, but it isn't too hard to

imagine things as they must have once been, with a grassy field studded with cows where the strawberries now stretch in endless rows.

## Veggie Notes, by Jason Johnson

Always rinse produce before use. Everything should be refrigerated.

This week I made a very nice, short season addition to my refrigerator. It is none other than the California mission fig.

Farms from the Central Valley have started to bring them to market and I have been pairing them with all the wonderful things that Steve grows. The subtle sweetness really offsets the heartiness of the roots and slight bitterness of the greens this time of year. Here are some things I'll be cooking this week.

First off, a salad pairing our delicious beets, berries and oregano with the dark juiciness of the fig. Just scrub and quarter your beets, then throw them in the oven at 400 degrees with some salt and oil. Not too much of either. These should roast for about 40-50 minutes or until they are tender. In the meantime, add a handful of whatever berries you get to a saucepan with ½ or ¾ cup of balsamic vinegar (depending on how big your handful is). Cover that and bring it to boil, then smash the berries with a fork and stir in a spoonful of honey. Bring down to a simmer and let the concoction reduce by about 1/3. Remove from the heat, strain into a jar, and place in the fridge to cool. Next quarter the figs and roast them in a dry pan for about ten minutes. You don't want to overcook them. When all is roasted and cooled, combine the figs and beets with some goat cheese and oregano on a serving dish. Drizzle with the berry balsamic glaze to taste.

Next, a dinner showcasing how seasonal veggies can transform a cut of meat. Just sauté kale or chard with mushrooms and oregano while roasting carrots whole (450 degrees for 10-15 minutes) with salt, pepper, and oil to taste. In a separate pan or on the grill, cook the biggest, most beautiful pork chop you can find, seasoning with salt and pepper only. All the while, use the balsamic recipe from above, but skip the honey and add a couple chopped figs in addition to, or instead, of the berries. This time, though, don't worry so much about straining. Fish any big chunks out, but leave it nice and thick. Plate by placing the pork on top of a bed of sautéed greens and mushrooms and topping with the reduction sauce. Serve carrots on the side. Have a great week!

Enjoy your veggies!

## In The Box

Strawberries

Broccoli OR Savoy Cabbage

Chantenay Carrots

Chioggia OR Gold Beets

Oak Leaf Lettuce

Rainbow Chard OR Scotch  
Kale

Summer Squash OR  
Blueberries

Shiitake Mushrooms\*

*All produce is certified organic.  
Mushrooms are from Far West Fungi.  
All other vegetables and fruit were  
grown by High Ground Organics.  
Note: last minute substitutions may be  
made.*

## Whole Roasted Chantenay Carrots, from Chef

Andrew E Cohen

1 bunch of Chantenay carrots, or as many as you want, stems removed, and washed well. Do not peel!	Olive oil, enough to coat the carrots well
6-8 large sprigs of fresh thyme, or enough to go under all the carrots	Salt and pepper to taste

Heat oven to 375°F. Place a rack into a roasting pan, and lay the thyme on the rack. Oil the carrots so they are coated all over. Salt and pepper them, and transfer them to the rack. Place the rack in the center of the oven and roast the carrots for 50 minutes. At this point, the carrots should be a nice golden color, with the skin looking like wrinkled parchment. A sharp knife should slip into the carrot at the widest point easily, telling you the carrots are done. Serve now or save for later.

Serves: 4

## Salad of Oak Leaf Lettuce, Carrot Ribbons, Gold Beets, with Creamy Blueberry Vinaigrette,

from Chef Andrew E Cohen

I really like salads with oak leaf lettuces. I love the shape of the leaves and enjoy the flavor/texture combination. This salad has lots of color to it, and the beets, carrots, and creamy blueberry dressing all have earthy notes as well as bright top notes to contrast and complement each other. Although I usually dress the lettuces in my salads in a bowl before serving, I like the colors of the lettuces, so drizzle the dressing over the leaves once they are on the plate for this salad. If you prefer more dressing, just put the leaves into a bowl with some dressing and toss to coat, then plate the lettuces and top with the rest of the ingredients.

1 head oak leaf lettuce, leaves separated and cleaned	2-3 carrots, cleaned
1½-2 cups roasted golden beets, diced*	1 cup "Creamy" Blueberry Vinaigrette*
Coarse salt and fresh ground black pepper to taste	-Optional- a handful of blueberries

Make sure the lettuce is clean, then store in the refrigerator until ready to use. Use a swivel peeler, or other sharp and easily controllable peeler, and use it to pare away thick-ish strips the length of the carrot. When you have done this, discard the left-over bits, and put the carrot strips into ice water. Allow to sit there for 30 minutes at least in a cold place until ready to assemble the salads. When it is time to make the salads, drain the carrots and blot dry.

In a bowl, place the beets with a little dressing and toss the beets to coat them lightly. Place the lettuce on 4 chilled plates, being sure to mix the lettuces on each plate, and having the tips of the lettuce radiate out towards the plate rim. Place a quarter of the dressed beets in the center of each plate in the middle of the lettuce. Toss the carrot strips in some of the dressing and place strips of carrot around the beets. If using blueberries, scatter some over each salad. Drizzle a little dressing over the whole salad, and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Serve right away.

*Chef's Notes:* You can add more things to gussy this salad up. Try scattering pumpkin seeds over the salad, or adding some micro-sprouts to the center on the beets. A little blue cheese crumbled over (use a sweet one that is a little creamy rather than a more pungent crumbly one.) or quenelles of mascarpone works well also.

Serves: 4

## Blueberry Vinegar, from Chef Andrew E Cohen

1½ cups really ripe blueberries	2 cups white balsamic, rice, or white wine vinegar
2 tablespoons sugar, or agave syrup	

Place the berries in the pan. Lightly crush them with a potato masher. Add the vinegar and the sugar and bring to a boil. Lower heat to a vigorous simmer and cook 3 minutes. Allow to cool a few minutes and transfer to a clean bottle or jar with a non-reactive lid. Let stand at least 4 hours, or when cool, put in the refrigerator and store overnight. Strain the vinegar from the berries through a cheesecloth lined stainless-steel strainer into a clean bottle. Store somewhere dark and cool.

Yield: Should make around 2 cups of vinegar.

## "Creamy" Blueberry Vinaigrette, from Chef

Andrew E Cohen

Although this recipe says "creamy", it's not very. There is just enough to give it that texture, and whipping it keeps the dressing light. This dressing is good on salads, in a slaw, and could be used to top chicken or a pork chop.

3 TBS blueberry vinegar	½ TBS shallot, minced
½ tsp. fresh thyme, minced	A pinch of salt and
A good sized pinch of black pepper	5 TBS grapeseed oil or other neutral flavored oil
1/3rd cup heavy cream	

In a non-reactive bowl, put the vinegar, shallot, thyme, salt and pepper together and allow to macerate 10 minutes. While the aforementioned is going on, put the heavy cream into a large non-reactive bowl and whip the cream until it is starting to thicken and just beginning to turn from cream to "whipped cream". When running the whisk around the bottom of the bowl, there should be a trail that shows the bowl bottom. Set aside and keep cool.

After ten minutes, whisk in the oil, slowly drizzling it in a steady stream and whisking all the while. When all the oil is in, begin adding the whipping cream. Add the cream until the dressing is a creamy yet pourable consistency. Taste the dressing to see if you need to add anything, and to be sure the balance between the vinegar and oil/cream is right. Adjust as necessary, whisking in anything you add. Store in the refrigerator until ready to use. Keeps a day or three.

*Chef's Notes:* Although a little different in texture and flavor, this variant is easier to make and more stable: Skip the cream, and use mayonnaise. Adding a tablespoon at a time until you get the texture you want. You could add mint to the dressing to great effect by adding some to the vinegar and allowing the flavors to marry an hour or so, and then straining the vinegar. You could also just do a fine chiffonade of 5-6 leaves and add them to the dressing at the end.

Yield: Around 1½ cups, enough for 4 salads at least