



High Ground Organics Community Supported Agriculture

Week 17, July 5th and 6th, 2017

The Cycle of Life, by Stephen Pedersen

At our Lewis Road property we have a very small pond that retains water throughout the entire year. Like many Ag wells in our area, ours pumps up sand, mainly when we first start it up. Rather than having to shut the pump down, clean out the filters and restart it every time we irrigate, we simply installed a valve with a short branching line where we could flush out the sandy water for a few minutes at the start of each irrigation set without having to shut the system down—hence the pond.

It really isn't much to look at but it manages to capture my attention nearly every time I pass by it. It captures the attention of many wild creatures as well. Water bugs scoot across the surface, masses of polliwogs swirl around the perimeter and the blackbirds seem to regard it as part of their territory. The shore on one side is lined with water-loving sedges.

It always amazes me that, miles from the nearest large body of water, this very specific ecosystem could find its way to our humble little pond. The only thing we added was some mosquito fish to keep it from becoming a breeding ground—everything else made it there on its own. How this happens became clearer to me yesterday when I opened the gate and started to pull up the drive. I noticed a half dozen or so bean-sized, baby tree frogs hopping across the road. The polliwogs, which had seemingly doubled in size every time I saw them, had metamorphosed, and this was the day that they were to strike out on their own. As I bent down to move the baby frogs out of the way, I got to thinking about the likelihood that any individual frog would survive the multitude of perils they face and make the massive journey to the nearest body of water—no doubt very small indeed. But then again, at least two did manage to find our little pond, and when you start out with thousands, the odds are in your favor.

In other procreative news, the barn swallows in our workshop I mentioned in an earlier article successfully fledged five fine offspring. They took four or five days to become competent flyers before heading off on their own. The mother is now sitting on a second clutch of eggs in the same nest. And yesterday our daughter Amelia saw a fledgling bald eagle from the nest across the slough for the first time.

Veggie Notes, by Jason Johnson

Always rinse produce before use. Everything should be refrigerated.

Strawberry U-Pick This Saturday!

Next Three Saturdays: July 8, 15 & 22 from 10am to 2pm

The strawberry plants are now full of fruit. This is your chance to load up on berries for your jam, smoothie, and freezer filling needs!

Bring your own containers or use our flats. Berries cost \$2 per pound.

Notes: This year there is a bit of a walk from the parking area to the field, so wear comfortable closed toe shoes. Long pants are also recommended. Farm carts will be available for toting flats of berries.

Location: 521 Harkins Slough Rd., Watsonville

In The Box

Strawberries

Green Oak Leaf Lettuce

Carrots

Cauliflower

Basil

Rainbow Chard

Mixed Summer Squash

Red OR Pink Radishes

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

Holiday weekends are a gentle reminder that my diet is an exercise in futility. As dinner excuses go, the birth of any nation or deity far surpasses my normal threshold for self-restraint. The ten days or so after a long weekend are usually marked by mild self-loathing, google searches, and grandiose statements on the benefits of good cleanse.

The general guiding thought on using food to rid your body of toxins is to reinstate healthy cardiovascular and digestive function. That means paying special attention to your intake of micronutrients and fiber. Some people opt for very strict, short-term diets aimed at resetting everything from enzyme levels to cell counts. The internet abounds with this sort of thing, but I tend to opt for something a bit more sustainable. To my mind, it is better to make healthy choices a trend that you revisit every meal. For example, leaf **lettuces** are high in Vitamin K, which is great for cardiovascular health. Clinical trials have shown that people who consume high amounts of the vitamin have a considerably lower chance of heart disease. It's what they call in the scientific community, good for you. Also good for you is **cauliflower**.

Cauliflower is common in detox diets because it has powerful anti-inflammatory properties. Inflammation is a healthy immune response that gets out of hand as we consume things that our body views as poison. **Cauliflower** helps restore lymphatic inflammation to normal levels. Especially helpful after a holiday that involves an annual \$1 billion spike in national beer sales. As we have discussed before, **strawberries**, **carrots**, and **radishes** are all high in, among other things, anthocyanins. Anthocyanins reduce the breakdown of collagen and help repair blood vessels. I will be pairing all of these ingredients, along with the probiotic power

of yogurt and vinegar, to kick off a new chapter of mindful eating this summer.

First, add about 4 chopped and smashed **strawberries** to small pot and cover with vinegar. Apple cider or balsamic work just fine. Simmer and reduce the vinegar for about 5 minutes, then remove from heat and strain into a mason jar. When cool, add a few tablespoons of oil, a spoonful of yogurt (or more), salt, pepper, and as much chopped **basil** as you deem worthy. Add jar top and shake. Alternately, whisk ingredients in ceramic bowl. Add the dressing to a salad of **lettuce**, shaved **carrots**, and chopped **radish**.

Enjoy your veggies!

Roasted Cauliflower Slabs with Pesto, from Chef Andrew E Cohen

Pesto is a wonderful complement to roasted cauliflower. Whatever nuts you use in the pesto would be the nuts to use to garnish this dish.

1 large or 2 smaller heads cauliflower, trimmed and cut into ¼ inch slabs (some florets will fall apart, that is fine, and the core should be left intact to hold the slices together)	¼ cup nuts, chopped, if not pine nuts (Use whatever nuts you use in you Pesto recipe)
Salt and pepper to taste	Olive oil as needed
1-2 TBS Balsamic vinegar reduction – Optional (See recipe on website)	1 cup Pesto (see recipe at right)
1 carrot, cut into thin shreds using the finest comb on a Ben Riner fixed blade slicer, put into ice water	

Heat the oven to 450°F. Cover a large sheet pan with foil and coat it with a good slick of oil. Coat the cauliflower slabs with a thorough coating of oil. If you have a sprayer for oil, this would be a good time to use it. Ensure the slabs are well coated. Season the cauliflower slabs with salt and pepper.

Place slabs on the sheet pan so they are flat and have space between them so they roast rather than steam, which will yield pale mushy results.

Place in the lower third of the oven and roast 10 minutes. Check that the cauliflower is turning golden and getting crisp, but not burning. The cauliflower should be getting tender as well. Either turn the slabs with a thin bladed spatula and return to the same location, or move the tray to the top shelf and continue cooking until both sides are browned. If moving the tray to the top shelf, you can turn up the heat to 450-475°F. Cook until slabs are browned, even blistering, and tender. Just avoid burning or cooking until the slabs are soft. Tender. Yes. Soft? No.

While cauliflower is roasting, drain the carrot shreds and roll in a paper towel and dry thoroughly. Toss with enough pesto to coat. Keep cool and reserve.

Once the cauliflower is done, remove to plates or platter. Spoon a generous line of pesto down center of the slabs and the top with little piles of the pesto coated carrot shreds. Scatter with the nuts. Dot the plate and slabs with drops of Balsamic vinegar reduction. Serve right away.

Chef's Notes: If you wish, omit the carrot shreds and balsamic vinegar reduction; the dish will still be fine. For variations, you could add toasted bread-crumbs. To make this more substantial and gussy it up, add cooked beans such as cannellini or chickpeas when you plate up. Serves: 4

Pesto, from Chef Andrew E Cohen

I like pesto for a lot more than just pasta. I mix it into farro or other whole grains, or toss vegetables with it. I also love it as a smear on sandwiches.

1 large pinch of coarse salt	40 mediumish basil leaves (make sure they are dry)
1-2 cloves garlic, peeled, split, and de-germed*	3 TBS roasted almonds (or pine nuts, or a combination)
2-3 TBS freshly grated Pecorino Romano (or Parmigiano-Reggiano)	2-4 TBS extra virgin olive oil
Fresh ground pepper to taste	

In a large mortar, add the salt and five of the basil leaves. Grind them firmly but gently with a circular motion against the sides and bottom of the mortar until they start to break down. Keep adding a few leaves at a time until they are all in, but not thoroughly destroyed.

Add the garlic, and mash down on it directly with the pestle to crush it. Then proceed with the grinding.

When the garlic is pulverized and the juices have been amalgamated into the basil, add the nuts a few at a time and crush them up before adding the next few.

When they are all in, grind to a uniform consistency.

Sprinkle in the cheese and mix everything together well.

Begin adding the olive oil in a steady stream and mixing with the pestle to achieve a creamy consistency. Add enough oil so the pesto moves a bit like a sauce, rather than being a stiff paste. The color should be bright and the ingredients well amalgamated.

Season to taste with a little pepper and salt if needed.

Store in a jar in the refrigerator with a layer of oil covering the surface of the pesto to prevent oxidization.

Food Processor Version:

For the food processor, you want to keep in mind that things heat up in there. You can cook the basil, turn nuts to nut butter, and you can melt cheese.

Fit the processor with the blade. Crush the garlic with the flat of the knife and toss into the processor. Process finely.

Add the nuts and pulse to just break up. Add the basil, and pulse to shred.

Add 2 TBS olive oil, then puree briefly (30 seconds).

Check the contents of the bowl to see if the pesto is fine enough. If not, puree just long enough to achieve the correct consistency. Add more oil if necessary to keep things moving.

When the nuts and basil have reached the right consistency, add the cheese, another tablespoon of oil and pulse to combine all the ingredients. Check for consistency and add more oil if needed. Stirring in the oil with a spatula is the way to go here.

Season with salt and pepper as needed and store in the refrigerator as in the mortar and pestle version.

Chef's Tips and Notes: If using the processor for heat sensitive herbs, I chill the bowl and blade in the freezer and chill the olive oil as well.

*The germ is the little green shoot that forms in the center of the garlic clove. This can cause indigestion in many people, from mild to extreme, especially once it has begun to grow. It can also add bitterness to the dish. It is only a matter of moments to remove it, so be sure to do so. Jars of commercial minced garlic are usually processed with the germ in, so I avoid them like the plague. Next time someone complains of heartburn from pizza, you'll know why.