



High Ground Organics

Community Supported Agriculture

Week 21, August 3rd and 4th, 2016

Old 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 sometime 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 Sarah Brewer

Always rinse produce before use. Everything should be refrigerated except tomatoes if you get them.

There are some things in this world that you look at and wonder what the creator was thinking. For example, in the case of the durian fruit, one might think that "God" (or your version thereof) was in a pretty bad mood and wanted to play a cruel joke on the world with such a spiky and foul-smelling creation. **Romanesco**, on the other hand, was obviously created on an especially good day. Visually, it is nothing less than perfect! Fractal spires twist in exact self-symmetry. The flavor is rich and nutty. If you don't get Romanesco, you'll get **cauliflower**. As far as taste and preparation go, they are pretty interchangeable.

Beets, they are here to make your world colorful, even your trips to the bathroom. You can do a "beet test" to make sure you have healthy digestion. All you have to do is note when you eat your beets and see how long it takes to reach the colorful outcome in your potty. Less than 12 hours says you may not be properly digesting your food. Slow down, chew your food carefully, and lay off the caffeine. More than 24 hours may indicate that you are constipated. Add more fiber to your diet and take care to drink enough water. Normal digestion rate is between 12-24 hours.

Fennel was just added to the list this morning for you! Way to add a subtle anise-charged infusion to your dishes to give it that little something special.

One of the favorite ways to prepare **summer squash** around our household is to make it into pretend pasta. Now, keep in mind, it's kind of like **cauliflower** pizza crust. You are not fooling anyone into thinking the healthy alternative is the real thing, so don't try to trick your kids/spouse with an all-out lie. Instead, pitch your idea with the

novelty factor. (e.g. I bet you didn't know I could make a pizza crust out of cauliflower/pasta out of zucchini!) At any rate, it is all about getting Italian-seasoned flavors down your throat, so if your sauce is good enough, they will eat it. If you don't get summer squash, you should get **cucumbers**.

Speaking of **tomato** sauce, it really isn't that hard to make your own. We will be offering **bulk tomatoes in the web store** starting week. In the past few years, I have been experimenting with canning tomatoes, making big batches of marinara, stewed tomatoes, tomato paste, ketchup, etc. It always makes me proud to pull out a jar of something I had canned myself!

Kale will come in either Lacinato form ("dinosaur kale") or the really ruffled Scotch kale variety.

Your lettuce will be the super-smooth **Green butter lettuce**. Enjoy your veggies!

Strawberries
Romanesco OR
Cauliflower
Red Beets
Fennel
Summer Squash OR
Cucumbers
Tomatoes
Lacinato OR Scotch Kale
Green Butter Lettuce

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

Chef's Notes, by Andrew Cohen

It is hard to believe it is August already, but my vegetables tell me it is true. Many of the recipes I came up with this week feature kale-note the Orange **Beets**, **Kale Salad** with Creamy orange dressing and the Eggs Baked with **Kale**, Olives, and **Tomatoes**.

Other ideas for this week would be a sauté of **kale** with onions tossed with orange **beets**-a variant of the salad- but you could add cooked grains if you wish. More **kale**? A stew of braised **kale** and garbanzo beans with middle-eastern/Indian spices such as coriander seed, cumin, turmeric, with tomato and maybe summer squash dice. Be sure to use a nice vegetable stock instead of just water for more flavor, and add either plain runny yogurt or some labne for contrast.

Another possibility is **Summer Squash** "Caviar", where the squash is cut into 1/8th inch thin strands, and then cross-cut into 1/8th inch squares that get salted lightly, rinsed and dried and dressed with lemon juice and olive oil for a slightly briny tasting vegetable caviar-like dish that could be dusted with sieved egg yolk and white (do them separately), or super finely minced shallot. Serve on very crisp crackers like Rye-Vita, and maybe put a couple slices of avocado along the edges to hold in the "caviar", or smash it and use in lieu of the butter that often shows up under caviar. Scatter this on raw oysters, grilled fish, very thin pork cutlets, or soft scrambled eggs.

Have these crisps alongside a salad of **butter leaf lettuce** with **cucumber** quickles and quickled **cauliflower**, and make a vinaigrette or creamy dressing using the quickle juice for the vinegar in the dressing. You could also add some of the orange **beets** to a salad like this and lob on a scoop of cottage cheese for more protein. For dessert, cook down some quality balsamic vinegar with black pepper until syrup, and pour over ¼-inch thick sliced **strawberries**. Serve with Gorgonzola Dolce (a young, sweet, and spreadable Gorgonzola) or Mascarpone drizzled with a little honey to offset the vinegar reduction.

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

Salad of Kale, Orange Beets, and Creamy Orange Dressing v.2, from Chef Andrew E Cohen

Another kale salad, and I think it's a good one. The process of crumpling the kale does something that makes the kale sweeter, and the beets match the earthiness of the kale. The cucumbers add a nice hit of cool moisture that goes well with the dry salt flavor of the pistachios.

1 bunch Scotch or Lacinato kale, stemmed and leaves torn into bite-sized bits	1 bunch of Orange Beets (see recipe at right)
1 cucumber, cut lengthwise, seeded, cut into 3/16th inch thick slices	¼ cup trimmed scallion whites thinly sliced, or red onion, thinly sliced and placed in ice-water for 15 minutes and dried thoroughly
1/3rd cup lightly salted pistachio nuts, shelled	1 cup Creamy Orange Dressing v.2 (See recipe on website)

Put the kale into a large bowl and squeeze handfuls until it darkens a little and you can feel it losing a little of its tough structure. Splash in enough dressing to coat the kale, then toss to mix dressing in. Add half the beets, season with a little salt and pepper and toss to combine. Divide evenly amongst 4 plates.

Put the rest of the beets into the bowl and mix into the dressing. If needed, add more dressing to lightly coat the beets. Add in the cucumbers, toss to mix in, and distribute evenly between the plates.

Scatter with onions, then pistachios. Serve.

Serves: 4

Orange Beets (Orange Seasoned Roasted Beets), from Chef Andrew E Cohen

A variation on roasted beets, this iteration sees the beets cut into bâtonnet instead of wedges, and a combination of orange juice, orange flower water, and vinegar is used instead of straight vinegar. Be careful with the orange flower (a.k.a. orange blossom water) as it is quite strong, and leaves a bitter taste when too much is used.

1 bunch beets, stems trimmed to 1-inch, scrubbed well, especially amongst the base of the stems	¼ cup orange juice
¼ cup white wine or white balsamic vinegar	A very few drops (not more than 1/8th tsp) of orange flower water
3-4 fresh thyme sprigs	Oil as needed
Salt and pepper to taste	

Heat oven to 400°F. Rub beets with oil and put into a piece of foil big enough to enclose them. Scatter with salt and pepper and place the thyme sprigs in the packet. Add a couple tablespoons of water, and seal the packet. Place packet into a heat proof dish and put into the oven. Bake for 1 hour, or until the beets are tender. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool enough so you can handle them without burning yourself.

While waiting for the beets to cool, whisk together the juice, and vinegar. Whisk in a drop or two of the orange blossom water, then taste. Do this until the juice/vinegar mixture has a subtle aroma of the orange blossom water, and maybe a little taste of it, then stop.

When the beets are cool enough, slip the skins off, using a paring knife on any stubborn bits. When peeled, cut off the tops and bottoms so the beets are even. Using a very sharp, thin bladed knife, Trim the perimeter of the beet into a rough square if seen from straight down. Cut the beet into ¼ x ¼ inch "sticks", using the longest part of the trimmed beets as the length of the "sticks".

When cut, toss the beets into the orange juice/vinegar mixture and marinate for at least a half-hour, but not more than 3, or there is a chance the orange juice could start breaking down the beets. Be sure to turn the beets periodically so they all spend time in the marinade. If using right away, drain and use. If storing, drain almost all the marinade and add a little vinegar back in. Store tightly covered in the refrigerator.

Yield: Enough for 4 salads