



High Ground Organics Community Supported Agriculture

Week 26, September 7th and 8th, 2016

Preparing to Plant Strawberries, by Stephen Pedersen

It's the time of year when strawberry growers throughout the valley start preparing their fields for next year's strawberry crop and we are no exception. Conventional growers start to plant in early October—those who grow organically usually keep their plants in the cooler to give them more vigor and therefore don't normally start planting until the later part of November. That may seem like a long way off, but a lot goes into getting the field ready.

For ease of picking and for better drainage, strawberries are planted on beds that are extra tall (up to 15" high), and that requires deep and thorough tillage. Because strawberries are a crop that is in the ground for nearly a full calendar year, we pay extra attention to the soil amendments we add to insure the plants' nutrient needs are met. Gypsum supplies both calcium and sulfur and can help to loosen our heavy clay soils. Compost adds a dose of beneficial microbes and organic matter which also helps to improve soil structure. We incorporate these amendments near the end of the tillage cycle and then set out the irrigation pipe. Strawberry beds hold their shape better when they are listed up in moist soil, so we pre-irrigate a week to 10 days prior to listing.

Listing itself is the one farm task that we contract with another company for. With their larger tractors and GPS guidance they can make taller, straighter beds than we can. (The tall beds make it easier for our crew to pick the berries as they don't have to bend down as far.) After the beds are in place we go about installing the irrigation system. We use a tractor implement that buries two lines of drip tape 1-2" deep on each bed top. These drip lines are connected to a long 3" flexible line that we shallowly bury along the front edge of the field.

After the irrigation is set up we go about putting the plastic mulch in place. This also is done with a specialized tractor implement that stretches the mulch tightly over the bed while burying the edges in the furrow bottoms. The last step is to mark holes in the mulch for the crew to plant into when the time comes. A dibble, an implement with large steel wheels that have spikes mounted at 12-inch intervals, is used for this. The mulch keeps the berries off the bare dirt-- the fruit is very susceptible to fungal diseases and mold if it's in contact with the moist soil. The mulch also reduces evaporation from the soil and therefore increases water efficiency. The exciting news this season is that we will once again be using all

organically grown planting stock. James Rickert, who used to grow the organic plants that we so loved with Prather Ranch, has formed a new company—Innovative Organic Nursery—and has launched back into growing organic plants. We are one of the farms who committed to buying these plants up front and have been making payments since the spring to ensure that he has the market for the organic starts.

Veggie Notes, by Jeanne Byrne

Always rinse produce before use. Everything should be refrigerated except **tomatoes, pears** and **apples**. You may refrigerate these if you want them to last longer.

Strawberries have made a comeback and are back on the webstore again! They can be enjoyed in so many ways--sliced over breakfast cereal or pancakes, the basis for **strawberry** shortcake, strawberry rhubarb pie, or homemade strawberry ice cream or smoothies.

Hardy Beurre is a variety of **pear** developed in northern France in the 1820s. The interesting thing about **pears** is that you do not want to wait until they ripen on the tree to pick them. Most pear varieties need a few weeks in the cooler after picking, and then will finish ripening when brought to room temperature for a few days.

The big question is how to know when it's ripe. **Pears** ripen from the inside out, so if you wait until the pear feels soft on the outside it will be grainy and mushy inside. To test for ripeness hold the pear in one hand and press the top of the pear next to the stem gently with your thumb. When it gives just a little the **pear** is ripe.

If you don't get the pears this week, you will get **Jonagold apples** from our orchard. These are delicious eating apples and are very good for pies.

Beets can be boiled, steamed, or roasted whole (just cut off the stems about an inch above the root and give the beet root a quick scrub). They are done when easily pierced with a sharp knife. Once they are cooked, you can peel them easily by holding the hot beet under cold running water

and simply rubbing the skin off with your hands. Then you can chop them and dress them (we just use a vinaigrette salad dressing) or let them cool and add them to your salad. Don't forget to cook up the beet greens and eat them too!

Crunchy **little gem lettuces** go perfectly with **beets**. Wash the lettuce thoroughly in a bowl of water until there is no more grit on the bottom of the bowl and spin dry. Chop a **Hungarian hot wax pepper** into small slivers and add to the salad. The heat won't be that noticeable and they add a nice zing of flavor. If you get **cucumbers**, they can go in the salad with the **little gems**, or could be diced with **tomatoes** in a simple tomato salad.

**Hardy Buerre Pears
OR Jonagold Apples**

Strawberries

Tomatoes

**Savoy OR Red
Cabbage**

**Padron Peppers
AND Hungarian Hot
Wax Peppers OR
Cucumbers**

Red Beets

Little Gem Lettuce

Cilantro

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

Job Available!

Our new hire left us for another job, so we are once again searching for a new **CSA Administrator**.

This is a part time job, which can be done partly from home. We are looking for someone who is very well organized, enjoys dealing with people, loves organic vegetables, and has good office/computer skills. Job duties include managing our CSA delivery database, communicating with members and hosts, and helping with the newsletter. E-mail jeanne@highgroundorganics.com or call (831)786-0286.

Tomatoes, cilantro, and peppers calls out for a homemade salsa or pico de Gallo. The **Hungarian Hot Wax Peppers** are spicy so chop them into small pieces and add to taste. The **Padrons** (these are smaller and darker green) could also be used in a salsa. But our favorite thing to do with **Padrons** is to cook them over high heat or on the grill until they are blistered all around, sprinkle with coarse salt and pop them whole into your mouth. Have a glass of water handy for the occasional hot one.

A head of **cabbage** is always a welcome addition to the refrigerator. It fills out the weekly stir fry, or can simply be shredded and cooked with some onions and bacon for a hearty side dish. It can be used raw as a crunchy slaw with whatever sort of dressing you like. Consider adding **apples** to your **cabbage** slaw if you get them.

Enjoy your veggies!

Chef's Notes, by Andrew Cohen

Sometimes I want to do recipes that all feature one ingredient, especially if the ingredient is in short supply or is ephemeral. The **pears** this year are a bit of both. Besides the two recipes served up here, a salad with **pears** didn't get typed up, but it should have been. **Little Gem lettuce** shreds, slices of **pear**, slices of brie (not too ripe so it can be cut), arugula sprouts, and pistachios. A white balsamic vinaigrette or one made with pomegranate molasses would be a good way to go. You could also go with grilled brie and **pear** sandwiches or pear brie and arugula pizza.

The deconstructed Pico de Gallo with **tomato** dice can be used for so many things; a coctel with shrimp and avocado tossed with the pico de gallo, used on grilled or roasted fish. Use for beef skewers or pork shreds as well. The **Savoy cabbage** would be a nice slaw with the pico along with some oregano leaves on soft tacos. The **padrons**, as always, have the ability to surprise you with a spicy one, while the **Hungarian Hots** are pretty much a sure bet for a stinging. The **strawberries** have been quite nice the last couple weeks, and just about anything you do with them will be a winner. Try a mélange of **pear** and **strawberries** for a breakfast treat with a little yogurt and granola.

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

Sauté of Savoy Cabbage with Pears and White Wine, from Chef Andrew E Cohen

8 cups level Savoy cabbage, cut into 1/4 x 1 1/2 pieces (1 x 1 inch works as well)	2 cups pear (the pear needs to be one of those that is firm-ish when ripe, not a really
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	soft type), cut into 3/8th inch dice, a little lemon juice drizzled on to prevent browning
1 medium yellow or white onion, cut into 1/4 inch dice	1/2 tsp. fresh thyme leaves, chopped
1 small pinch cinnamon-not more than 1/8th tsp.-optional	1 garlic clove, peeled and left whole
1/4 + 1/4 cup, or as needed, gewürztraminer or Riesling, on the dry side	Salt and pepper to taste
2 TBS unsalted butter	Neutral flavored oil, as needed
Optional- 6 slices thin-cut bacon, cooked until golden and crisp, kept as flat as possible, then patted free of oil with paper towels, then cut cross-ways into 1/4 inch long pieces	

Heat a large chef's pan or deep fry pan/sauteuse (4 quart/12-inch) with top over medium heat. While the pan heats, drizzle the pears with a little oil and gently toss to coat all over. If you choose to use, sprinkle the cinnamon over the pears and toss gently to mix the cinnamon into the pears.

When the pan is hot, lightly film the pan with oil, then add 1 tablespoon of butter, and as soon as it stops foaming, add the pear dice and toss to coat with butter. Cook, gently tossing occasionally, until the pear is golden all over and fragrant. Season lightly with salt and pepper and then remove to a bowl.

Film the pan liberally with oil and heat it until it shivers, then add the garlic clove. Tip the pan towards the handle and allow the garlic to flavor the oil, moving it around to prevent burning it. Once it is golden all over, remove and discard the garlic. Add the onions, half the thyme, and 2 tablespoons of pear, and toss to evenly coat with oil. Cook gently until softened and fragrant, but do not allow anything to burn or get dark, reducing the heat if needed. Season with salt and pepper.

Add the cabbage to the pan, season with salt and pepper and add the rest of the thyme. Drizzle with a small amount of oil, and use tongs to turn the mess in the pan to combine everything. (If there is more cabbage than will fit at once, add as much as will fit, cook until the pile has reduced a little and add more until it all fits in.)

Cook a few minutes until the mess starts to shrink. Drizzle the 1/4 cup of the wine over the cabbage and turn the vegetables in the wine, then cover the pan with a lid. Cook, shaking the pan every 30 seconds. Check the pan after 2 minutes. The cabbage should be wilting and the wine evaporated. Add the second 1/4 cup of wine, stir, and replace the lid. Cook until cabbage has wilted and is no longer raw. It should be tender without being really soft or smelly. If there is still liquid in the pan bottom, turn up the heat and cook, stirring frequently until it is mostly gone. When there is only around 1 tablespoon of liquid left, make a well in the center of everything, add the last tablespoon butter and allow to melt into the liquid. Turn the cabbage into the butter, coating all the vegetables. If using, scatter the bacon over the vegetables, toss to combine, and serve hot.

Chef's Notes: To make this a one-pot dinner, steam or blanch small potatoes and carrots until tender and add when cooking the onion. Add pre-cooked sausages such as chicken apple, bratwurst, or the like just after turning the cabbage the first time and proceed as above.

Serves: 4