



High Ground Organics

Community Supported Agriculture

November 9th and 10th 2011

Cover Crops, Erosion, and Ground Squirrel Holes

from Jeanne

Even though the fall brings a slowdown in farm operations, it's actually a busy time for us as we prepare the ground for the winter rains. The weather has been cooperating so far this fall, with no huge rainstorms to cause erosion before we were ready for them. We have seeded the cover crops on most of the areas of the farm that we needed to. Some we watered up with sprinklers to make sure they were up and firmly rooted before the first rains. Others were watered in nicely by the first gentle rains we had in October and should be in good shape for the next rainstorms to come in later this week.

A cover crop, for those of you who may be new to this concept, is a crop that a farmer plants to prevent erosion and add organic matter and nutrients to the soil. A cover crop is mowed down and incorporated once it has grown tall, and the farmer waits a couple weeks for the plant matter to break down before planting a food crop there. We use different cover crops for different areas of the farm. At our sandy, hilly, Lewis Road ranch, we got in at the end of September with a cereal rye that comes up quickly, outcompetes weeds, and ties up residual nitrogen. The tractor roadways we seeded with barley and spread straw on top for extra erosion control. Barley comes up well in compacted areas, and it's cheap so we can apply it thickly. We don't use barley in our planting fields though because it heads out early and can become a weed problem itself. On other fields we use a fairly common mix of bell beans, vetch, peas, and oats. The legumes "fix" nitrogen – they actually have a symbiotic relationship with bacteria which form nodules on the roots from nitrogen the plant takes in from the air. The oats provide a scaffolding for the vetch to climb up, as well as adding high carbon organic matter to balance out the nitrogen that the legumes provide.

We have an extra erosion control challenge this year on the property that borders our home farm in the back (along the far side of our blueberry patch, for those of you who've been out here). This neighboring farmland has had terrible erosion problems for years, due to the steep hillside, insufficient cover cropping, and run-off from the neighboring farm road that channels right down the hill. The Santa Cruz Land Trust acquired the 300+ acres adjoining us and is leasing it mostly to the larger scale organic farms that were already operating there. On this part of the property, they have decided to take the steeper part of that hillside out of production to deal with these erosion issues and protect the slough from farm run-off. We will be helping to manage the lower area and will farm the

less steep top couple acres adjoining the blueberry field. Steve seeded the top area with the legume and oat mix and the rest of the hillside thickly with rye. He also extended the existing roadside channel to carry the road run-off past the steep portion of the hill to a more gently sloped area where, we hoped, it would disperse harmlessly. Nature outsmarted us this time though. In last week's rain, the water followed the intended path about halfway, then found a huge ground squirrel hole, slipped under the channel and started to form a rivulet. Fortunately it was not a heavy rain this time. We've filled in the hole and will have to keep an eye out for ground squirrel holes in the future!

Notes from Chef Andrew

With the advent of colder weather, and all my food magazines showing pictures of Thanksgiving tables, my mind is shifting to autumnal foods-thicker dressings on my salads, creamy sauces, and more glazed vegetables. Along that line, I think the **fennel** would be nice braised and glazed. For this, halve the fennel through the widest part and core it. Then slice down closely from the top, but leave it attached at the base. Then use the heel of the hand to fan the half bulbs and place them in an oven proof pan. Put a little water in the pan with some butter and sugar and bring to a boil. Paint the top with some of the liquid, then cover and put in a slow oven until tender. Remove the top, baste the bulbs, and cook until caramelized. Serve these with pork chops or roast chicken and some mashed potatoes. I could see the **fennel** going into a soup, and adding a potato for a

thickener. Puree the lot and garnish with some of the fronds and some toasted fennel seed powder for garnish. If I get a **Kabocha squash**, I will roast it after rubbing it with ginger, mirin, and soy sauce, and then I will serve it with the original Mermaids Hair (Japanese Inflected **Collards**). I might mix the **collards** with rice and stuff the squash, or just serve it all separately along with some cod misoyaki, which would be a best hits dinner all around for this family. For the **Marina di Chioggia** I would go traditional and make up some gnocchi with it and serve it with either brown butter with sage or rosemary. This would be a good meal to have the **Little Gems or Romaine** with, perhaps shredding the carrots and slicing in some fennel. The sturdiness of these **lettuces**, along with the little bite they have make them great during the months we eat richer foods, and I like them dressed with Balsamic vinegar and olive oil, or a balsamic vinaigrette. The **Little Gems** would go well under slices of tomato topped with Balsamic Marinated Mushrooms. I could also see roasting then stuffing the **Marina di Chioggia** squash with a mixture of farro, a fine

This Week

Romaine or Little Gem lettuce

Green Kabocha or Marina Di
Chioggia winter squash

Mokum Carrots

Collard Greens

Green and Yellow filet beans

Fennel

Mystery*

Flowers: Mixed Bouquet

dice of carrots, fennel, and onions, and some strips of **collards** tossed in as well. I'd finish those off with bread crumbs and a little cheese and serve a salad alongside. For a slightly richer side dish in the Thanksgiving vein I'd do creamed **filet beans** with hazelnuts. Sort of like a cross between green beans with brown butter and almonds and Green Bean Casserole, with no cans of soup or fried onions involved. It is also a lot lighter feeling than the casserole and uses a lot less salt, but you still get that richness as the dish does use some cream.

“Pumpkin” Gnocchi, from Chef Andrew E Cohen

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| 1 medium Marina di Chioggia squash (around 1½ pounds), split and cleaned | 2-3 cups all-purpose flour, or as needed |
| 1 tsp. salt | ¼ tsp. fresh ground nutmeg |
| ½ stick butter, melted, or olive oil as needed | |

Heat oven to 400°F. While oven heats, split the squash and scoop it clean. Oil the inside and cut surfaces and place on a foiled baking sheet, and place in the center of the oven. Cook until the squash is tender-it should yield easily when pierced at its thickest part. This should take around 30 minutes. As soon as you can handle the squash without hurting yourself, scoop the flesh from the skin and either pass through a sieve or food mill, or puree in a blender or processor. You will need around 1½ cups of squash. In a large bowl, put in the squash, then season with the salt and the nutmeg. Stir well to mix thoroughly. Sprinkle 1 cup of flour over the squash and mix in until just blended. Scrape the squash onto a floured surface. Knead a little, adding in just enough flour to form a soft dough that will hold together. The dough may be a little sticky, which is fine. Remember, the less you manhandle the dough, the lighter the results will be. Once the dough will hold shape, set aside covered with a clean towel, and scrape the surface clean.

Divide the dough ball into 6 part or 8 parts. Remove one from the pile, recover the rest, and proceed to roll the dough into a rope around ¾ of an inch thick on a lightly floured surface. Do this with the rest of the dough. Cut the ropes into ¾ inch long pieces and roll about on the floured surface so they are lightly dusted. When they are all cut, hold a fork in one hand, tines pointed down, and roll the gnocchi over the tines. You can either just score the one surface, or you can push hard enough with a finger tip to dimple the side opposite the tines. The second method leaves a place that will hold even more sauce. As the gnocchi are formed, put them on a sheet pan with parchment paper that has been dusted with flour. Keep them from touching if possible so they do not stick to one another.

Once the gnocchi are made, you can cook them right away, keep them refrigerated until you are ready to cook them, or put them into the freezer for later usage. Freeze on the sheet pans until firm, and then bag them up. Do not thaw before cooking. To cook the gnocchi, bring a large volume of water to a boil, and salt liberally. Have a large bowl or platter handy and coat with oil or melted butter. Bring the water to a gentle boil and drop in a few gnocchi at a time. Do not add so many that the water temperature drops below the gentle boil. Cook until the gnocchi float to the surface and give them another 30 seconds or so. Use a skimmer or slotted spoon to remove the gnocchi from the water and drain before adding to the bowl with the oil/butter. Toss gently to coat with the fat. Continue until all the gnocchi you need are cooked. You can just toss with some grated Parmesan cheese and eat as is if you like. -OR-

Sign Up Options for 2012

The 2012 season will run from March 14/15 to November 14/15. Pick-up sites and delivery days should remain about the same. We will let you know about any changes as they come up. Here are the options for 2012:

Full Year Early Sign Up with 5% discount if you send your check by *January 2, 2012*:
 \$752 vegetables/fruit only
 \$1026 for vegetables/fruit + flowers.

Full Year Regular Sign Up with discount (one free week) if you send your check from *January 3 to March 13, 2012*:
 \$770 vegetables/fruits only
 \$1050 vegetables/fruits + flowers

9-Week Quarterly Payment Sign Up:
 \$198 for the first quarter (9 weeks) of vegetables/fruits
 \$270 for the first quarter (9 weeks) of veg/fruits + flowers

Send your checks to High Ground Organics at the address below. Please note your preferred pick-up site on your check. We will hold the checks for the 2012 regular session and deposit after January 1, 2012.

Winter Session

There is still room in the winter session, which runs every other week from November 30/December 1 to February 22/23.

Winter session costs \$160 (vegetables only). Please include the winter pick-up site you wish to use (see list below)

You can combine winter payment with your payment for the 2012 season, or send 2 checks if you want us to hold your 2012 season payment until January.

Winter Pick-Up sites:

Wednesday Deliveries: Blossom Hill Belwood Lane; Los Altos - Loyola Corners; Mountain View/Sunnyvale Pear Ave; Rosegarden Shasta Ave; Willow Glen Avalon; Los Gatos Downtown Bachman Park; Mountain View Harpster; Palo Alto Cornell; Portola Valley; Saratoga Quito Rd; Stanford West; Sunnyvale Vireo Ave.

Thursday Deliveries: Aptos Ledyard Way; Capitola 49th Ave; Happy Valley School; Santa Cruz Downtown; Santa Cruz High St; Santa Cruz Ocean View; Scotts Valley; Carmel Taylor Road; Monterey MIIS; Monterey Unitarian Church; Pacific Grove; Salinas; Watsonville West Marine; Linscott School

Heat a large skillet over medium-high. When hot, add some olive oil and butter. When the butter stops foaming, add a small handful of sage leaves and cook the sage on both sides so they are golden. Remove from the butter and save on a paper towel. They will crisp up. Tip the boiled gnocchi into the skillet and toss to coat with the sage butter. Cook without stirring until the bottoms of the gnocchi are browning and get a little crisp. Toss to turn them and brown a little more. Scatter with the sage leaves, season with salt and pepper and serve. Pass cheese separately. You can grate Amaretti cookies over the gnocchi if you wish.

Everything in your box and the flowers are certified organic. Some mystery is from Ron Borba this week. All else was grown by High Ground Organics. Flowers are from the Thomas Farm.