



# High Ground Organics Community Supported Agriculture

March 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>, 2011

## All Wet, by Steve Pedersen

Still reeling from the effects of last weekend's drenching, and with three more major storms lined up across the Pacific due to arrive starting tonight, it certainly doesn't feel like the first week of spring. If you follow weather patterns around here closely you know there is no "normal" when it comes to the rainy season. Even so, this has been a particularly strange year. If someone had told me that we would be at 120 percent of normal rainfall for this time of year, after receiving no rainfall for the entire month of January and part of February, I probably wouldn't have believed them. It's as if someone cut the seasonal calendar into pie shaped wedges and mistakenly reassembled it with a mid-summer piece in the depths of winter. And as enjoyable as that warm, dry break was, it appears that the rain we normally would have received then has simply been pushed back into spring.

When people ask me what effect these storms have on our farm, it's difficult to give a simple answer. In the big picture, receiving this much rainfall is a good thing—lakes and reservoirs are topped off, local aquifers are recharged and rivers rise, allowing fish to spawn. And at the farm level, rain at the right time and in the right quantity can also be a good thing. It can save us the expense of having to irrigate, it can "sweeten" the soil by flushing out certain harmful salts, and if temperatures are warm, plants respond to rainwater better than any well-water.

The problems with rainfall usually relate to timing and quantity. At this time of the year, when our cover crops have matured and our greenhouse is full of transplants, we are waiting for the soil to dry out enough for us to get in with our tractors to prepare more ground for planting. In this regard, serious storms at this time of year can be a big set-back—especially on the poorly-drained, clay soils at our home farm. We were fortunate to have our new Lewis Road farm with its sandy soils to do our first plantings on, but here the problem has been the low temperatures associated with the cold-fronts, which means that things grow very slowly.

And then there are the strawberries. This year we held over two acres of berries from last year. One of the good things about second year berries is that they come into production much earlier than first year plants. This can be great when the weather is good, but when it rains, the ripe fruit swells and cracks and becomes infected with botrytus (grey mold). One of our painful tasks for the past week has been sending a crew through the field to pick off all the ripe fruit and dispose of it away from the field to keep the botrytus from spreading to the plants and unripe berries. We would much have preferred

## Spring Open Farm Tour POSTPONED to Saturday April 2, 1:00-4:00

Due to the wet forecast for the rest of this week and weekend, we are changing the date for our Lewis Road farm tour to Saturday, April 2nd.

sending that fruit to you in your CSA boxes if the weather had cooperated.

The good news is that, according to the National Weather Service, the storm track will once again veer off to the north, and that next week should be dry here. The strawberry plants still have lots of flowers and immature green fruit, and given a couple of weeks of dry weather, you should start to see berries in your boxes soon.

## This Week

**Braising Mix**

**Arugula**

**Radishes**

**Baby Artichokes OR  
Baby Fennel**

**Leeks**

**Green Leaf Lettuce**

**Purple Top Turnips**

**Flowers: Tulips**

## Veggie Notes/Storage Tips

Store all items in the fridge. The *braising mix* is a double-washed mix of baby Red Russian kale, mizuna mustard, and tatsoi. (Easiest prep: just saute briefly with garlic.) *Purple top turnips*, unlike white Tokyo turnips, need to be peeled before cooking. *Leek* washing tip: trim off the dark green leaves and cut leeks in half lengthwise, keeping the root part intact on each half. Then fan the sections under running water to remove any hidden dirt. If you're new to leeks, it is perfectly acceptable to simply use them just like onions.

## What Chrissi Would Do with This Week's Box

I LOVE *turnips*, but it wasn't always so. My mom used to attempt to get me to eat them by passing them off as mashed potatoes, but I knew at a very unripe age, that those just weren't potatoes! I have since discovered the unique taste of turnips and appreciate them for the own merits. My favorite way to cook is to sprinkle with a little olive oil, salt and pepper and stick them in the oven at 425 for 45 min. The trick to roasting root crops is to have the pieces cut in about the same size. That way they roast evenly. Don't forget a shake to the pan every once in a while. I also love *baby artichokes*. My husband, Stephen, growing up in Salinas Valley, taught me to cut the thorny tips and stems off, put a little Italian dressing (my idea) in a pan of water, bring to a boil, throw the chokes in and cook for about 20 to 30 minutes, until tender. Then forget eating them leaf by leaf, cut into quarters and eat the whole thing. And lastly but not leastly, those lovely, luscious *leeks*...If you have a little green garlic left from last week, cook up some spaghetti noodles. Sauté in a little olive oil, the whites of the leeks (be sure and wash carefully and save the greens for a stock later) some of the green garlic and throw in some of that arugula. If you have any green olives around, a few sliced olives would be tasty. Sauté about 2 minutes and toss with the noodles, a little salt and pepper...voila!

## Notes and Recipes from Chef Andrew Cohen

Oh, boy! *Arugula*! One of my favorite leafy things. The flavor of arugula captivated me from the first bite. I love the nutty, slightly peppery flavor it has, and it goes in so many things. On pizza with slivers of red onion, prosciutto, and mozzarella. In sandwiches- it elevates tuna salad, and it makes a great salad with orange supremes. I toss it with a light balsamic dressing and mushrooms to top breaded pork chops where the peppery-ness contrasts with the richness of the meat. One of my favorite things to do with arugula is to make a “pesto” to use on pasta, top entrees, or smear in sandwiches.

*Radishes*-everyone knows them raw, but I like to cook them. When I serve them raw, I soak them in ice water a while to get them nice and cold and crisp. When I get my *lettuce*, I wash it and then spin it. Once dry, I line a plastic box with paper towels and put the lettuce in, where it stays fresh and ready for instant usage all week long (sometimes longer!). Caramelized or roasted *turnips* are a favorite vegetable in my house, and since it is cold I can see adding some sweetness to them in the form of apple or orange juice. If I have any apples around, I might add some apple wedges to a sauté of turnip wedges.

*Leeks* are fundamental added to soups and braises, but are good on their own steamed until tender and then either served chilled or hot with a Dijon mustard vinaigrette. If they are larger, cook them and then use a sharp knife to slice them into rounds before dressing. This is great weather for potato leek soup, and if you have any green garlic in the refrigerator this is a winning combination. If the Mystery of the week brings *fennel*, I’ll use the fennel and the leeks to make a “jam”, or for a well-flavored soup. I like fennel sautéed with onions and carrots, and I use it shaved raw into salads. I will snap the leaves from the *artichokes* until I get to the palest leaves, then cut them into small wedges, remove the tips and chokes, and put them in lemon water to prevent browning. Sauté a leek or two until soft, then add the drained artichokes and cook to brown them a little. Add stock, water, wine, or any combo of these just to come to the top of the vegetables and cook until tender. Reduce the pan liquid until syrupy and serve this as a side or toss in pasta. Or, I might just be lazy and steam them until done and have them dipped in olive oil with a little salt.

### Basic Roasted Roots, from Chef Andrew Cohen

2-3 lb of root vegetables- Parsnips, Turnips, Rutabagas, Celeriac, Carrots, etc. (enough to fill the pan bottom in a single layer without crowding. Toss the whole vegetables into the pan to get an idea)	Olive oil-enough to coat the vegetables when cut up
2-3 TBS fresh herbs-rosemary, thyme, sage, savory...your choice, -OR- 1 tablespoon dried	Salt and fresh ground pepper
Optional-Garlic cloves	

Pre-heat oven to 400°F. If you wish, rub the bottom of an ovenproof dish with a peeled clove of garlic. Rub well to coat the pan with garlic oil. If you look carefully you can see the oil coating the dish. This will impart garlic flavor without leaving bits of garlic to burn and taste bitter. Peel and cut

Everything in your box and the flowers are certified organic. Everything is grown by High Ground Organics unless otherwise noted. This week the leeks, lettuce and turnips are from Lakeside Organics. Flowers are grown by the Thomas Farm.

enough vegetables to a uniform size to fill the dish without crowding. Some vegetables cook faster than others. If mixing types, know that parsnips and turnips and celeriac cook faster than potatoes, so cut them a little bigger. Parsnips are high in sugar so watch them for burning, and cook higher in the oven away from the heating element to prevent scorching. In a large bowl, toss the vegetables with enough oil to coat them. Put into the prepared cooking dish, then sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste. Scatter herbs over the dish. If you wish, scatter unpeeled cloves of garlic around as well. These will cook to a paste inside the jackets and you can squeeze the contents of the cloves onto bread or use in other preparations.

Cover the dish tightly with aluminum foil or a tight fitting lid and place in the center or upper part of the oven. Roast for 30 minutes. After 30 minutes, remove the foil and check that the vegetables are tender enough to be easily pierced with the tip of a knife. If not, re-cover and cook 10 minutes more. When the vegetables are tender, return to the oven and cook for 15 minutes to brown and crisp the roots. Shake the dish occasionally to turn the roots. When they are evenly cooked, they are ready to serve. Though the recipe seems long, once you have done it is incredibly simple.

### Arugula Pesto, from Chef Andrew Cohen

1 bunch Arugula	½ bunch of flat leaf parsley
1 large or 2 medium cloves of garlic, germ removed	1 TBS lemon juice
Salt and Pepper to taste	¼ cup roasted almonds
1/3 – ½ cup flavorful extra virgin olive oil	

Using a sharp knife cut the parsley leaves from the stems, turning the bundle to cut all the way around. Bunch up the parsley and lay the arugula over it and then begin to cut the leaves as finely as you can. Cut down to the stems of the arugula then stop. Discard the stems. Begin mincing the leaves as finely as you can. Stop if you notice the leaves becoming very dark starting. When the leaves are done, transfer to a non-reactive bowl and drizzle with the lemon juice. Toss to evenly coat. Split the garlic clove(s) from base to tip and remove the germ (the little sprout that forms and turns green). The germ tastes bitter and can cause stomach upset. Mince the garlic as finely as you can and add to the leaves. Add fresh ground pepper and a big pinch of salt. Stir ingredients to evenly distribute seasonings. Add ¼ cup of oil and stir to mix.

Mince the almonds as finely as you can and stir into the bowl. Begin stirring oil into the bowl until a “pesto” consistency is reached. The mixture should be wet without being soupy or liquid. A little loose oil around the edges is just right. Taste for seasoning and adjust if necessary. Salt or lemon is the first elements to look to. Use immediately or refrigerate right away. When keeping in the refrigerator, leave a thin layer of oil to cover the surface of the “pesto” to prevent oxidization.

### Want more Recipes?

We put many more recipes in the e-mail newsletter than can fit here. If you’re not on our e-newsletter list, please sign on at our website—[highgroundorganics.com](http://highgroundorganics.com).

If you think you signed up for the e-newsletter, but have not been receiving it, please check your spam filter and add [csa@highgroundorganics.com](mailto:csa@highgroundorganics.com) to your trusted e-mails list.