



High Ground Organics Community Supported Agriculture

April 27th and 28th, 2011

Apples on Fire, by Jeanne Byrne

The big story down here in Watsonville last week was a 4-alarm fire at the Apple Growers Ice and Cold Storage Co. warehouse in Watsonville that completely destroyed the building and most of its contents. It started at 3:30 on Wednesday and burned for almost 2 full days. Once they deemed that no one was inside the building, firefighters stayed safely outside and worked mainly to contain the blaze as it burned itself out.

Concern about ammonia tanks on site led the fire department to send out reverse 911 calls to residents within 3 miles with instructions to shelter inside. (The official word is that no ammonia leaks were in fact detected from the fire. That thick black smoke couldn't have been good though.) We got one of those calls Wednesday night, though fortunately for us the smoke was blowing in the opposite direction. In fact, we got very little smoke here the entire two days. But that didn't stop the children from wanting to bring our 10 chickens inside for the night. We nixed that idea, but not without major grumbling and charged philosophical discussions—"Why do you care about people more than chickens?" I did promise to bring them in if we thought they were in immediate danger, though where we would have put them I'm glad I didn't have to figure out.

The small out-building that we currently use as an employee break room and which served as the original milk cooler from the days when our farm was a dairy, was built around the same time (late twenties) as the Apple Growers facility. When we removed the cooler—which was essentially a room within a room-- we found redwood framed walls tightly packed with shredded redwood bark to serve as insulation. It was this shredded redwood within the partitioning walls of the Apple Growers shed that caused the fire to smolder on for so long. The facility contained 6,000 bins of apples and millions of dollars worth of Martinelli's bottled juice. The organic debris that was washed into Watsonville Sough behind the warehouse from the fire hoses also apparently caused a die-off of hundreds of catfish, carp and sunfish from the slough. In addition to the immediate tragedy of these losses, it's a blow to Watsonville to lose this historic building that has been a part of the local economy for over 80 years.

Veggie Notes and Storage Tips

Everything should go into the fridge when you get home. Strawberries are picked ripe so eat them right away (the first day or two). Fava beans are a real spring treat. If you've never seen a fava bean before, you may want to take the easiest route. Just shell them and sauté them in olive oil with some

garlic and salt. Most recipes will call for skinning as well as shelling them, which involves blanching the shelled beans in boiling water for a few minutes and then slipping the skin from each bean with thumb and forefinger. I have to admit I'm generally too lazy to do this. I eat the smaller skins and all, and the tougher skins on the larger ones can be removed by the eater. Those who don't get fava beans this week will get them next week.

Notes/Recipes from Chef Andrew Cohen

With this weather, I think I will do a soup or stew with the kale. Cook it up with plenty of onions and lots of garlic, and add some carrots. Add plenty of stock to make it soupy, and then add some cooked farro. To make it a one pot meal, I might start the whole process by cooking up some Italian sausage to be added back in at the end.

I like spinach slowly sautéed with nothing more than a lot of garlic and some oil. I also like it cooked down with butter and a generous scattering of hazelnuts and sautéed mushrooms. This is nice with brown or basmati rice as a foil to its earthiness, and I like it under fish like this. Lately, though, I have been hankering for some of the things I made at my sushi bar, and spinach will fit the bill for that. The classic Ohitashi (seasoned spinach bundles) and the less common marinated root crown salad.

For cilantro, I think I will go south with it. I will make up a batch of Baja marinade and grill something, making enough beans and rice to go with it for burritos or tacos the next day. Half the cilantro goes to the marinade, the rest for garnishing things. You can also stuff a bunch of cilantro into a bottle with rice vinegar, a peeled, split and de-germed clove of garlic, and a slit chili pepper and infuse the vinegar for a week for a flavorful vinegar you can use to liven things up.

I have been playing with grilling romaine lettuces quartered lengthwise and rubbed with oil. I hit them with a good balsamic vinegar when they come off the grill and they really are good. I think I will give the Little Gems a turn on the grill in this manner, and then maybe I'll try hitting them with the miso vinaigrette. The little gems might be nice with sliced strawberries and a balsamic-black pepper vinaigrette. For this dressing, I would dry toast the peppercorns so they lose some of the heat and pick up a little fruitiness. Then again, I might just do what I have been doing all along and just savor them plain.

This Week

Strawberries

Little Gem Lettuce

Cilantro

Kale

Spinach

Green Garlic

Fava Beans (Wed)*

Mystery (Thurs)

Flowers: Mixed Bouquet

Everything in your box and the flowers are certified organic. Everything is grown by High Ground Organics unless otherwise noted. This week some of the fava beans are from Coke Farm. Flowers are grown by the Thomas Farm.

Easy Ohitashi (Japanese Spinach Bundles, easy version),
from Chef Andrew E Cohen

Ohitashi are a classic of Japanese cuisine. Typically, the spinach is marinated in a broth based on “dashi”, which is made of dried smoked bonito flakes and seaweed. This is a simpler version using water. To make this even easier, simply remove the stems entirely, then microwave the spinach to wilt it. This keeps in the refrigerator for a couple days.

1 bunch of spinach, root crowns snipped off and used for another dish, stems trimmed even	2 TBS toasted sesame seeds
Seasoning	2 cups water or light vegetable stock
4 TBS mirin	4 TBS soy sauce

Place the seasoning ingredients together in a jar or bowl and mix well. Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil. Keeping the spinach in a bundle, wash in plenty of cold water until clean.

Use a piece of kitchen string to tie the spinach in a bundle around the stems. Hold the spinach by the leaves and submerge just the stems into the boiling water, cooking for 2 minutes or until just tender. At this point, submerge the rest of the bundle and cook just until the leaves wilts. Drain and rinse in cold water. Remove from the water in a bundle and drain, squeezing gently to remove as much water as possible. Pour the seasoning over the spinach and marinate 30 minutes. Remove from the seasoning and transfer the bundle to a bamboo sushi-rolling mat. Cut stems from the leaves and set aside. Roll the leaves to form a 1 to 2 inch log. Slice the log into 1½ inch lengths. Do the same with the stems. To serve, dip one end of the bundles into the sesame seeds and stand on the other end in a bowl. Pour some of the seasoning into the bowl and serve chilled or room temperature.

Chef’s Tips: If you want to keep this really simple and quick, just trim the crowns from the stems and blanch the spinach as instructed above. Instead of rolling the spinach, just cool it and drain it, and then cut the whole bundle into 1 inch lengths. Pour the seasoning over the spinach and marinate 30 minutes. To serve, just pinch some of the spinach up and drain off the liquid and transfer to a bowl. Garnish with sesame seeds and serve. The high-speed version is to cut off the stems, wash the spinach and cook it in the microwave until wilted. Rinse to cool, wrap it in a towel and squeeze out excess moisture, then season. Serve as above.

Roasted Garlic-Fava Bean Sauce, from Chrissi Brewer

8 cup home-made chicken stock	2 green garlic stems chopped and sautéed
2 TBS butter	1 TBS freshly-squeezed lemon juice
Salt to taste	Freshly-ground black pepper to taste
½ to 1 cup cooked fava beans	

Place stock and sautéed garlic in a medium saucepan and reduce to 3 cups. Strain into a clean saucepan and bring to a simmer. Whisk in the butter and lemon juice and season with salt and pepper to taste. Add the fava beans (from 1/2 to 1 cup, depending on desired consistency) and cook for 1 minute. Serve with roasted chicken or other meat, or over rice or polenta.

Shrimp and Fava Beans with Thyme, adapted from Elizabeth Schneider's Uncommon Fruits and Vegetables

1 Tbs. olive oil	1 Tbs. butter
About 2 ounces firm, salty ham such as prosciutto, cut into tiny dice (about 1/3 cup)	1 stock green garlic, chopped
1 pound shrimp, shelled	1 lb fresh, shelled fava beans
1 tsp. minced fresh thyme	Salt and pepper, to taste

Heat oil and butter in skillet over moderate heat. Add ham and garlic and toss for a minute. Add shrimp, favas and thyme, and toss just until shrimp become pink. Sprinkle with pepper and salt. Cover pan and cook on lowest heat possible for 1 to 2 minutes, or until shrimp are just cooked through and juices exude slightly. Serve immediately.

Strawberries with Pastry Cream and Black Pepper, from Chrissi Brewer

½ cup sugar	2 TBS. cornstarch
1/4 tsp. salt	2 cups light cream
½ a vanilla bean, split lengthwise, or 1/2 teaspoon vanilla	4 beaten egg yolks
1-1/2 cups chopped fresh strawberries	1 to 3 TBS sugar
½ tsp. ground black pepper	10 Cream Puff Shells* or if time is of the essence use Puff Pastry shells and bake according to the directions

In a 1-1/2- or 2-quart heavy saucepan stir together sugar, cornstarch, and salt. Gradually stir in cream. Add vanilla bean, if using. Cook and stir over medium heat until thickened and bubbly. Cook and stir for 1 minute more. Gradually stir the hot mixture into the beaten egg yolks. Return the egg yolk mixture to the saucepan. Bring to a gentle boil. Reduce heat. Cook and stir for 2 minutes. Remove from heat. Remove and discard vanilla bean or stir in liquid vanilla, if using. Strain through a sieve. Cover surface with plastic wrap. Cool slightly or refrigerate until serving time. (Do not stir after mixture sets or it may separate and thin.) One hour before serving, in a small bowl stir together strawberries, sugar, and pepper. To serve, spoon about 3 tablespoons pastry cream into each puff; spoon in strawberry mixture. Makes about 2 cups pastry cream and 1-1/2 cups strawberries.

*Cream Puff Shells: Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Lightly grease a baking sheet or line with parchment paper; set aside. In a medium saucepan combine 1 cup water, 1/2 cup butter, 1/4 teaspoon sugar, and a pinch of salt. Bring to boiling water. Add 1 cup all-purpose flour all at once, stirring quickly with a wooden spoon. Cook and stir until mixture forms a ball. Remove from heat. Cool for 10 minutes. Add 4 eggs, 1 at a time, beating well after each addition. Drop dough using a heaping tablespoonfuls 3 inches apart onto baking sheet. Bake for 35 to 40 minutes or until a deep golden color and puffs are firm. Transfer puffs to a wire rack; cool completely.

Cut puffs in half; if necessary, remove soft dough from inside. Spoon in filling. Replace tops. Sift powdered sugar over tops. Makes 10 cream puffs. (Serves 4)