



High Ground Organics Community Supported Agriculture

June 22nd and 23rd, 2011

Field Notes, from Steve

"Be careful not to disturb the nest between the blueberry rows--there are 9 duck eggs in there." I told my berry-picking crew. "No, once," Gabriel said. "There are eleven." The clutch of eggs that a mother mallard had laid in the middle of an aisle between rows of blueberry plants has finally hatched. Although we didn't see it, the mother undoubtedly led her ducklings in single file down to the slough, a few hundred yards away. This was a relief, because, as careful as we were not to disturb her, there is only so much we can do when we have to pick the berries on either side.

We started harvesting new potatoes this week. The first new potatoes are something I look forward to nearly as much as the first strawberries of the year. Their sweet, creamy and dense flavor and texture are far superior to potatoes that have been in storage for any length of time. Among the general public, there seems to some confusion about what exactly a "new" potato is. Often, people equate them simply with small potatoes, and occasionally farmers or stores will market them this way, adding to the confusion. Others think that it's a particular variety of potato, like a woman at a south bay farmers market who asked with a British accent if mine were true English new potatoes. A "new" potato can in fact be of any variety, the name simply implies that the tubers were dug while the plant they came from was still very much alive, and that the potato skins have yet to "set". Most determinate potato varieties (those that essentially set most of their tubers at the same time, and then die, similar to what a determinate tomato variety does) aren't harvested until the plants have completely died back and the potato skins have become tough enough to withstand machine harvest without getting scuffed up. Indeterminate varieties, including most russets, will continue to produce over an extended period, and are often killed back with chemical herbicides to induce the potato skins to set in time for harvest.

The main reason that you rarely see new potatoes for sale at markets is that they are very perishable. Once the outer skin is scuffed up, as inevitably happens no matter how careful we are when harvesting and washing them, they will quickly turn brown and dry out when exposed to air. So if you get potatoes this week as part of the mystery, you should keep them in the bag they came in, and store them in the refrigerator. If you don't receive potatoes this week, you will soon. We planted 2 plus acres here at our home site, and another acre at the Redman House site, and although that may not sound like

much to somebody from the mid-west, it is the most that we have ever planted. And it is the nicest crop that we have planted as well. Despite the cool spring that we have had, the plants of all six varieties (Sangre, Romanze, Carola, Bintje, Red Gold, and Desiree) have grown lush and tall, and are now mostly in full bloom. That means lots of delicious potatoes to come.

Veggie Notes

If you get basil, it is best used in the first day or two. There are many different opinions about the best way to store basil. One good way is to store it out of the fridge in a glass of water (like a basil bouquet). Some people recommend covering this

with a plastic bag secured to the glass. You can freeze it whole by blanching in boiling water for 2 seconds, then plunging in ice water, patting dry and freezing in airtight bags. If you like to make pesto out of your basil, you can freeze the pesto in ice cube trays (remove to an airtight bag once frozen so they don't pick up odors from the freezer. It is very convenient to be able to pop a couple cubes of pesto into whatever you're making. (If you're going to freeze it, it's best to leave cheese out of the making of your pesto. You can add it later when thawed.) By the way, parsley makes a nice pesto too, so this can also be done if you get parsley. If you get new potatoes, store them in the bag they come in in the refrigerator. New potatoes are far more perishable than storage potatoes. Use them within the week as you would any other fresh vegetable.

Everything else should be stored in the fridge.

We've been waiting a long time for our cauliflowers, broccolis, and cabbages (they were slowed down by the spring weather) so we're excited to finally be able to start harvesting them this week. Note for those who haven't yet received blueberries: the plants of one of our four varieties are producing nicely

now, but it may still be a few weeks before everyone has got some. Please be patient.

Notes/Recipes from Chef Andrew Cohen

As I have been on a bit of a Mediterranean/tapas thing this week's box will fit right in. The leaf lettuce will go nicely with tuna fish salad. As my daughter is a bit of a purist, it might be just mayo and pickle relish, but I might be able to persuade her to let me do it with capers and olive oil. Open face sandwiches on small slices of baguette with the red leaf or maybe just some on leaves of the Little Gem without bread. Roast broccoli would go well, hot or at room temperature with a little lemon juice or oil and vinegar. The cauliflower and Romanesco can both be cooked this way, and are favorites

This Week

Bok Choi

Strawberries

Basil OR Italian Parsley

Little Gem Lettuce Hearts

Green Oak Leaf Lettuce

Gold or White Stemmed Chard

Cauliflower, Romanesco, OR
Broccoli

Mystery (New Potatoes, Summer
Squash, or Blueberries)

Flowers: Sweet William,
Cosmos, Snapdragons

with the kids here. Depending on what I serve it with will determine whether I use orange or lemon juice for the marinade. I also like to cut the romanesco and cauliflower florets into 1/8-inch thick slices and sauté them in oil at high heat to caramelize them. Toss these with chili flakes, wine and garlic and top with some golden bread crumbs and they make a nice quick side dish. One night will see pesto on the table, either on pasta or mixed into a grain like farro. To keep it simple, I might just grill sausages or chicken and serve it with the pesto farro. While I am grilling, if I have summer squash I will slice these up and toss them with oil and lemon juice and garlic and give them a quick trip over the heat, along with some sliced onions. These can either be eaten right then or used in sandwiches or scrambled eggs with pesto later. Bok choy sautéed with carrots, celery, button mushrooms, garlic, herbs, and white wine tastes great and looks pretty, especially if you slice the vegetables on the diagonal. As this is a light dish, serve it with rice and fish or tofu for nice warm weather meal.

I am very happy to see Desiree potatoes this week as I love the colors of the skin and flesh together almost as much as I love the flavor. These potatoes are sort of general purpose spuds, and are great roasted or mashed. One preparation I love gives the texture of both creamy mashed potatoes and crisp roasted spuds. For this, boil the potatoes whole in salted water until just tender, and then drain and transfer to a bowl and toss to coat with oil. Place on an oiled sheet pan and use a fork to smash the spuds. Leave space between them. Salt with a coarse grained salt and pepper, then roast until the edges of the potatoes are crisp and the surfaces are golden. These do not need much else to go along with them as they are so good. If the potatoes are really small, I just steam them until tender and sauté in a little oil to crisp them up. Going along with the tapas theme, I might roast them with saffron and serve with an aioli (garlic mayonnaise). By the way, in Liguria, an old way of serving pesto is to blanch haricot vert (“matchstick” or “French filet” green beans) and tiny potatoes and mix them in to the pasta with plenty of pesto. If you’ve not tried this, and you have some of the beans handy, I recommend you give this a try as it is excellent.

Saffron Roasted Potatoes, from Chef Andrew E. Cohen

½ gram saffron threads	4 TBS olive oil
1 TBS unsalted butter	8 medium Desiree, halved lengthwise, or 3-cups of smaller potatoes halved lengthwise.
Salt and freshly ground pepper	

Pre-heat the oven to 400°F. In a dry pan, toast the saffron to parch it and then crumble it into a dish. Put the butter and oil into a very small sauce pan and heat over low. Melt the butter and infuse the butter/oil mixture with the saffron over very low heat. The butter/oil should be very fragrant and colored a golden red. Pour the butter/oil mix over the potatoes in a large bowl, and toss to coat evenly. Allow to marinate. The longer the better. Salt and pepper the potatoes, then arrange on the round side in a roasting pan and cover tightly with foil. Roast, covered, for 30 minutes. Uncover, and roast 15-30 minutes more or until nicely crisped. Serve hot or at room temperature.

Everything in your box and the flowers are certified organic. Everything is grown by High Ground Organics unless otherwise noted. Flowers are grown by the Thomas Farm.

Pesto, from Chef Andrew E. Cohen

1 large pinch of coarse salt	40 mediumish basil leaves (make sure they are dry)
1-2 cloves garlic, peeled, split, and de-germed*	3 TBS roasted almonds (or pine nuts, or a combination)
Fresh ground pepper to taste	2-4 TBS extra virgin olive oil
2-3 TBS freshly grated Pecorino Romano (you can also use some Parmigiano-Reggiano or some of each, but I prefer the Pecorino as it is a little less assertive typically)	

Mortar and Pestle Version:

I use a mortar and pestle for my pesto. I feel the flavors are brighter and the pesto holds its color and flavor longer. The pestle releases all the basil juices into the mortar so there is more basil aroma. Food processors heat the pesto and “cook” the basil, which helps the discoloration. Food processor blades dull quickly and tear the basil, speeding oxidization.

In a large mortar, add the salt and five of the basil leaves. Grind them firmly but gently with a circular motion against the sides and bottom of the mortar until they start to break down. Keep adding a few leaves at a time until they are all in, but not thoroughly destroyed. Add the garlic, and mash down on it directly with the pestle to crush it. Then proceed with the grinding. When the garlic is pulverized and the juices have been amalgamated into the basil, add the nuts a few at a time and crush them up before adding the next few. When they are all in, grind to a uniform consistency. Sprinkle in the cheese and mix everything together well.

Begin adding the olive oil in a steady stream and mixing with the pestle to achieve a creamy consistency. Add enough oil so the pesto moves a bit like a sauce, rather than being a stiff paste. The color should be bright and the ingredients well amalgamated. Season to taste with a little pepper and salt if needed. Store in a jar in the refrigerator with a layer of oil covering the surface of the pesto to prevent oxidization.

Food Processor Version:

For the food processor, you want to keep in mind that things heat up in there. You can cook the basil, turn nuts to nut butter, and you can melt cheese. I chill the bowl and blade in the freezer and chill the olive oil as well.

Fit the processor with the blade. Crush the garlic with the flat of the knife and toss into the processor. Process finely. Add the nuts and pulse to just break up. Add the basil, and pulse to shred. Add 2 TBS olive oil, then puree briefly (30 seconds). Check the contents of the bowl to see if the pesto is fine enough. If not, puree just long enough to achieve the correct consistency. Add more oil if necessary to keep things moving. When the nuts and basil have reached the right consistency, add the cheese, another tablespoon of oil and pulse to combine all the ingredients. Check for consistency and add more oil if needed. Stirring in the oil with a spatula is the way to go here. Season with salt and pepper as needed and store in the refrigerator as in the mortar and pestle version.

Chef’s Tips and Notes: *The germ is the little green shoot that forms in the center of the garlic clove. This can cause indigestion in many people, from mild to extreme, especially once it has begun to grow. It can also add bitterness to the dish. It is only a matter of moments to remove it, so be sure to do so. Jars of commercial minced garlic are usually processed with the germ in, so I avoid them like the plague. Next time someone complains of heartburn from pizza, you’ll know why.