



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993
Local & Madison Edition - Brown Week Delivery

October 2-3, 2009

Here a Moo, There a Moo...

By Andrea Yoder

Our first meat delivery of the season is only 6 weeks away and the orders have already been rolling in. If you had the opportunity to visit the farm this summer, hopefully you were able to sneak a peek at the cows on the hillside or get up close and check out the pigs...maybe even let them eat out of your hand. We enjoy raising animals as another way to add diversity to our farm. While vegetables are our emphasis, we also like the excitement of a new baby goat or chick, the first day the squealing little pigs arrive on the farm, watching the pigs chase the chickens and then find rest atop a pile of cabbage leaves. Fencing, fencing and more fencing...but it's what you have to do to keep those mischievous cows from checking out the grass on the other side of the fence... just to see if it really is greener.

We appreciate being able to make informed decisions about our own food choices, and want to afford you the same opportunity. We pasture our certified organic animals on certified organic pastures and only feed certified organic forage and grain that is either grown on our farm or purchased from our local co-op. Our Angus beef come from a high-quality line of genetics that has been carefully selected over many generations by Jim Munsch of Deer Run Farms. Once the animals come to our pastures in the spring, they are rotationally grazed on mineral-rich pastures. What the heck does that mean? Well, our pastures are divided into sections that we call paddocks. The animals graze the paddock until the forage has been eaten and then they are moved on to the next section. The animals are moved to a new pasture every couple days. They always have a sufficient supply of grasses, which re-grow by the time the animals return to that paddock. Our beef cattle are also offered a free ration of grain daily. Part of the reason we offer the grain is for management. If there is a reason to go to the pasture every day, then no one will forget to count the cows daily to make sure they are all still where they belong, as well as check in to make sure they are growing appropriately and don't have any problems. In comparison to the amount of food they eat overall, the grain portion is about 1% over their lifetime. We believe our cattle are being fed a diet that is an appropriate, natural source of nutrients for bovines. When cattle roamed on the range, they did eat some prairie grasses gone to seed (grain) as a means for insulating for winter. Our pigs are fed certified organic

THIS WEEK'S BOX

ITALIAN OR PORCELAIN GARLIC: The Italian is an average sized bulb, and should look familiar to you since it is the variety that has been appearing in boxes thus far this year. Porcelain is recognizable by its slightly larger bulb size, with far fewer and much larger cloves. Like the jumbo crayons given to preschoolers, I find the Porcelain garlic's larger cloves easier to work with.

RED & YELLOW ONIONS: Raw onion is higher than cooked onion in sulfur compounds, which offer many health benefits. So remember to have a few raw onions each week in your sandwiches or salads.

LEEKs: See veggie feature on back of newsletter.

ADIRONDACK RED POTATOES: Cube and fry potatoes till lightly browned, stir into scrambled eggs with chopped spinach and Cheddar cheese and perhaps some crumbled sausage. Breakfast for dinner?

CARROTS: Try carrots in butter, baked until tender, with a pinch of spice such as nutmeg or cumin.

BUTTERNUT SQUASH: The smooth flesh of a baked or steamed squash blends well into rolls, pancakes, sauces, or custards.

BROCCOLI: Serve heaps of steamed, buttered broccoli with poached fish and a wild rice pilaf. That sounds good.

BABY BOK CHOI: Chop leaves and thinly slice stems to make a quick Asian cole slaw. Toss with shredded carrot, onion, and your favorite dressing. Or try whipping up a vinaigrette with sesame oil and rice vinegar or lime juice. Don't forget to keep baby bok choy in a plastic bag if you won't be using it right away.

PEPPERS - MINI SWEET: Tasty, adorable little peppers make a wonderful raw snack. Open the plastic bag they are packaged in to allow them to breathe, or transfer to a paper bag. Store in the fridge either way.

UKRAINE: Add roasted and peeled peppers to a chicken and rice casserole.

ARUGULA: Serve up a nutritious breakfast of poached eggs, tucked into a nest of steamed arugula. Top with fresh ground black pepper and a few shreds of sharp cheese.

BEAUTY HEART RADISH: Slice and add to your salads for a beautiful color contrast. They are also good in a stirfry or with a slice of cheese for a little snack.

EDAMAME: Boil the pods in salty water for 5-7 minutes, then pull the beans out with your teeth. Yummy salty soybean snack.

SWEET CORN: One last taste of summer.

TOMATILLO SALSA PACK: Look for the Salsa Verde recipe card at your site!

grain and vegetables. Some of their favorites are cabbage leaves, spinach, cauliflower and turnips, although they don't mind a few fruits as well.

More and more information has come to the forefront recently that has begun to uncover the uncomfortable and sometimes horrifying realities of the American food production system. Through consolidation and industrialization, we have created some supposedly very automated and efficient systems for producing food. But has this been a positive advancement? I don't even think I'd call it an advancement and certainly not a positive one. In the world of meat production, this system is referred to as a CAFO—concentrated animal feeding operation. What happens is a large number of animals—a thousand or more— are put into one feedlot. Usually there is concrete beneath their feet, not pasture. They are not

rotated to new pastures; they aren't even given pastures to graze. The only rotating they do is from one CAFO to another to a slaughter facility. They are fed grain and pushed to gain weight rapidly with the use of growth hormones. Cattle are not made to eat a diet of grain alone, which causes health problems. No fear, they are given antibiotics to prevent and treat this problem, as well as to prevent an outbreak of disease that could spread rapidly in such close quarters. And what about their waste? It goes into manure lagoons where the amount of waste is so out of balance to what can be handled in one area that a valuable asset (it could become compost or fertilizer) has now become a liability.

Our goal is to raise our animals humanely and afford them the benefit of a low-stress life. We feed them a wholesome diet rich in minerals and nutrients and allow them to

graze openly on pastures. We manage pests naturally using diatomaceous earth and organic oil mixed with essential oils of citronella and lemon grass (for fly control). The result of intensively managing a smaller herd of animals in this way is an animal that has a strong immune system. They don't receive antibiotics because they don't need them---they don't get sick! And since everything is in appropriate scale, we are able to grow their main feed source (grass) in the pastures on our land. Their waste products stay on the land where they fertilize the pastures. We don't create environmental dilemmas and it all kind of makes sense this way. Also, much of the land we use as pasture would be prone to erosion if we were to till it for vegetable production. Instead, we work to improve our pastures by seeding new grasses, adding minerals to improve the soil and composting when appropriate. Since it is always kept in sod the soil remains anchored and we don't cause erosion.

To complete the picture, you should know more about the facility the animals are processed in. We've been using Ledebuhr Meat Processing in Winona, MN for a long time. Dave and Karen Ledebuhr run a top-notch, professional operation that is quite impressive and very different from the way animals raised in a feed lot are processed. At Ledebuhr's, less than 10 animals are processed in one day with a USDA inspector present to inspect every animal thoroughly to ensure it is safe for processing. All of our processed products (sausage, bacon, etc) are made with certified organic ingredients and no nitrates or nitrites. Dave and Karen also offer their employees a fair living wage as well as health and retirement benefits. All that I have to say is this is one of the cleanest meat processing facilities I've been in. Last year we took our fresh hams to Black Earth Meats in Wisconsin to have them smoked and cured. Dave isn't set up to process our hams organically yet, but we were pleased with the job Black Earth did last year--all without the addition of nitrates.

So what does all this translate to? Well, we believe our animals live low stress lives of contentment, are treated respectfully, fed appropriately and the end result is tasty meat. Recent research has indicated that the meat from animals fed a grass-based diet is lower in saturated fats and higher in conjugated linoleic acid, Omega-3's and Vitamin E. These nutrients have been shown to be important defenses against cancer and heart disease amongst other health benefits.

Small scale meat production, like ours, is very difficult to be profitable. We offer you our super quality meats for a very reasonable and competitive price. Our "profits" are the extras that we enjoy and use to feed our crew throughout the season, and a way to better manage some of our land. We hope you'll take advantage of the opportunity to try some of our meat for yourself this year.

Get your orders in soon, we've been known to sell out in November and December. Order forms are available at your delivery site and on our website, on the beef page.

Veggie Feature: Leeks

This week's featured vegetable is another member of the allium family. If you've never cooked with leeks before, you may think that they look like overgrown green onions. Though a close relative of onions, leeks, when fully mature, do not form a large underground bulb. The edible part of a leek is the long stalk.

Leeks, although alliums, aren't as strongly sulfurous as most onions or garlic. Unlike most of their relatives, leeks can often be eaten as a vegetable dish themselves, as opposed to a flavoring agent for other vegetables. Although many people would not enjoy the flavor of raw leeks, when cooked, they are smooth, creamy, wonderfully mild and even sweet.

Leeks are best known for their delicious pairing with potatoes, particularly in soup. Almost any imaginable potato dish can be enhanced by the addition of some leeks. But besides potatoes, leeks' earthy and mild onion character are a flavorful complement to other fall vegetables, such as squash, carrots, and parsnips. The flavor of leeks is also carried well by cheese, cream, and other dairy.

To use leeks, the root end must be trimmed off, and the entire leek should be split lengthwise and rinsed thoroughly under running water. Leeks are planted deep and hilled with dirt to lengthen the desirable white shaft. As the summer progresses, this process gives dirt ample opportunity to get inside where we can't wash it out here at the farm. The tightly packed concentric rings of leaves make a great trap for sand and dirt, so be sure that you check between each layer. Once cleaned, leeks can be braised, sautéed, fried, boiled, or even used raw. In a pinch, you can substitute leeks for other types of onion in a recipe, although the flavor will be different. There are also many recipes that the leek itself has made famous, notably Vichyssoise (a French cold soup), cock-a-leekie soup (Scottish), and plain old American leek and potato soup. The white end of the leek is the crispest and most tender; the higher up and the darker green, the more fibrous the flesh becomes. The green tops that branch off of the leek are generally too tough to eat, but they make a great broth if simmered in water.

Leeks should be refrigerated, but will dry out if kept in the fridge for longer than a day or two. Store them in a plastic bag or wrapped in a damp towel. If a leek does become dried out, usually the inside can still be used after peeling away the papery outer layers.

Apple and Leek Quiche

Serves 4 as an entrée

Crust for 1 pie

½ a large leek, trimmed, washed and cut in narrow strips

2 Tbsp butter

3-4 large leaves of kale

1 tart apple, cored and sliced thinly

2 ounces of earthy, flavorful hard cheese, shredded (try Gruyere or Pastureland's Thoten, Sogn, or Berne.)

3-4 eggs

½ cup sour cream

Teeny pinch of freshly grated nutmeg

Pinch of black pepper

Salt to taste (depending on type of cheese used)

1. Bake pie dough into a 10-inch shell according to recipe directions. While pie shell is baking, prep your veggies. Reduce oven temperature to 350° once the crust is baked.

2. Sauté leeks in butter over very low heat until softened but not brown, about 10 minutes.

3. Strip the stems from the kale leaves and boil in 1 cup of water about 5 minutes. Remove with a slotted spoon, drain and cool. Chop into very fine pieces and squeeze dry.

4. Whisk together eggs, sour cream, and spices. Stir in the chopped kale.

5. Spread apple slices in an even layer in the bottom of the pie crust. Add a layer of shredded cheese. Next, evenly spread the sautéed leeks. Carefully pour in the egg mixture, tapping or shaking to allow it to evenly distribute. Sprinkle remaining cheese on top.

6. Bake quiche 1 to 1 ½ hours, or until center of filling is puffed and set (center will be slightly wobbly but not liquid). Cool on a rack at least 20 to 30 minutes before serving (filling will continue to set as it cools). Serve warm or at room temperature.