



# Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

September 16-17, 2011

**Meat, a Benign Extravagance, by Simon Fairlie, forward by Gene Logsdon, reviewed by Farmer Richard**

The one week of the year that we get away from it all, a real vacation in January, and the book I chose to bring to the beach is about farming and food. Say what you will, but I could not put it down until I finished it! Simon Fairlie is British, and his examples are British countryside, but his perspective is worldwide, his research is extremely thorough, and his underlying question, "How will we feed an increasing world population?" affects us all.

Fairlie begins with a fascinating recount of humans' historic relationship with various animals. Animals shaped religions; nomadic people with access to grass believed in the cow and goat. India needed cows to pull plows and carts, but lacked the grass for enough animals to eat, so cows became "sacred."

Pigs on the other hand were best suited to cultures that stayed put in settlements. Every household had a few pigs to eat the scraps and garden waste. Eating meat when it was available made sense and fit with cultural and religious values. People grew their own food or traded with their neighbors. There were droughts and floods, so granaries were developed. Animals were part of food storage, "on the hoof."

Fast forward a couple hundred years and we have CAFOs (Confined Animal Feeding Operations) with half the world's grain production going to feed animals in large confinement operations. We now have millions of people worldwide that do not have enough food to eat. Is it because of all the animals on feed? No, it is because they do not have access to land to grow their own food or do not have money to buy the food produced by large agribusiness.

Fairlie explores in detail the diminishing land base, the increasing world population and the diversion of grain to fuel production. He adds fuel production to the mix and investigates the feasibility of organic farming feeding the world. Can we produce and capture enough nitrogen from the air to sustain yields? Are high-tech, patented, GMO seeds the solution? No, they are a proven failure. Can everyone in the world eat meat 3 times a day or even every day? No, not possible!

His research leads to some interesting scenarios such as the creation of communities that are self-sustaining in energy and food.

## THIS WEEK'S BOX

**RED AND YELLOW ONIONS:** Both of these onions are mild and flavorful. They store very well in a cool dry place. Once cut, an onion should be tightly wrapped, refrigerated and used within four days. Use the onions raw as in salads or on burgers, fried or sautéed as an ingredient in a recipe, or made into soup.

**ITALIAN GARLIC:** Simmer garlic in a little oil until soft. Cool, then puree for garlic oil! Bake or fry thin potato rounds until crispy, season with salt, & brush with garlic oil.

**WATERMELON:** The beautiful red watermelon, full of sweetness and thirst quenching juices. Use in salads, as a side of fruit, grilled to accompany your steak, or cut into small cubes for a salsa. Last week for these!

**MELON:** Use in fruit salads, in salsas, as a base for ice cream, or just as a side of fruit.

**GRAPE & VARIETY TOMATOES:** Some tomato advocates claim the fruit had aphrodisiac powers and, in fact, the French called them pommes d'amour, "love apples". These may need some ripening; we picked them pretty green to save them from the frost!

**MINI SWEET PEPPERS:** See Vegetable Feature on the back of this newsletter

**SWEET PEPPERS:** The Ukraine, yellow bell, Pimento or Italia are all sweet peppers that impart a wonderful flavor to all dishes. The Ukraine, Pimento and Yellow bell are somewhat round and thick fleshed and are great raw, sautéed or stuffed. The Italia is slightly elongated, and they can be used raw or in sauces, or roasted and peeled for their delicious flesh.

**PURPLE VIKING POTATOES:** The strange purple looking potatoes with the brilliant white flesh can be used as with any potato. Boil and smash these potatoes, slice and fry them, roast them, or use in salads. This is a really cool potato!

**BABY BOK CHOI:** Baby bok choy is a versatile vegetable with crunchy stalks and tender green leaves. It can be used raw in salads, in a stir fry or a cooked vegetable. I enjoy creamed baby bok choy and carrots, as a side dish. Use the baby bok choy whole or slice into bite size pieces.

**MINI RED ROMAINE LETTUCE:** Romaine lettuce adds crunch and flavor to mixed green salads and is the lettuce of choice for Caesar Salad. The leaves are crisp and the crunchy midrib is particularly succulent. Because the Mini Red romaine is smaller in size, it is perfect to cut in half and grill with a brushing of olive oil and sprinkle of salt and pepper.

**BABY RED, CHIOGGIA OR GOLD BEETS:** The firm round roots and the leafy green tops of the Baby Red or the Gold beets are edible and highly nutritious. Slice, dice or made into matchsticks, the beet can be eaten roasted, steamed, boiled, or pickled. If you choose to peel your beets, cook them first by boiling with the stem and roots attached, then the skins will slide off and you won't lose the goodness within the skins.

**GREEN TOP RED RADISHES:** The green topped radishes are excellent in salads using the greens as well as the bright red root. The flavor can be mild to peppery. Use raw in salads, or as garnish for crudités, or cooked such as roasting with a bit of olive oil.

**CHARD:** This green is a member of the beet family and is grown for its crinkly green leaves and reddish or silvery stalks. The greens can be prepared like spinach but take a bit longer to cook. Chard makes a great accompaniment to meat dishes.

The best land goes to grain and vegetable production, the higher, sloping marginal land is used for animal grazing and wood for fuel production. A portion of land is set aside for untouched nature for all to enjoy. In Fairlie's scenario, animals are referred to as "default meat," a modest part of a healthy diet and an

important and integrated part of the picture. The cows and goats utilize the marginal land for grazing and the pigs take care of the vegetable waste.

Maybe I liked the book so much because he recommends what we do here at Harmony Valley Farm. We grow vegetables and dry beans

on our best land, the black angus cows graze the marginal, but improved, hillside pastures.

The pigs? They eat all of the waste, trimmings, and culls from the vegetable packing, they have a large pasture of grass to eat and are soon to be eating acorns in our oak woods, plus they have made themselves a wonderful muddy wallow from the drain water from the packing shed to cool themselves. They are happy pigs! Maybe we can all be happy, healthy and fed, with meat in moderation.

#### **HVF MEAT SHARES!!**

When you purchase our organic beef and pork, you are buying more than a cooler of meat. Our cattle come from a closed herd of certified organic Angus cattle originating at Deer Run Farm in Coon Valley, Wisconsin. We know the quality of an animal's life and the quality of their food source have a direct impact on the flavor and nutritional value of the meat they produce. This is why we choose to rotationally graze cattle on certified organic, mineral rich pastures to allow them to live peaceful, healthy lives. You can be assured these animals are raised respectfully with no hormones, antibiotics, or chemical parasite treatment. We offer a variety of packages for you to choose. **Visit our website for details on our selections:** <http://www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com/HVFMeatOrderForm.pdf>

All purchases will be delivered directly to your pick-up site, freshly frozen, and in a Styrofoam cooler. For this fall, we offer delivery in November, December and January. We've added new, smaller packages, too! Choose a 15-pound package and give our meat a try! This is the perfect size for a standard size freezer or for smaller households, with packages starting at only \$108!

**Harvest Party at the Farm!**  
**Sunday, September 25**  
**Noon - 5pm**  
**Potluck, Pig Roast, Wagon**  
**Tours, U-pick Pumpkins!**

### **Vegetable Feature: Mini Sweet Peppers**

We are proud to claim these little guys as a Harmony Valley exclusive. After a lot of prompting and suggesting from long time CSA members David Griffith and Cathy Loeb, Richard decided to give the little peppers a try. However, he discovered that seeds were not available commercially. So, he went down to Willy Street Co-op and bought one container of mini sweet peppers. He took these Mexican peppers straight home to the farm, removed the seeds and planted them in the green house. He was impressed with how well they grew and continued to save the seeds each year. It took about four years of growing and seed saving to multiply his original, single container purchase to a crop large enough to use for CSA boxes and market. Now, we enjoy a huge harvest of these great little peppers!

Peppers are a self pollinating plant but bees and other insects sometimes transfer pollen. Once in a while, a plant will pop up that is crossed with a hot pepper. Their appearance is slightly different from a mini sweet and we are able to identify and remove about a dozen crossed plants out of 8,000. But every once in a while, one hot pepper will slip through and can be very unpleasant to an unsuspecting child. To avoid tainting the crop, we plant mini sweets in a block and only save the seeds from the inner most plants. When the weather is hot and the peppers are ready for harvest, the field resembles Christmas trees decorated with brightly color bulbs!

Mini sweets are easy to use and also preserve. You can serve them raw or cooked and they can be used in any recipe that calls for bell pepper or any other sweet pepper. They are especially sweet when eaten raw and kids love them dipped in goat or cream cheese. Their size makes them perfect for appetizers or finger food. You can stuff them and bake them, or roast them and fill them with a goat cheese spread. I like to grill or sauté them whole, until the skin just starts to blister and serve them with steaks or grilled chicken.

Mini sweets are available on our Produce Plus list and can be preserved in a number of ways. The petite size of the peppers is also great for canning them whole. Use a pin to poke a few holes through the flesh of each pepper to allow the air to escape and the canning liquid to get inside. The canning liquid is a simple ratio of 1c water:1 c vinegar:1 t salt. You can add any other spices or flavoring agents that you like. Mini sweets can also be candied. Candying is a process the spans across a few days, but only takes a few minutes each day and the candied peppers will keep for several weeks. They are great to chop and add to quick breads, corn bread, cake or muffins. Peppers also freeze very well. You can freeze them raw or cooked, whole or cut. I prefer to roast them over an open flame, peel the skin and remove the seeds before I freeze peppers. You can then cut them in strips or chunks and freeze them in ice cube trays or muffin pans for individual servings you can throw into soups, stews or sauces.

**Sweet Pepper Marmalade** Yields 1½ cups *This marmalade looks like stained glass and makes a beautiful and tasty gift. Spread on top of goat cheese, brie, crackers or pretzels.*

1 cup sweet peppers, small dice  
1 cup onion, small dice  
1 cup sugar  
½ cup white distilled vinegar  
½ cup apple cider vinegar  
¼-½ tsp chili flake

-Combine all ingredients in a medium sauté pan. Simmer over medium heat for 5 minutes. Reduce heat and simmer another 20 minutes or until liquid is syrupy. You can store in the fridge for several weeks or can and process 10 minutes in a hot water bath.

### **Peppers and Sausage over Mashed Potatoes**

4 Italian sausage links or brats  
1½ cups onions, julienne  
3½ cups sweet peppers, julienne  
4 large purple viking potatoes  
4 Tbsp butter  
½ cup cream  
S&P



-Peel and cut potatoes in large chunks. Place potatoes in a large sauce pan and cover with cold water. Boil for 10-15 minutes or until potatoes are tender. Drain and reserve. In a small pan, melt butter with cream. Use a potato masher or food mill to mash potatoes. Fold in warm cream and butter until just incorporated. Season and serve warm.

-While potatoes are cooking, cut sausages or brats on a bias into 6 pieces. In a large saute pan, cook sausage until browned on all sides. Remove from pan, leaving behind any rendered fat. Add onions to the pan. Cook 3-5 minutes, then add peppers. Cook until the onions are translucent and peppers are crisp, yet tender. Add sausage back to the pan to warm. Serve warm over mashed potatoes.