



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

June 22-23, 2012

Strawberry Day 2012 Recap

by Captain Jack de Wilde (Farm Dog)

Last Sunday we celebrated strawberry season with our annual Father's Day Strawberry Day farm event. As HVF hospitality coordinator it is my job to be on duty, front and center, the whole day to make sure our guests are having a great time and enjoying the farm. Of course my first selfish concern, I have to admit, is watching and waiting for someone, usually a younger person, who might be willing to play a little "toss and fetch" with me. I keep a few sticks, chunks of wood and even my old half-chewed Santa toy from Christmas on standby in case I find a willing victim to play with me for awhile. I had lots of takers on Sunday and was exhausted by the end of the day! In fact I was so tired I had to take Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday off of work!

We started off the day with a potluck. I couldn't see the top of the table, but I cleaned up a lot of good crumbs off the floor. I kept hearing people say "That was so good, I'm stuffed!" After lunch we boarded 4 harvest wagons for a field tour. I always ride on the first wagon with my Dad, Farmer Richard. Rafael was our tractor driver. He's a very careful driver and I hardly even knew we were moving!

Our first stop was near our broccoli, kale and Brussels sprouts fields. These fields are really beautiful and a lot of people took a walk through them to see if they could find little heads of broccoli starting to form. Benji brought twist ties and harvested several bunches of kale for some interested people. Honestly I could care less about kale and broccoli, but digging up potatoes was great fun! We only found 4 or 5 small potatoes under each plant and 5-10 more were very small babies. My Dad says in about 2 weeks we'll have a real big dig to harvest potatoes for your boxes. A few kids were eating the small potatoes and I was happy to help them dig. On the side of the field some people were asking about the beautiful purple flowers they saw on the hairy vetch plant. Richard and Andrea helped them dig up a plant and found the little nitrogen nodules that are feeding the potatoes. I'm not sure how it all works, but I know Richard is

THIS WEEK'S BOX

Green Top Cipollini Onions: Slice thin and add to a pizza just before serving.

Napa Cabbage: The first taste of the season! Chiffonade and toss with kohlrabi matchsticks, oil, and vinegar for a light side dish.

Red Beets: Edible greens! Treat as you would any other cooking green: tear or chop into pieces, sauté until wilted in olive oil with garlic, onion and balsamic. Then grate roasted or raw beets on top and add peas in the pod.

Fennel: See veggie feature on the back of the newsletter

Kohlrabi: See last week's newsletter for a hash brown recipe and other ideas. Great/grate raw in a slaw or stuffed and baked!

Sugar Snap Peas: Eat them pod & all. Add at the end of cooking so they don't get mushy -the crunch is good!

Radish Seed Pods: Try a quick pickle or puree for a horseradish like sandwich spread.

Mini Romaine or Mini Boston or Iceberg Lettuce: Food can be so darn cute sometimes, especially in miniature! Tasty as a salad or as a sandwich topper. Make sure to dunk and wash thoroughly, dirt clings inside the heads. Iceberg is one of those hardy lettuces that holds up well and grows in summer heat. Top a sandwich or make a wedge salad with peas, hard-boiled egg, shredded cheese and a thick, creamy dressing.

big on planting cover crops like vetch to put nutrients into the soil during the fall, winter and spring so we can have enough nutrition in the soil to grow really great crops. The potatoes, kale, broccoli and Brussels sprouts all look great and Richard says it's the rye and vetch cover crops that were plowed in this spring, so it must be working!

We had a lot more to see, so we hopped back on our wagons and crossed the river to get to Field 20 which has all of our onions, Napa cabbage, kohlrabi, and some other brassicas. Some people got excited about the Indigo Bunting birds at the river, but I much prefer the killdeers that sometimes nest in our fields. They are so much fun to chase, despite the fact that I'll never catch one because they are just teasing me to keep us away from their nest. The Amish boys that do some weeding here found a nest in the celeriac field and marked the spot. We have a lot of biodiversity on our farm and work really hard to make sure we have places for birds, bees, and insects to live around our fields. Last fall we cleared a lot of trees away from the edges of our onion field, and then we planted a bunch of wild flowers. My Dad made sure he pointed

them out to our guests as we drove past. There are all kinds of things growing there now and you can usually see several different kinds of honey and bumblebees collecting pollen from the wildflowers. But what we really came to look at was our onion and shallot crop that really looks quite green and healthy! Richard and I check this field pretty often to make sure the onions aren't getting too dry. We are just a few weeks away from harvesting all the onions—very exciting!

Time to move on...we still had to get to the strawberries! Our tour guides drove us back to our home farm. We circled around the garlic field and ended up in the strawberries. Everyone knew what to do here! There were a lot of happy faces marked with strawberry juice and you could smell the sweet scent of strawberries everywhere! While everyone was picking, I hung out on the edge of the field. I'm trained to stay out of the field for food safety reasons that I do not understand. The inspector, who was pretty nice to me, said I have to stay out of the fields and packing shed. That was fine though because I found a really great stick and a cool little boy to play with. Everyone picked as many strawberries as they wanted

Vegetable Feature: Fennel

Fennel, a pastel-green root vegetable indigenous to the Mediterranean, has a refreshingly crisp texture when raw and a subtle sweetness when cooked, with a flavor reminiscent of anise or licorice. While the bulbous base lends itself wonderfully to salads, braises, and risottos, the thread-like fronds function nicely as an herb when finely chopped; try substituting the dill called for in any recipe with fennel fronds. The deep green stalks also impart a mysterious undertone to homemade vegetable stocks. Fennel pairs well with apples, nuts, and citrus, and makes a delicious side dish when roasted at 400°F for 15-20 minutes.

Store fennel in a plastic bag in the vegetable crisper drawer of the refrigerator, where it will keep for up to a week. Chop the bulb only immediately before using, as it rapidly browns once cut. To prepare fennel, cut the white base away from the green stalks and fronds, reserving them for later use. Peel off any wilted or browning layers from the outside of the bulb. Slice the bulb in half lengthwise and make a triangular cut around the fibrous core to remove it from both halves. At this point, the fennel can be sliced, chopped, or left whole depending on its intended use.

Fun fact! The most common fennel cultivar is called Florence fennel after the Italian city, where locals refer to it as *finocchio*.

to take home and as many as they could eat in the field. I heard Kelly say that there were almost 500 pounds of strawberries picked, including those estimated to have been eaten in the field!

After our extensive tour, I was exhausted. I found a nice shaded place to hang out on a wagon and just watched everyone finish picking strawberries. Then I remembered there was strawberry ice cream back at the packing shed so I asked José Ramon if he could drive us back there. I love strawberry ice cream and every year we ask Castle Rock organic dairy to make a special batch of strawberry ice cream using our strawberries. I heard a lot of people say "This is the best strawberry ice cream I've ever had!" I ate a big bowl of ice cream and then started to say good-bye to everyone.

We had a really fun day and I'm so glad so many people took the time to drive out and see our beautiful farm. We have been working really hard this year planting, weeding, working ground and harvesting vegetables. We're proud of the work we do and love to share our beautiful farm and valley with everyone that supports our farm. If you weren't able to attend our Strawberry Day party, make sure you plan to come to our Harvest Party on September 23. We'll have more good food to share with you and lots of pumpkins for you to pick! I'll be waiting to greet you!



Fennel and Carrot Slaw with Orange, Olives, and Dill

Serves 4

1 fennel bulb, trimmed and cored
2 medium carrots
½ cup kalamata olives, pitted and halved
¼ cup finely chopped dill or fennel fronds
Juice of ½ an orange
1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
2 tsp agave nectar or maple syrup
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

-Slice the fennel lengthwise as thinly as possible, using a mandoline if available. Place the shaved fennel into a large bowl.

-With a vegetable peeler, make thin strips of carrot and place into the bowl with the fennel. Add the olives and dill.

-Add the orange juice, olive oil, agave or maple syrup, salt, and pepper to the fennel mixture and toss with your hands to combine. Mound on a serving plate and garnish with extra dill sprigs, if desired.

Recipe adapted from The First Mess

Grilled Fennel and Quinoa Salad Serves 4-6

¾ cup uncooked quinoa, rinsed
1 fennel bulb, trimmed, halved, and cored
4 radishes, halved and thinly sliced
1 cup sugar snap peas, trimmed and diced small
¼ cup finely chopped dill or fennel fronds
2 scallions or Cipollini onions, white and light green parts only, thinly sliced
1 tbsp Dijon mustard
2 tbsp apple cider vinegar
Juice of 1 lemon
¼ cup + 2 tsp extra virgin olive oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

-Combine the quinoa with 1½ cups of water in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil, cover, reduce heat to low, and simmer until all of the liquid is absorbed, about 15-20 minutes. Remove from the heat and let sit, covered, for 5-10 minutes before fluffing with a fork. Set aside.

-Meanwhile, brush the prepped fennel with 2 tsp of the olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Place the bulb onto a grill over high heat, cut side down. Grill until char marks develop and fennel feels fairly tender. Remove from the grill and let sit until cool enough to handle. Cut the fennel into crosswise slices, then chop in the other direction to achieve a small dice.

-In a small bowl, combine the Dijon mustard, apple cider vinegar, lemon juice, and remaining ¼ cup olive oil and whisk until emulsified.

-Place the cooked and cooled quinoa into a large bowl. Add the grilled fennel, radishes, snap peas, dill, and scallions. Pour the dressing on top and stir until well combined. Season with salt and pepper and mix again. Serve garnished with extra fennel fronds, if desired.

Recipe adapted from Laura Wright