



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

July 13-14, 2012



Insights from the Potato Field By Farmer Richard

Our potato crop this year looks like it might be one of the best crops we've seen in quite awhile! I must admit I've been pretty excited to start digging the potatoes and I liked what I was seeing yesterday when we dug the first 2½ beds of our early variety, *Red Norland*. If the remainder of the 2 ½ acres yields this well we'll be looking at 64,000# of potatoes this year! We grow potatoes mainly for your CSA boxes and choose potato varieties for several reasons. First, we want potatoes as early as reasonably possible, and thus we plant the *Red Norland* which you will find in your boxes this week! Beyond early, our primary criterion is flavor!

As we go through the season, here's what you can look for in the varieties you'll receive. The gold fleshed varieties we grow have a smooth and creamy texture and taste like the butter was melted right into them by the sun. The golden *Satina* will follow *Red Norland* in early maturity. The beautiful *Red Maria*, a red skinned-white flesh variety is the next to come in. Most of our varieties are older heirlooms; none are the familiar dry russets. We try to give you varieties that are not readily available in the world of cheap conventional potatoes and that bridge a long season. We're excited to see a few new varieties this year including *Peter Wilcox* and *Kerr's Pink*. *Peter Wilcox* is supposed to have purple skin with gold flesh, the first of its kind to come from our fields.

THIS WEEK'S BOX

New Potatoes: Cut into wedges and toss in olive oil, fresh minced garlic, fresh minced rosemary, salt, and pepper; roast in the oven until golden.

Green Top Carrots: Cut in to ½" coins and sauté in butter with small diced onions, and finish with real maple syrup.

Sweet Spanish Onions: Small dice and add to your favorite potato salad. Use the green tops as a garnish when you slice them thin.

Italian Garlic: Roast the cloves in olive oil, puree, and add to mayonnaise to make your sandwich explode with flavor.

Zucchini/Scallop Squash: Stuff with a blend of cream cheese and Italian sausage and bake. This makes a great appetizer.

Golden Chard: Remove the stems from the leaves. Blanch the leaves in hot water and wrap around fish and bake. Chop up the stems and sauté with garlic, lemon, and golden raisins.

Broccoli: Chop into small florets and add to chicken Alfredo and top with smoked gouda.

Cauliflower: Use in an Indian Curry dish and serve over rice. Aloo Gobi is an excellent and kid friendly recipe.

Amaranth: Excellent when braised in coconut milk with garlic, onion, lemon juice, sweet & hot peppers, and finished with crab meat.

Yellow Beans: Cut into 1" pieces and sauté with cooked diced beets, walnuts, garlic, and fresh dill in butter.

Cucumbers: Add crunch to your lunch when you put these on your sandwiches!

Gold Beets: Slightly sweeter than red beets, these would be beautiful roasted with your new potatoes this week!

Choice - Basil: One portion per veggie share, not per household please.

Kerr's Pink will have pink skin with gold flesh. The striking *Mountain Rose* will be a beautiful potato with red skin and red flesh. Toward the latter part of the season we always look forward to *Purple Viking* with its purple and pink tie-dyed exterior and snow white, smooth flesh. There's also the pretty little *French Fingerling* potatoes and *Desiree*, two of our European varieties. Needless to say, we have a lot of interesting potatoes to look forward to!

So what does it take to grow a potato? In a society based heavily on potato consumption (potato chips, French fries, mashed potatoes, etc), there are some striking differences between organic and conventional production methods. We make sure we prime the soil with nutrients before we plant a potato crop. This year's crop follows a massive cover crop of rye and nitrogen fixing hairy vetch as well as a generous application of compost and rock mineral powders to satisfy the potatoes' high need for nutrients. Potatoes need large amounts of water and regular watering or they develop in growth spurts and stops. They are still good to eat, but have a misshapen appearance.

Potatoes are a favorite of many insects including the Colorado potato beetle which can totally defoliate the plants. Flea beetles eat

small holes in leaves, and leaf hoppers cause leaves to brown and die, called "hopper burn." There are also a number of underground worms and grubs that can eat on developing tubers.

Despite the best organic production methods, potatoes are one of only a few crops world-wide that are unable to match the pounds of production of conventional methods. Weeds are fairly easy to control in organic potatoes with timely mechanical cultivations and flame weeding. We are able to keep the insects under control with a few organic sprays. So why is organic production important? Besides the obvious great flavor and colors that a crop has when attention is given to optimizing the soil health, there are a host of chemicals that are used in conventional potato production to combat weeds and pests. There is one class of conventional insecticides called *neonicotinoids* that is often used. One of the chemicals in this class most used in potato production is *Imidacloprid*. It is a systemic insecticide that enters the plant's whole system and makes all parts of the plant-- from leaves to tubers to pollen, poisonous to whatever would try to eat them. Folks, I'm not a rocket scientist, but it has always made me wonder

what affect that systemic insecticide has on the consumer of those potatoes!? It obviously does not kill you on the spot, but what kind of impact may it have when ingested in small doses over the years? This same insecticide is used on most of the U.S. corn crop.

Neonicotinoids may be applied as a seed treatment, soil drenches, granular or a foliar spray. This class of chemicals remains toxic within the plant for longer than other insecticides and has been found to persist in soil and surrounding vegetation for extended periods as well. These chemicals function as neurotoxins which affect the central nervous systems of the pests causing paralysis and disorientation. Recent studies have now linked this class of insecticides to the devastating bee colony collapse disorder. As a result of these studies, Europe has banned Imidacloprid. Scientists are concerned with the impact these insecticides may have on both domestic and wild honey bee and bumblebee populations worldwide. There are many facets of our ecosystem that are dependent upon the pollination services bees provide, including many of our food crops. As we mentioned previously, neonicotinoids are found in every part of a plant, including the pollen. When bees are dosed with even a minute amount of this chemical, they become disoriented and lose their ability to navigate their way back to their hive. As such, the bees don't bring home the food it takes to sustain the hive, reproduce queen bees and

Vegetable Feature: New Potatoes

You will find these first potatoes to have a thin, delicate skin, so handle with care. It is best to store potatoes out of direct sunlight in a well-ventilated, cool place, 45-50°F is ideal. Potatoes are ethylene emitters, so it is best to segregate them from other fruits and vegetables, such as apples, that are sensitive to ethylene.

When you are ready to use your potatoes, wash the outside skin. All of our varieties are waxy varieties of potatoes meaning they have more pectin than starch. As such, they hold their shape well when used in soups and stews. They are also good to use in salads or roasted. If you want to incorporate them into a mashed potato preparation, I would caution you to not mash them too much or they will become sticky and paste-like. Go for a smashed potato variation and enjoy the coarseness of the dish.

populate the hive. There are thought to be other impacts on bees as a result of chemical exposure to neonicotinoids that may also contribute to colony collapse disorder.

Rest assured our organic potatoes will never have a systemic poison in them. As you walk through our fields, you will see an abundance of insects, bumblebees and honeybees. We find them not only intriguing, but reassuring to know they are still our allies.

We hope you enjoy the potatoes we've grown for you this year as much as we've enjoyed growing them for you!

Additional information on Neonicotinoids and their impact on bee populations is available at

www.xerces.org/neonicotinoids-and-bees/

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Summertime Pan Braised Chicken with New Potatoes & Greens Serves 4 *Recipe developed by Andrea Yoder*
Chef's Notes: The beauty of this dish is the simplicity of the ingredients. As the dish cooks on the stove top, you keep adding layers of flavor to the pan. This is best prepared using bone-in chicken thighs or legs, which will stay moist throughout the cooking and will impart additional flavor to the sauce that is created in the pan. The moisture that is released from the vegetables as well as the additional wine and water/stock create a pan sauce as you build your dish. The potatoes will release starches into the liquid causing it to thicken the sauce. When I prepared this dish I used half Swiss chard and half Egyptian spinach. You could use all chard or Egyptian spinach or any other summertime cooking green.

Cooking Time: 45 minutes

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| 1 tbsp vegetable oil | 2 bay leaves |
| 4 chicken thighs or legs, skin removed | 2 cups potatoes, skin on, medium dice |
| 6-8 cloves garlic, sliced thin | 1½ cups zucchini or summer squash, medium dice |
| 2 cups onion, medium dice | 4 cups Swiss Chard, Egyptian Spinach or other summer cooking greens |
| ¾ cup white wine | 2 tbsp butter |
| 1½ cups water or chicken stock | Salt and black pepper, to taste |

1. Heat a 12" sauté pan over medium high heat. Add 1 tbsp of oil to coat the bottom of the pan. Season chicken pieces with salt and pepper. Add the chicken pieces to the hot pan and sear them on one side for about 3-4 minutes or until golden brown. Turn chicken pieces over and sear the other side for another 3-4 minutes.
2. Add onion and garlic, sauté for 2-3 minutes or until the garlic and onions are soft and starting to brown. Add ¾ cup white wine and reduce it for about 2 minutes.
3. Add potatoes to the pan along with water or stock. The level of the liquid should just cover the potatoes in the pan. Return to a rapid simmer and add 2 bay leaves. Simmer, uncovered, for 12-15 minutes or until potatoes are just turning tender.
4. While the potatoes are simmering, prepare the squash and greens. Wash greens well in a sink of cold water. Shake off any excess water. If using chard, cut the stems into bite sized pieces and set aside with the zucchini or squash. Cut or tear the chard leaves, Egyptian spinach or other greens into bite sized pieces and set aside.
5. Once the potatoes are tender, add the zucchini/squash and chard stems. Season with salt and pepper and simmer for 8 minutes. You should still have a small amount of liquid in the bottom of the pan at this point.
6. Add the greens, season again with salt and pepper. Put a lid on the pan and reduce the heat slightly. Simmer with cover on for about 4-5 minutes or just until greens are soft and wilted. Remove the lid from the pan. Take the chicken pieces out of the pan and set aside.
7. Add butter to the vegetable and sauce mixture remaining in the pan. Stir to combine until the butter is melted and incorporated. Taste some of the sauce and vegetables, adjust seasoning if needed. Serve the chicken pieces on top of the vegetables and sauce.