



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com

July 1-2, 2016

Mid-Summer Farm Update

By Capt Jack, The Dog

Hello Everyone! Can you believe the first day of July is this week! There's been so much going on around here I have kind of lost track of time. I recently heard my Dad (Farmer Richard) tell someone we are now past the longest day of the year and the days will start to get progressively shorter. Thankfully we still have several more months of summer to enjoy, and a lot more vegetables to eat before winter rolls in!

I wanted to give you a glimpse into what I'm seeing as I travel through the fields each day with Farmer Richard. Let's get an important discussion out of the way first.... Garlic. This is the time of the year when Dad and I start to visit the garlic field every day, and sometimes twice a day. We're checking the garlic to see if it's ready to harvest yet. Dad says it's not quite ready yet, we're thinking next week will be the big week of harvest.

Here's something else exciting to share. The corn is starting to tassel! We'll need to put up all the shiny bird deterrents, fence and electric tape pretty soon to keep the critters out of the field. We're thinking we'll be picking corn within a few weeks. You may be wondering about the rest of the popular summer vegetables like tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers. I'm happy to report the tomatoes, tomatillos and peppers all look healthy and fantastic! The cucumbers have been a challenge this year. We will have cucumbers, they'll just be a little behind schedule.

We've been harvesting quite a lot of broccoli last week and this week. Our first and second plantings of the year are heading up and the guys just keep cutting and cutting! It's kind of funny to consider that while we're harvesting our spring-planted broccoli, we're also planting our fall broccoli. We have one more planting to do next week and then our 2016 broccoli plantings will be done. Mom has been asking Dad when we'll have cauliflower. He keeps telling her the spring-planted cauliflower is waiting for cooler temperatures to make a head. The cauliflower must think like I do. When it's really hot, like it was last weekend, I prefer to work minimally and hang out in a cool place. This week has been a much more mild week, so I think we'll start seeing the heads forming on the cauliflower plants very soon.

Wait until you see the big, beautiful head of leaf lettuce in your boxes this week! We've had pretty good early season

This Week's Box

FRESH GARLIC: Handle fresh garlic with care as the cloves can be easily bruised. Keep the garlic in the refrigerator until ready to use. You'll notice the skin surrounding the cloves is thicker than it is after it is dried. Simply peel away the thick skin to reveal the tender, juicy cloves inside.

PURPLE CIPOLLINI ONIONS: Slice the lower part of the onion finely and use it in a stir-fry. Thinly slice the green tops and add them to the stir-fry just before serving.

LACINATO KALE: Slice thinly and toss with lemon juice, olive oil, minced fresh garlic and Parmesan cheese. Let the salad rest for about 30 minutes before serving.

SUGAR SNAP PEAS: The pods on this variety are edible. Simply remove the stem and the string on the top of the pod. Lightly steam, stir-fry or eat them raw.

REDLEAF LETTUCE: Make a strawberry vinaigrette to lightly dress the lettuce. Top with sliced fresh strawberries, feta cheese and toasted almonds.

STRAWBERRIES: This is likely our final week of strawberry picking. If you haven't had a strawberry sundae yet, now's the time.

BROCCOLI: Don't forget to eat the stems and the florets! Peel away the outer skin on the stem to reveal the tender, sweet flesh inside.

ZUCCHINI: Time to make zucchini fritters!

GREEN TOP RED BEETS: Beets and fennel pair well together in salads, or check out the pizza recipe in this week's newsletter.

FENNEL: Check out this week's vegetable feature and recipes.

GREEN AND YELLOW BEANS: Just in time for your July 4th Celebrations! Snap beans into bite sized pieces and sauté with fresh garlic and butter!

head lettuce this year. Rain and humidity can be very detrimental to a lettuce crop, but my Dad chose some good lettuce varieties this year and they held up well despite some rain and hot days. We're thankful to have had these lettuces this year as our spring salad mix and spinach has been quite a challenge. We are looking forward to the fall when we plant spinach and salad mix again. They grow much better in the fall.

Oh, I wanted to let you know the winter squash field looks awesome right now! Despite a few annoying bugs on the plants, they look very healthy and are filling out very nicely. We're optimistic that we'll have a good winter squash crop to harvest later this fall. The pumpkins also look pretty good. Some of you may have seen them when you were at our party a few weeks ago.

In addition to the crops, we've also been busy dealing with weeds. We were caught up with weeding earlier in the season, and then we had a period of rain and the temperatures spiked. These are the perfect

conditions for weeds to take advantage of and they literally grew overnight! While I really don't like weeds, I have to admit I have a lot of respect for the intelligence of a weed seed. Weeds are opportunists and will establish themselves whenever and wherever conditions are favorable. Dad says the weeds are going to slow down now. Weeds like to multiply by producing seeds that drop back into the soil or blow around. They have to have enough warm days to do so though. Now that we're past the longest day of the year, the weeds won't waste their time germinating because they know they don't have enough time this year to produce seed. Unfortunately they don't just go away, they'll lay in the soil and wait until next year to grow. For this year though, it means the pressure of having to hand weed will let up a little bit.

Well, I have a lot more to tell you, but I'm out of room and need to get back to work. We hope you've been enjoying your boxes so far this year and continue to have fun cooking and eating!

Vegetable Feature: Fennel

by Andrea Yoder

You'll be able to identify fennel in your box this week by its unique appearance and distinct aroma. Most of the fennel plant is edible, however the white bulb at the base of the plant is the most commonly used part. The soft, fine, feathery green portion extending off the stalks is called "fronds." The fronds are also edible and can be used more as an herb, seasoning or garnish to add a bit of flavor to soups, salads, etc. The stalks are sometimes too fibrous to eat, however they have a lot of flavor and can be used to make vegetable stock or a soothing tea.

Fennel has the flavor of anise, or mild licorice, which some people love and others are still learning to like. The bulb is crisp, sweet and can be eaten raw or cooked. If you are in the group of people who just really don't care for the flavor of licorice, you may find fennel more enjoyable if you cook it. When sautéed, roasted or otherwise cooked, the oils in fennel that give it the distinct flavor volatilize which lessens the intensity of the flavor and develops the natural sugars.

Fennel may be used in gratins, cream soups, seafood dishes, simple salads and antipasto platters. It pairs well with a whole host of other foods including lemons, oranges, apples, honey, white wine, olives, beets, tomatoes, potatoes, fish, seafood, pork, cured meats, beans, cream, Parmesan cheese, feta cheese, cucumbers, dill and parsley.

Fennel is a good source of calcium, iron, magnesium, zinc and vitamins C & A. The volatile oil I mentioned earlier, anethole, has been shown to reduce inflammation and help prevent some cancers. It is also aids with digestion and freshens breath.

Fennel should be stored in the refrigerator, loosely wrapped in plastic. When you are ready to use it, you may need to peel off the outer layer of the bulb to wash away dirt that may be between the outermost layers. The outer layer is still usable after it is washed. Cut the bulb in half and make a V-shaped cut into the core at the base of the fennel bulb. Remove most of the core, then slice thinly or cut as desired.

Yield: 3-4 servings

Caramelized Fennel & Beet Pizza

By Andrea Yoder

Pizza dough, homemade or premade, enough for a 12" pizza	½ cup white wine	⅓ cup Parmesan cheese
2 tsp olive oil	1 ½ tsp honey	1 ½ Tbsp lemon juice
1-2 fennel, bulbs with stalks and fronds intact	1 egg	1 tsp lemon zest
2-3 cloves fresh garlic, peeled and sliced thinly	1 Tbsp heavy cream	1 Tbsp honey
	7 oz fresh goat cheese	2 ½ Tbsp olive oil
	1 bunch beets	Salt and Black pepper, to taste.
	4 slices bacon, cooked and coarsely chopped	

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F.
2. Prepare fennel by removing the outer portion of the bulb if necessary. Cut off the stalks just above the bulb. Cut the bulb into quarters and, using a V-cut, remove the core from each quarter. Thinly slice the bulb and the lower portion of the stalk up to the point where the fronds start to form. You will need a total of 2 cups of sliced fennel. Set aside remaining stalks and fronds for later use.
3. Heat 2 tsp olive oil in a medium saute pan over medium heat. Add sliced fennel & garlic and sauté over medium heat for 8-10 minutes or until the fennel has softened. Stir fennel periodically as it cooks. Once the fennel is softened, add ½ tsp salt, freshly ground black pepper, white wine and honey. Bring mixture to a simmer. Simmer until all the liquid has evaporated, then remove from heat and cool slightly.
4. Form the pizza dough into a 12" round. Lay it out on a pizza pan or baking stone. Parbake the crust for about 5-6 minutes in a preheated oven. Remove crust from the oven and set aside until you are ready to assemble the pizza.
5. Next, beat the egg in a medium bowl until it is pale yellow and frothy. Add the heavy cream and continue to beat until the cream and the egg are well-combined. Finally, add the fresh goat cheese and beat on high speed until the mixture is smooth.
6. Separate fennel fronds from the remaining stems and finely chop them. You will need 2 Tbsp plus ½ cup of finely chopped fronds. Fold 2 Tbsp of fronds into the goat cheese mixture. Set the mixture aside.
7. Cut the beets off the stems. Scrub the exterior of the beet roots with a vegetable brush. Depending upon the size of the beets, you will need 1-2 medium beets. Set the remaining beets aside for another use. Wash the beet greens carefully, pat or spin dry and set the greens aside.
8. Very thinly slice the beets using either a knife or a mandolin.
9. Assemble the pizza. Spread the goat cheese mixture on the parbaked pizza crust. Spread the chopped bacon over the goat cheese layer. Lay the thinly sliced beets on top of the bacon. The beets will shrink a little bit during cooking, so place the slices of beets very close together and try to cover the majority of the pizza surface.
10. Next, spread caramelized fennel evenly on top of the beets. Sprinkle Parmesan cheese over the entire pizza. Put the pizza in the preheated oven and bake for 15-17 minutes or until the crust is golden brown.
11. While the pizza is baking, thinly slice the beet greens and stems. You should have about 2 cups of greens. Put the beet greens and stems in a medium mixing bowl and set aside.
12. In a small mixing bowl, combine lemon juice, zest, honey and olive oil. Whisk together to make a vinaigrette. Season with salt and black pepper.
13. Once the pizza is fully baked, remove it from the oven and allow it to rest for at least 5 minutes before serving. Just before serving, drizzle a little bit of the vinaigrette over the beet greens. Use just enough to lightly coat all of the greens. Save the remainder for another use. Serve the pizza with lightly dressed beet greens spread on top.

Check out our blog at www.harmonyvalleyfarm.blogspot.com for a Caramelized Fennel on Herbed Polenta recipe.

Caramelized Fennel on Herbed Polenta

Serves 2

2 to 3 cups vegetable broth, as needed

½ cup polenta

Fine sea salt, to taste

1 large fennel bulb

Ghee or coconut oil

2 Tbsp raw fennel seeds

1 to 2 Tbsp maple syrup, to taste

¼ cup chopped mixed herbs, such as parsley, dill, and chives

¼ cup grated Pecorino Romano cheese (optional)

Olive oil

1. Heat the vegetable broth in a large saucepan until simmering. Slowly pour in the polenta in a steady stream, whisking all the while to prevent clumping. Add a few pinches of salt. Stir constantly for a couple minutes, then reduce the heat and simmer, stirring every 5 minutes or so for 30 – 45 minutes. If the polenta becomes too thick, add more broth or hot water and whisk until smooth. The polenta is cooked when you rub a small amount of it between your fingers and it is no longer gritty, but instead creamy and smooth.

2. While the polenta is cooking, cut the fennel bulb into thin vertical slices (from the top to the base).

3. Heat the ghee or coconut oil in a large skillet on medium-high heat. Working in batches, add the fennel slices to the skillet, making sure that they all come into contact with the surface of the skillet (not overlapping-you may have to work with a few slices at a time). Sprinkle with sea salt. Do not stir or move the fennel until it is golden on the bottom, about 5 to 7 minutes. When all the pieces have browned, flip them onto the uncooked side. When the underside has also browned, add a sprinkling of fennel seeds and a ½ Tbsp of the maple syrup, and let cook for 1 minute. Toss to coat, transfer fennel to a plate, and repeat until all the fennel is cooked. Season with salt if desired.

4. Add the chopped herbs and grated cheese to the polenta, and give it a final stir. Whisk in a little more broth or water to thin it if necessary.

5. To serve, scoop a portion of polenta onto a plate, then arrange the caramelized fennel on top. Add a drizzle of olive oil.

Recipe borrowed from Sarah Britton's book, *My New Roots*.