



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993
Twin Cities Edition - Brown Week Delivery

June 25, 2009

Strawberry Day 2009 by Terri Kromenaker

This past Sunday was Strawberry Day – our first farm event of the CSA season and a celebration of the miracle of the strawberry. Strawberry Day generally falls on Father’s Day, the traditional peak date for ripe strawberries, and I think many families are now combining the festivities. We had so many families here – we’re guessing about 250 people again this year! It’s so exciting and encouraging to see so many parents raising their kids organically and helping them learn about where their food comes from, how it grows and bringing them out to the farm to meet their farmers.

The main event was on Sunday but we had about 12 tents set up to camp in our meadow on Saturday night. Richard went down to the campground when he got back from the Farmer’s Market and saw a “herd of children” (his words) chasing fireflies and heard about their adventure climbing the muddy bank, washing off in the spring creek and just enjoying the setting.

If you couldn’t make it to the farm this past weekend, remember that you can always come and camp. CSA members are invited to visit the farm just about any time during the season, not just when we have a party! Give us a week’s notice if you’d like to camp and we’ll mow the meadow for you. If you’ll be here during the week we’ll let Chef Bri know that she’ll have guests for the noon lunch. Save the dates for the next fun farm events: the Summer Barn Dance (our only Saturday event!), Saturday July 11 and the Harvest Party, Sunday September 27.

Saturday, we recruited a work crew to get ready for the party, deep cleaning the shop, setting up tables for the potluck, and cleaning the tractors and wagons for the field tours. Working at a farm is hardly ever a 9-5, Monday through Friday gig; there’s always something to do and hardly enough time in the day to do it all, so thankfully we have an awesome, hard-working crew that is always ready to lend a helping hand when asked.

THIS WEEK’S BOX

ROMAINE OR RED LEAF LETTUCE: The crispy Romaine lettuce is strong enough to hold its own with a thick, rich classic Caesar dressing. The redleaf, harvested early, is young and delicate. Add some shredded cabbage and scallions to either salad for a little extra interest.

SPINACH: We have had a great spinach season this spring! Enjoy it while it’s here, it won’t be here much longer. Spinach seeds don’t germinate in the heat of the summer, so we’ll be taking a little break until fall.

STRAWBERRIES: Toss with a drizzle of honey, a splash of balsamic vinegar and a generous sprinkling of black pepper. Roast in the oven at 350°F just until soft. They’ll make their own syrup and are perfect on top of pancakes.

SCALLIONS: Don’t forget to eat the green tops too—they are full of flavor and add a nice touch on top of a taco, sandwich or salad.

GARLIC SCAPES: While they make a beautiful centerpiece display, you really should try eating them. Chop them in a food processor with olive oil, grated hard cheese, and pine nuts. Makes a great scape pesto to spread on bread or pizza.

SUGAR SNAP PEAS: Don’t forget to remove the string from the pods, and don’t bother removing the peas from the pod—the entire pea is edible!

SALAD MIX OR ARUGULA: This spicy green, arugula or rocket, goes great as a salad base topped with grilled peaches, a light honey vinaigrette and crumbled feta. A great balance of spicy, sweet, and salty.

NAPA CABBAGE: Shred and mix with other veggies to make a great coleslaw.

AMARANTH: See veggie feature on back

SUMMER SQUASH: We are just starting to harvest our summer squash & have several different varieties. You probably recognize the familiar green zucchini. If you get a striped zucchini, this is a traditional Italian variety named Flamino. The round yellow and green squashes are scallopini squash. Slice and enjoy raw with dip as part of a veggie platter, or lightly sauté for a stir fry or in pasta.

CHARD: Both the stem and leaf are edible, although the stem will require a little longer cooking. Stores well in a bag in the crisper drawer.

On Sunday, we started the day with a huge potluck – so much to eat and so little time! Chef Bri had prepared an amazing frozen strawberry delight for dessert, but we had to let it melt a little bit before cutting, so we saved it for when the wagon tours returned. We had planned on staggered tour times, but there were so many people we had to fill all three wagons at once!

Juan, Angel and José Manuel drove tractors, while Andrea, Darin and Richard served as tour guides. The tour started at some of our leased land, “Dorothy’s Bench” (we lease the land from Dorothy and it is located on a couple acres of flat space in the midst of all the hills and valleys of our area). At the first stop on the tour, everyone had the chance to “pet” the fennel. The soft fronds are always fun to run your hand over, and then you can smell the sweet fennel fragrance. Many members also enjoyed picking some of

the barely ripe red currants—boy were there some puckered faces! As we perused the field, one of our missions was to find the first cauliflower head...and we did! Just one lonely little head, but it was fun for those who had never seen a cauliflower growing in the field. We also saw the beautiful rows of sunchokes, dandelion greens, kale, carrots, chard, lettuce and broccoli.

Next stop on the tour was our new farm on Hammel Lane. We bought this farm (with a house for our H2A visa workers) last year, after leasing the land (it’s great land!) and growing there for the first time last season. There was a lot of clean up to do to get ready for this year, but it was ready to show off in time for Strawberry Day! As we looped around the fields, everyone got to sneak a peek at the tomatoes, watermelons, Brussels sprouts, lettuce, eggplant, and celeriac. But the excitement of this farm was when

we stopped in the sugar snap pea patch! I don't think anyone chose to stay on the wagon there! Everyone was anxiously searching for the plump fat pea pods—a sign of a sweet pea. Kids and adults alike were munching on peas and filling their pockets to have a snack for later. One parent stood back at the edge of the field watching his children run down the row of peas....and actually eating what they were picking! This father commented that it was times like this that give him hope for our future in a world that sometimes can seem not too hopeful. We love seeing children try new veggies in the field. There seems to be something magical about seeing it and touching it in the field that turns a veggie from "Ooh, disgusting" to "Hey this is good!"

Final stop on the tour was the Strawberry field. Everyone had the chance to pick and eat as many strawberries as they wanted in the field and CSA members could take home four pints per share free. Including that amount, about 800 pounds of strawberries were picked on Sunday! Next year I think we'll weigh the kids before they go out to the field to find out how much gets into bellies instead of baskets! Thank you to everyone who made the trip – it was so good to put a face to the names of all the people I have spoken to by phone or email. Despite a little rain, I think we all had a great day.

In between tours, visitors had the chance to look in the greenhouses and flower tunnel, plus pick cool rocks in the creek bed and meet the animals. We had

a recent hatching of some baby chicks to look at in the chicken coop, plus the pigs were pretty feisty and fun to watch. Some kids chased the chickens around the yard, and some chickens chased the kids!

After the tour, we heard so many comments about how our members gained a greater appreciation and understanding of farming and what it takes to fill a CSA box. We believe that a visit to the farm deepens your connection to your food – and that's a big part of being in the CSA. If you couldn't make it to the farm this time, we hope you will come for our Summer Barn Dance on Saturday, July 11. Everyone is welcome to camp overnight in our meadow and we'll even make breakfast for the campers on Sunday morning! If you're not the camping type, Viroqua has a nice B & B and a couple hotels. When you visit, you'll have a chance to see how the fields look in mid-summer as well as meet and mingle with other CSA members and more of the HVF crew. We take the day off from the Farmer's Market just so we can dance the night away with you! We'll start the night with an Irish string band and dance caller and then switch gears to a sound system and the best dancin' music we can come up with - hope to see you then!

Veggie Feature: Amaranth

Amaranth is an ancient plant that was part of the diets of Aztec civilizations in Mexico up to 7,000 years ago. It was held as a symbol of immortality and means "never –fading flower" in Greek. There are about 60 different varieties of amaranth, some grown to harvest seeds, others for the leaves, and several ornamental species.

Amaranth is a beautiful plant that is able to adapt well to variable conditions with little impact from weather or disease. This characteristic is due in part to the type of photosynthesis the plant utilizes. Amaranth is able to survive in extreme heat or drought conditions because it is able to convert twice the amount of solar energy using the same amount of water as most other plants. Both the stems and leaves are edible lending an earthy, mild flavor similar to spinach.

The nutritional value of amaranth is particularly exceptional. The leaves of this plant are high in calcium, phosphorus, protein, vitamin C, carotene, iron, B vitamins, and trace elements including zinc and manganese. Compared to spinach, amaranth leaves have three times more vitamin C, calcium and niacin!

Amaranth can be prepared similarly to spinach. It may be steamed, sautéed, added to soups, stews, wilted and used in cold salads, or made into a sauce. Small, tender leaves can be added to green salads. Amaranth should be used soon after receiving it. If you do need to store it, wrap the base of the stems with a wet towel and store in a plastic bag in the refrigerator.

Veggie Stir-Fry with Orange Cashew Sauce

2 cups Napa or Sweetheart Cabbage, sliced thin	1 Tbsp Toasted sesame oil
2 cups greens, roughly chopped (Amaranth, yukina savoy, beet greens, chard, sauté mix, etc)	3 ½ Tbsp Soy sauce
3 Scallions, sliced on the bias	3 Tbsp Cashew butter
3 Garlic Scapes, chopped	3 Tbsp Rice Vinegar
1 cup sugar snap or snow peas, cut in half	1 tsp ground cumin
2 cups broccoli (florets & stems)	½ tsp ground coriander
2 cups summer squash or zucchini	1 ½ -2 tsp ground white pepper
12-16 oz Beef (Skirt steak, flank steak, or tenderloin), sliced into ½" strips	1-1 ½ tsp freshly ground black pepper
	Juice of one orange
	½ cup fresh basil, chiffonade

--Wash and cut all vegetables. Set aside in separate piles as they will be added to the pan at different times.

--Trim and cut beef.

--In a small bowl, combine sesame oil, soy sauce, cashew butter, rice vinegar, cumin, coriander, white pepper & black pepper. Stir to combine into a thick paste. Gradually add the juice of one orange and stir until well combined.

--Heat a wok or large skillet over medium-high heat. Add 1 tbsp sunflower oil to the pan. Add beef and stir-fry about 5 minutes. Add garlic scapes, scallions and cabbage. Stir-Fry for 2-3 minutes. Add remaining vegetables and stir-fry for about another 5 minutes.

--Stir in sauce, lower heat to medium and simmer for another 3-5 minutes or until sauce is slightly thickened.

Remove from heat and stir in basil.

--Serve over hot rice, quinoa or millet.