News from

Harmony Valley Farm

An Update for Our Community Supported Agriculture Members

Harmony Valley Farm, S. 3442 Wire Hollow Rd., Viroqua, WI 54665
608-483-2143 harmony@mwt.net www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com

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THIS WEEK'S BOX

PEA VINE - EVERYBODY'S FAVORITE!

LITTLE GEM LETTUCE - A MIMI-HEAD. GREAT ON SANDWICHES.

SALAD MIX - THE YEAR'S BEST MIX YET!

GREEN GARLIC - CUT OFF THE TOPS IF YOU FIND THEM YELLOWING BEFORE YOU ARE READY TO USE THE GARLIC.

ARUGULA - A SPICY GREEN THAT IS A FOUNDATION FOR THE SALAD MIX

SPRING RADISHES - MAYBE THE LAST WEEK.

ASPARAHGUS - MAY BE THE LAST

CHOICE BOX: RHUBARB

NEXT WEEK - STRAWBERRIES, KOHLRABI AND CILANTRO

The Love of Cooking, the Joy of Eating, and Health

There has been a lot of discussion flying around the culinary world about health, for the past few years. Many chefs, myself included, have a belief in the connection between the "Love of Cooking", the "Joys of Eating", and corresponding health issues. In France (a society based around cooking love and eating joys) they take great pride in triple cream cheeses, soft, buttery croissants, duck cooked in a vat of its own fat, and countless other dishes that make some Americans fear, and Frenchman cheer. The question is, "How can they be so healthy, with much lower rates of heart disease, hypertension, stroke, with a diet like that?" Nutritionists want you to believe that it can all be explained by how they eat. They eat many small courses over a long period, so they actually eat less in the long run. They are also more active, many walk or ride their bikes everywhere. Ok, but I don't think they have the whole picture, because they can only state scientific fact. Ask any Frenchman and he will tell you, "It's the way we live!" Scientifically, STRESS has been identified as a key ingredient to dis-ease in all forms of the term. This combined with unhealthy diet leads to... Death. The reason the French are more healthy is their lowered stress level. What makes their stress level so low? Eating! Enjoying food = Enjoying life. If we look at the basis of French food we find Passion, Care, and great Pride. Food in France is very regional and seasonal. Super rich foods are mainly limited to the cold winter months, when your body metabolizes fat most efficiently, and only in the regions where those ingredients are prevalent. The ingredients themselves are almost always local, and very fresh. The food, created by Loving hands, enlivens the soul, giving joy through wondrous flavors and sensations. The best way to describe this is with energy. Passion, Love, Joy, and Attentiveness are all positive, high-energy words, as well as tangible feelings. Hand-crafted cheeses, Artisanal breads, fresh local vegetables, ingredients created with love, by passionate people, showing great attentiveness all to, bring themselves, and others, joy, harmony with their community and within themselves, and positivity in life — all related to food, the fuel. It is no wonder to me why they have less stress, and thus, less dis-ease.

In America, appreciation for finer things has become a materialistic pride. The joy has turned from experience to accumulation. It has robbed us of our passion. It is my challenge to you to open your hearts when you cook. Smile! Take pride, and be attentive when you cook. I guarantee you will notice a difference, if not in taste, in the way you feel after you've finished. Take time to enjoy your meal. If you don't have time to eat, grab some fresh fruit or vegetables, a crust of bread, and a piece of cheese. Wait until you do have time. Make time! Eating bad food or worse, fast food, while in a rush, under pressure, under stress, is a Molitov Cocktail for your body. Be good to yourselves! Put only "Super Premium High Octane" in your fuel tank. What you put in is what you'll get out, so put Love, Passion, Joy, and Happy Positive energy back into your life.

Happy Cooking, Happy Eating, Happy Living! Harry

Michael Pollan on Organics - read him if you can

Michael Pollan, a name new to us until a few months ago, has earned our respect for his thoughtful commentary and reporting on food issues. His most recent article, appearing in the New York Times Magazine, May 13, about the "organic industrial complex" is the first we've seen that really grasps the big picture of what organic is, where it is going and in what it was rooted. Mr. Pollan looks at Cascadian Farms, one of the few national organic brands, from its inception of a few acres tended by idealistic hippies to its status today as a division of General Mills. Through the Cascadian story he allows us to glimpse at the misconceptions, contradictions, hard choices and unanticipated evolution of an industry that began as an agricultural alternative, a social revolution or an unrealistic dream, depending on who you ask.

Are the thousands of corporate Cascadian acres a sellout or an environmental boon? (If 1 % of the pesticides used in conventional ag end up on food, where do the other 99% go? Into the environment! Cheer the organic farm -- the bigger, the better.) Another twist though; the conversion of thousands

Pea vine is the order of the day here at Harmony Valley. Young, fresh tops of a pre-pod pea plant(say that five times fast), they are sweet and delicious, with a wonderful pea flavor. I recommend pulling it apart, and separating the tender leaves and top stems from the fibrous main stalk. This will make it easier to work with and more enjoyable to eat. It can be sautéed just how it is, in a little butter or olive oil, and S&P, or put into salad mix, sauté mix, fresh pasta dishes, just about anywhere you would put peas, or greens, 'cause this is both. - Harry

Pea Vine and Spinach Lasagna

1 bunch pea vine, separated, stemmed, and chopped
1 bag HVF spinach.
4 green garlic whites, quarted and sliced thin
1 bunch winter onions, sliced thin
2 T. + 2 T. olive oil
2 cups tomatoes diced
1/4 c. fresh herb, your favorite, chopped (I used thyme, marjoram, oragano, and tarragon)
15 lasagna noodles, cooked, and rinsed
1cup fresh soft cheese (ricotta, brebis, fresh goat cheese, even drained cottage cheese)
1 1/2 lb. Low moisture cheese (mozerella, white cheddar, asiago, monterey jack)
S&P to taste

Heat two saute pans, each with 2 T. oil. Add 1/3 of the onion and garlic to each pan. When garlic begins to become translucent, add spinach to one pan, pea vine to the other. Cook just until wilted. Season, remove from heat, and set aside. In a bowl combine tomatoes, herbs, S&P, and a splash of olive oil (1 t). In a baking dish place 1/2 c. tomato mixture. Layer three noodles, then low moisture cheese, then 1/2 cooked pea vine, high moisture cheese, and more noodles. continue making layers alternating spinach and pea vine. Top, final layer of noodles with low moisture cheese, then with remaining tomatoes, sprinkle tomatoes with any remaining cheese. Bake at 350 F for about 1 - 1 1/2 hours, or until heated through. Let dish rest for 5 - 10 minutes before serving.

from front page

of conventional acres in California by large players has resulted in over half the $400 million organic produce market in that state being controlled by 5 giant farms. The results, more organic food available, lower organic prices and a steady squeezing out of many smaller farmers "for whom organic was the niche representing a way out of the cheap-food economics that has ravaged conventional agriculture for the past few decades."

Another revelation from Pollan: "Farms produce more than food; they also produce a kind of landscape, and if I buy my organic milk from halfway across the country, the farms I drive by every day will eventually grow nothing but raised ranch houses," he points out.

Finally, is there importance in the spirit of organic vs. the letter-of-the-law organic? Mr. Pollan asks us to examine this. "In the eyes of General Mills, an organically grown fruit or vegetable is not part of a revolution but part of a marketing niche, and health is a matter of consumer perception. You did not have to buy into the organic 'belief system' to sell it" [or grow it.]

The USDA is now in control of the definition of organic and will say who is and who is not! When the system is bringing food from far away to the buyer, buyers have to rely on the word of a certifier (the USDA now), there is no other way to know how it was grown. Consumers, however, can decide if organic from far away is what they are looking for, or if it is something more. There is no substitute for knowing and trusting the farmer. Michael Pollan stimulates us to see a broad picture of organic and all the issues that surround it.

Agricultural Innovation Gone Bad

Dairy farming, as we all know by now, is in a state of cardiac arrest and, if and when it is revived, it may not resemble the dairy farming that has been a foundation of our state's rural ecomony for several generations. Is dairy farming worth caring about? A study by a Cornell economist has shown that dairy plants have the highest multiplier of any rural industry. Yet family dairy farms are lost daily in this state. Declines in this important industry can't help but have some major negative consequences.

New York state farmers, not content to sit by while their industry crumbles, contribute to research at the Northeast Dairy Research Center. Such research has resulted in technology that will increase dairy product shelf-life considerably by injecting CO2. ('m not sure that's the kind of research the farmers had in mind.) Now, couple that technology with the new policy being considered by the U.S.D.A. to allow milk imported from other countries to be sold as Grade "A" and you set up a situation that will actually hurt the very dairy farmers who funded the research. To avoid the environmental regulations that make large milking operations increasingly difficult to site, fourteen American investors are putting together a 110,000 cow (no, that's not a typo!) dairy operation in Brazil. It would package milk intended for shipment to the U.S. in direct competition with the farmers who spent money to do the research that makes long distance transportation of that milk possible.

There's something wrong with that scenario. Free market --- free trade --- free-for-all --- ***free will***. With my free will I am going to buy milk from local farmers (organic, from Organic Valley, since I have that option), and cheese from the local plant. For those of you who are interested, we are pursuing a good quality, Wisconsin source of organic and/or pasture-dairy cheese that we can delivery with the CSA boxes and feel good about. -- Linda

POLENTA WITH ARUGULA SAUCE

Soft Polenta, cooked and warm
4 garlic cloves, minced
1 teaspoon kosher salt
3 cups arugula leaves, cleaned and trimmed
1 cup heavy cream, hot
2 ounces Parmigiano-Reggiano, grated
Black pepper in a mill

Cook the polenta and when it is nearly ready, place the garlic, salt, and 2 1/2 cups arugula in a food processor or blender and pulse until it is evenly chopped. Add half the cream and process until it is well blended. Add the remaining cream, pulse just enough to mix, transfer the sauce to a small warm bowl, and stir in the grated cheese. Keep the sauce warm. Pour the polenta onto individual serving plates-low soup plates are ideal-and spoon the sauce over each portion. Quickly slice the reserved arugula into thin strips and scatter over the surface. Add several turns of black pepper and serve immediately.

Yield: 4 to 6 servings

Try making the cream sauce with pea vine instead of arugula. Save a few tips and tendrils for garnish.