



# Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

September 2-3, 2011

## Farm to Table Experience by Chef Brigitte Fouch

Some people claim that eating locally is just another food fad that will come and go. I've even been called a 'hippie' for my food choices and been accused of jumping on the local 'band wagon'. However, I do not believe that eating local is going to fade away any time soon.

I first became involved in the local scene just over two years ago. And while I am still new to the movement, I can think of nothing else that has grabbed my attention so quickly and so fully. For me, it started with the food. I wanted to cook with local ingredients because they were simply better tasting. Once I got involved with a few area farms I quickly discovered how time consuming responsible growing is. I was inspired by the time, labor and dedication the farmers put forth in the face of social adversity and environmental challenges to produce their crops. Seeing their hard work gave me more respect for the food and a responsibility to uphold its integrity until it reaches the table.

This year has been a continuation of my learning, both here on the farm and at L'Etoile Restaurant in Madison. I have the unique opportunity to experience both sides of local food. Since I have been working here in Wisconsin, local food has become less about the food and more about the people. I have a huge sense of pride when I see 'Harmony Valley Farm' in italics on the L'Etoile menu because I know where it came from, the people who grew it, picked it, cleaned it and drove it across the state to our kitchen.

This weekend, I had the chance to sit down with Tory Miller, executive chef and co-owner of L'Etoile Restaurant and Graze gastro-pub, and chat about his experience with local eating and sourcing. Tory first became interested in local when he moved to Madison in 2003. He said that the first summer he spent in Madison blew his mind. He got a job working part time for Odessa Piper at L'Etoile and visited the Dane County Farmer's Market every week. He got to know farmers and vendors and began to establish relationships and partnerships. His desire to support the local community grew.

When Tory bought L'Etoile and then decided to relocate to a larger venue, I don't think it is a coincidence that he ended up on the farm market's front lawn. Every Saturday morning you can find him and his large Graze wagon making the rounds at market. Tory says he

## THIS WEEK'S BOX

**ITALIAN GARLIC:** As the weather cools, I tend to crave mashed potatoes. Roasted garlic makes them exceptional!

**YELLOW ONIONS:** Beer battered onion rings go great on top of or on the side of burgers! Make a roasted garlic aioli for dipping.

**HONG VIT RADISH GREENS OR SHUM CHOY:** Hong Vit is tall, green with a pink stem, and is delicious sautéed and can be used as you would any cooking green. Add to stir fries or slice thin and float in miso soup. Shum Choy is in the Bok Choi family and can also be used in stir-fries.

**YELLOW OR RED WATERMELON:** Add mint, chervil, lavender or basil to a cubed melon salad.

**MELONS:** Cut in half, remove the seeds and add a scoop of vanilla ice cream to the center.

**CUCUMBERS:** Stuff cucumbers with feta, finely chopped roasted nuts (your choice), and top with Prosciutto for a tasty appetizer.

**SUMMER SQUASH:** Have you made a chocolate summer squash cake or cupcakes yet?

**VARIETY SLICING TOMATOES:** Spread blue, ricotta or cream cheese on thick toast and top with a thick sliced tomato and a sprinkle of basil.

**ARUGULA:** Fruit complements the pepper flavor of arugula greens; add grapes, raspberries, an orange vinaigrette or other fruit to your salad.

**GOLD OR PURPLE VIKING POTATOES:** The bright colors add interest to your meal when cut in wedges and roasted with oil, salt and pepper. Use as you would any potato, but they don't mash as well as other potatoes – don't overwork them.

**EDAMAME:** Place 2 garlic cloves, 1 roasted pepper, 2T olive oil, 1 tsp hot sauce (or to taste), and ½ tsp cumin in a blender and puree until smooth. Add in 1 cup cooked, shelled edamame and continue to puree until smooth. Add water as needed to achieve dip consistency, season with salt & pepper and call it "edamole" – a tasty dip with more fiber & protein than guacamole!

**YELLOW & GREEN BEANS:** Add to black, kidney and cannellini beans for a colorful 4 bean side salad. Dress with red wine vinaigrette and lots of herbs.

**POBLANO PEPPERS:** These strongly resemble green bells, but they are hot, not sweet! See veggie feature on back of newsletter. Poblanos are best known for their use in Chiles Rellenos. They can be eaten fresh, sautéed or roasted.

**ORANGE UKRAINE OR RED & YELLOW BELL PEPPERS:** See the feature on the back.

feels like a kid in a candy store when he goes to market. He allows the ingredients and people to inspire him and his menus. He has the kitchen staff on the edge of our seats, waiting to see what he will bring back, knowing that it will affect our prep lists for the rest of the day. Some weeks it results in major menu changes and others just minor adjustments.

This weekend I experienced his whimsical farm market adventures first hand. He returned from market with a bag full of what looked like the worlds tiniest watermelons. I was told that these 'mouse melons' would be replacing the cucumber on the heirloom tomato salad. I replied with the obligatory

'Yes, chef' but thought how strange it was to replace cucumber with miniature watermelons. Until I cut into one and I discovered they aren't melons at all but, in fact, are related to cucumbers! Knowing that I would soon have to speak to the servers about this little oddity, I popped the entire kumquat sized 'melon' in my mouth and was surprised by its big flavor. It tasted like concentrated cucumber with a squeeze of fresh lemon juice.

Exposure to these new and exciting ingredients is exciting, however, eating locally in Wisconsin also means eating seasonally. It can be challenging both as a home cook and restaurateur to maintain a local menu in the dead

of Wisconsin winter (Those people in California don't realize how good they've got it!). As a newbie to this area, I asked Tory how he deals with the challenges of our climate here. He laughed and replied simply, "root veggies". His winter menu is laden with beets, potatoes, turnips, radishes, carrots, rutabagas, celery root and of course, onions. He elaborated, saying that he intentionally over purchases throughout the summer to allow for putting by. We dry a lot of tomatoes and mushrooms, freeze fruit purees and pickle vegetables. He also mentioned that there are quite a few innovative farms who use hoop houses and heated green houses and who, for a price, help stock his coolers. He concluded by saying that "the cooks come out in the winter". It is easy to cook with a seemingly endless supply of beautiful, fresh produce but it requires a creative mind to overcome the difficult restrictions presented in a cold climate.

One of the things I enjoy most about working at L'Étoile is that the whole staff believes in the cause. Tory joked that he just gets lucky with the people who apply to work for him, but I believe it's more than luck. He puts forth an effort to motivate the staff and shares his passion with us so that we all have a greater understanding for his goal. We take field trips to visit the farms that supply our coolers and local businesses that stock our shelves. We go see the land where our food comes from and the people who make it happen. We return to work with a renewed sense of responsibility and respect for the products on our cutting boards.

The industrial farming industry has pushed our natural systems to the limit. Whether on the farm side or table side, I feel compelled to be part of the change and restoration. Label me what you will; hippie, locavore, too picky, or eccentric, but I am proud to be a part of the local movement. I am proud to bring people pure and healthy food, to support the people who devote their lives to growing and raising the best possible products, and to experience the full circle of food from the soil to the table.

## Vegetable Feature: Peppers

Most people are concerned with how many peppers Peter Piper picked, but I want to know what kind of peppers did Peter Piper pick? I think the answer would be far more interesting. There are so many varieties and growing techniques and ways to prepare peppers.

Andrea describes growing peppers a 'labor of love'. They are fun and relatively easy to grow, but here on the farm we save seeds from many of the varieties to plant the next year. Richard selects the fruit from the plants he wants to preserve the seeds from in an effort to produce the most flavorful and consistent fruit. Some of the varieties, like the Orange Ukraine, are not available commercially and seeds have to be saved in this way. Others, like the UW roaster are also not available commercially, but in order to obtain these seeds Richard had to give a presentation to undergrads at University of Wisconsin and received these special seeds as payment (hence the name).

We grow both sweet and hot peppers. Our sweet varieties are green bell, red and yellow cross, red pimento Señorita, mini sweets, Orange Ukraine and Italian frying. The hot varieties include poblano, UW roaster, jalapenos, super chili, Guajillo and habaño. The spicy heat of peppers is measured using the Scoville scale. The number of Scoville heat units (SHUs) indicate the amount of a chemical compound called capsaicin which makes a pepper hot. The scale starts at 0 and goes to 15,000,000 SHU. Bell peppers are at the bottom of the scale with 0 and habaño, our hottest pepper, earns 200,000 or more SHUs. Jalapeños and Guajillos rank around 5,000 SHUs. A general rule of thumb: the smaller the pepper, the more heat it packs! The level of heat in a pepper is also affected by the growing environment. Hot peppers usually have more heat in the hot part of the summer as opposed to later in the fall when it is cool. Most heat is in and around the seeds. When handling hot peppers, it is always advised to wear gloves and keep your fingers away from your eyes!

There are several ways to prepare and store peppers. Drying is the oldest and most common way to preserve peppers. They can be sundried on hot, dry days or in a low oven with the door cracked slightly or in a dehydrator. Once dried, they can be crushed into flakes or ground into powder. Peppers can also be juiced using a juicing machine. The juice is best for applications that do not require cooking. Cooking the juice tends to remove the spiciness. The juice can be stirred into soups once cooking is complete or in drinks and cocktails like Bloody Marys or martinis. Candying peppers is not very common, but the uses are vast. Candied peppers can be used in muffins, quick breads, cakes and cheesecakes. Even the syrup, a by-product of candying, can be used to sweeten tea, chocolate, cocktails, caramel or over waffles. Be advised: candying peppers is a rewarding, but long process, spanning over several days. Maybe the easiest way to preserve peppers is to roast, peel and freeze or can them. Peppers can be washed and frozen in their raw state. To save space in the freezer, remove the seed cavity and stem.

This week's recipe focuses on poblanos. Poblanos are a type of ancho, Spanish for 'wide', pepper. Technically poblanos are a specific type of ancho grown in Puebla, Mexico. However, the produce industry uses the term poblano for any green ancho. Poblanos are mildly hot, around 1,500 SHUs. They have high shoulders, sunken tops and medium thick walls. The most popular poblano dish is chili rellenos, which means 'stuffed pepper', but poblanos are a very versatile pepper and deserve your creative mind!

### **Saving Seed & Cooling Down**

Peppers are self-pollinating but insects can move unwanted pollen across varieties. We select seed plants from the inside of a block, but very occasionally, a hot pepper is crossed with a mini-sweet. The famous Spanish sweet pepper, Padron, has an occasional hot one, considered very special to find. But be advised that even a slightly hot mini sweet in the mouth of a young child may not be so special a find. Dairy products (milk, yogurt, sour cream, cottage cheese) are considered the best at soothing a hot mouth.

## Roasted Poblano Chicken Salad

1 # boneless, skinless chicken	2 Tbsp lime juice
1 Tbsp olive oil	¼ cup mayonnaise
1 Tbsp chili powder	½ cup onion, small dice
3 poblanos	

- Rub your chicken in olive oil and chili powder and let marinate for about 30 minutes (you can skip this step if you're short on time).
- Preheat the oven to 375°F. Place the chicken in a roasting pan. Cook for 20 -25 minutes, or until the chicken is cooked through.
- While chicken is cooking, roast peppers. If you have a gas stove, place the peppers directly on the grate over the flame. Turn when the skin is blistered. If you have an electric stove, roast peppers in the oven with the chicken. When the whole pepper is blistered, place in bowl with plastic wrap over the top and allow to steam and cool. When the peppers are cool enough to handle, peel off and discard the pepper skin, then remove the stem and seeds. Puree peppers with lime juice and mayonnaise. Season with salt and pepper.
- When chicken is cooked through, remove from oven and let cool completely. Using 2 forks (or your hands), shred the chicken, then mix with the poblano mayonnaise and onion.
- Serve on sandwiches with lettuce and tomato.