



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

October 28-29, 2011

Los Hermanos Morales Peralta by Terri

The H2A is a special agricultural visa that allows Mexican farmers to journey to our farm for the growing season and return home for the winter. We are fortunate to have many referrals of friends and family from our longtime seasonal H2A workers and this is how we met the Morales Peralta family. We are fortunate to have such a smart, energetic and friendly family working with us!

We first met Manuel Morales Peralta in the spring of 2009, when he arrived to work at our farm with his first H2A visa. The third child in a family of 4 boys and 4 girls, Manuel rocked his first year! He came to us with tractor skills, a twinkle in his eye, and a beautiful singing voice. We trained him in on irrigation and he helped Vicente keep all the fields well watered. Since then, he's become an integral part of the harvest crew and our primary salad planter. You have him to thank for the contents of your bagged mixed greens! Just by watching and assisting our previous salad planter, he has learned quickly how to operate the machine at the proper pace and settings, and the plantings improved once he took over. Because of his experience on the harvest crew, planting accuracy has increased. For instance, from his years bunching cilantro, he knows that we plant it in five rows and that is how he does it. If you plant it in 15 rows, your plants can't thrive and you get a poor stand, meaning no cilantro! He is rightly & justifiably proud of the most recent salad plantings – the fields are brightly colored, vibrant and with extremely straight rows!

Manuel's little brother Rafael is so pretty. Andrea and I wish we had his skin and sculpted eyebrows. Last year he was going for the Mexican Amish look, but this year he's gone 1985 preppy! He can pull off either look, let me tell you. His first season with us (2010), his housemates convinced him to be their cook every night of the week – that is how good he is! Chef Katie worked side by side with him at last year's farm parties, learning his techniques for salsas (sauces) and goat/pig preparation. Along with Angel, he built our new underground oven for pig & goat roasts.

Rafa really likes learning new skills and is not afraid to ask for new, different and more work. Like his brothers, he is mechanically inclined and quite clever. After a frustrating season of crop losses due to bugs, pests and uncontrolled disease, Rafa took over our spraying program. We use organically approved products to protect plant leaves from disease and attempt to control flea beetles during vulnerable parts of the season, and Richard has been able to rely on Rafa to defend the fields with the sprayer. Rafa maintains the equipment, fixes it as needed and figures out

THIS WEEK'S BOX

RED ONIONS: The mild pungent flavor of the red onion is popular served raw in salads, salsas, as a topping for hamburgers or hot dogs, as a garnish for hot spicy chili, and when cooked it can be used in any recipe where you would use a white onion. Store in a cool, dry place with good air circulation.

ITALIAN GARLIC: Mince or chop the cloves to extract the most flavor from them. The whole bulb can be roasted and the roasted cloves removed after cooking.

RED POTATOES: This is the final week of potatoes. If you have some stockpiled, they should continue to store well in a cool dry place, out of sunlight.

LEEKs: Before using, trim rootlets and slit the leek from top to bottom and wash to remove any dirt that may be trapped there. Cook as a vegetable or chop and use in salads, soups, and anywhere you would an onion.

SALAD MIX: A nice assortment of salad greens that make the base of a great side salad; can also be used in sandwiches.

SPINACH: Crisp, green delicious spinach that can be used raw or cooked. Add to salads, soups, sandwiches, pizzas, lasagnas, quiche, omelets, and just about anything you can imagine. Many dishes that use spinach as an integral ingredient are appended with the phrase "A LA Florentine." Note: The bunched spinach was so crisp and delicate we decided not to wash it for fear we would ruin it. Please be sure to wash your spinach prior to using.

SWEET POTATOES: The sweet potato with the orange skin and the sweet deep orange flesh is used for baking, boiling, frying, and roasting. Cubed it works well in soups, and stews. Sweet potatoes can be used as a substitute for regular potatoes in most recipes.

CARROTS: They have become a popular ingredient for baking, such as in cakes, muffins, cookies, bread and biscuits. You might find a random purple or yellow carrot in your bag this week, enjoy the sweet burst of color!

RED MUSTARD: The peppery leaves of the red mustard are often used in dishes that contain onion, garlic, ham, salt pork, or bacon. They can be steamed, sautéed, or simmered, wash them just before using. This is our favorite time of year to eat mustard, as it is especially sweet and mild in the fall with vivid deep red coloring.

LACINATO KALE TOPS: Kale may be prepared in any way suitable for spinach and small amounts make a great addition to a salad. Store in the coldest section of the refrigerator.

CAULIFLOWER, ROMANESCO OR BROCCOLI: Steam until tender, chop into small pieces and bake into a quiche with ham and a nutty cheese.

HONEYNUT BUTTERNUT OR SUGAR DUMPLING SQUASH: The Honeynut butternuts are small versions of the popular Butternut squash. They are the perfect size for a side dish when cut in half and roasted, topped with a little butter and salt and pepper. Roast at 350 degrees for about 20 minutes, then check for tenderness.

RADICCHIO TREVISO: See Vegetable Feature on the back of the newsletter

CHOICE-CARDOON: Pick up an info sheet & recipes at your site

the formulas for mixing the sprayer solutions. Again, because of his experience on the harvest crew, he has an intimate knowledge of the plants and fields. While he is out in the field, he does "scouting" for Richard, looking for worms and bugs and fields that need his attention. Then Richard can hand him a map with the acreage of that crop and Rafa can figure out how many gallons of solution to make for that job. Just like his brothers, he takes pride in finishing the job, doing it well and then moving on to the next task. There is very little wasted time with these guys!

Alvaro is the latest addition to our family, from theirs. One year older than Rafa & several younger than Manuel, he had worked previously in Mexico and the U.S. with horses and other animals. He is a skilled horse trainer and wise guy. Even though this is only his first year here at our

farm, because of his excellent English language skills, great attitude and mechanical aptitude, Richard has been able to train Alvaro in on a number of new jobs and make him crew leader.

The three brothers work well together and have done a great job taking over the FMC harvest duties. The FMC is a root harvesting machine that takes 3 skilled operators: Two tractor drivers that have to stay in sync, driving alongside the harvest bin on a trailer, keeping it under the harvest elevator, operated by the third man. Besides watching the steering cylinder and making other adjustments, you have to watch your speed and turn the elevator on and off appropriately. Richard has seen people struggle to learn all the techniques and learn the subtleties of this machine, but Rafa learned fast. With confidence, he can grease and maintain the machine and fix it in the

field if it breaks down. With finesse and skill, he can get those first 4-5 feet of harvest rather than driving over it as he gets properly lined up.

As with many of our other H2A employees, these guys have a desire to do things right and to please us, their employers. They want to learn everything about working at the farm and they say they want to work here the rest of their lives. Besides a great work ethic, they have proven to be consistent and more than willing and able to do hard physical work. Once when the FMC was broken down, the harvest crew challenged themselves to do the job faster than a machine would – and they did!

The Morales brothers are family men. We had expected to see Alvaro in 2010, but he decided to stay home and help his family by staying in Mexico while one of their sisters was seriously ill. They each have a wife at home, raising the children and keeping the home fires burning, until Papa gets back home from work – in 6-7 months! It takes a lot of motivation to leave your family for half the year, but they do it to build better lives for themselves and their extended families. But they have certainly enriched *our* lives while they are here in the U.S., and we all certainly would not be eating as well without their efforts in the fields.

Produce Plus

<http://www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com/SpecialOffer.pdf>

New!

15# Winter Squash \$15

15# Sweet Potatoes \$30

10# Orange Carrots \$20

**Plus Garlic, Onions, Shallots,
and Garlic Braids!**

Vegetable Feature: Radicchio de Treviso

Don't be mistaken, contrary to popular belief, radicchio is not a lettuce. It is actually a type of chicory. Chicories thrive in cold weather making them a late fall or winter crop. Included in the chicory family are frisée, endive, escarole and radicchio. Varieties of radicchio are named for the region where they originate. These red, leafy chicories originated in the region of Treviso in northern Italy and so, bear the name. The Italians take their chicories almost as serious as they do their cheese. Like Parmigiano-Reggiano, Radicchio di Treviso was granted Protected Geographical Status (PGS) under European Union law.

Treviso is very popular in Italian cuisine, however is shamefully most commonly seen in the US as filler in prepacked mixed greens. It's vibrant colored leaves stand out among the other leafy plants and have a crisp, yet tender texture. Treviso has a bitter taste that we Americans seem to run from. Our palates tend to prefer sweet over bitter, while Europeans embrace bitter flavors. Bitter isn't bad, but it does, generally, need to be balanced. Adding an element of fat, like bacon, cheese, olive oil, toasted nuts or sausage gets the job done. Or, if you wish to stay true to your American palate, adding some sweetness, like honey, apple or pear will also balance out the bitterness. Treviso also mellows when cooked; braising, roasting, grilling or searing are the best cooking methods.

As the availability of salad greens dwindles, Treviso makes an excellent stand in. Another reason we feature this vegetable in the fall is that the flavor balances more in the fall after a cold snap, making it more sweet and mellow. The chill of late autumn days make me crave warming foods and a salad of grilled or sautéed Treviso hits the spot! Grill quarters lightly drizzled with olive oil or sauté on the stove top and top simply with shaved Parmesan, crispy lardons and a drizzle of oil and balsamic vinegar or with sliced apples, fennel and walnuts. But wait there's more! Treviso is more versatile than you may think. It is excellent shredded and added to creamy risotto. You can puree cooked Treviso to make a soup or garnish soups with grilled and chopped Treviso. Use it in pasta dishes that feature cream and sausage or as a filling for stuffed pasta.

To store, keep in plastic bag or wrapped in damp paper towel in the refrigerator. You can pull whole leaves from the head or cut the head in half or quarters, depending on your intended use. In the center of the head is a core, which is edible but most often is discarded. Cut a 'v' shape in halved heads to remove this core or pull whole leaves until only the core remains.

There are entire cook books dedicated to preparing chicories, so don't feel stumped if this is your first encounter with this striking vegetable. But until you can get your hands on one, here are a couple recipes to get you started!

Fall Treviso Salad with Honey-Thyme Vinaigrette

1 head Treviso, julienned; 1 medium gold or red beet, peeled and julienned; 1 apple, julienned; 1 small celeriac, peeled and julienned; 4 T apple cider vinegar; 2 T honey; 1 t stone ground mustard; 1 t fresh thyme, chopped; ¼ c oil (sunflower, olive or walnut); Salt and black pepper, to taste; ¼ c toasted walnuts or pumpkin seeds

Combine vinegar, honey, mustard, thyme. Slowly whisk in oil to make vinaigrette. Combine Treviso, beet, apple and celeriac and toss with vinaigrette. Adjust seasoning with salt and pepper. Top with walnuts/seeds.

Flat Bread Pizza with Roasted Squash and Treviso *This recipe only seems labor intensive. It actually comes together quite easily! You can also use a store bought pizza crust or any pesto you made this summer!*

Squash: 1-2 squash (Butternut, Sugar Dumpling, Festival) **Dough:** 1 c warm water

4 garlic cloves, unpeeled

1 T honey

2 sprigs sage

1 T olive oil

2 T olive oil

1 packet (2¼ tsp) active dry yeast

Pesto (*there will be some leftover!*): 1 c spinach

2 ¾ c whole wheat flour

½ c walnuts, toasted

1 t salt

3 cloves garlic, peeled and roughly chopped

Slaw: ½ head radicchio, outer leaves removed, cored and thinly sliced

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil

4 sprigs flat leaf parsley, leaves finely sliced

Assembly/extras: 1 shallot, sliced thin

Juice of half a lemon

¼ c Parmesan cheese

1 T olive oil

¼ c pine nuts, toasted

Salt and pepper

Roast the squash: Preheat the oven to 400°F. Place halved squash cut side up and top with garlic, sage, oil, salt and pepper. Roast until very tender, about 35-40 minutes. Once cool enough to handle, scrape flesh into a food processor. Squeeze garlic cloves out of their peels into the bowl as well. Blend until smooth and set aside.

Make the slaw: Combine all of the ingredients and store in the fridge until ready to serve.

Make the pesto: Place all ingredients in the bowl of a food processor and pulse until everything is blended, scraping down sides of the bowl as needed. Season to taste. Put in a bowl and cover with plastic wrap to avoid discoloration and set aside.

Make the dough: Combine water, honey, oil and yeast in a large bowl. Let the yeast set for about five minutes or until you see bubbles forming on the surface. Add the flour and salt. Stir with a wooden spoon until combine. Knead with your hands until you have a smooth ball of dough.

Make the pizza! Increase oven to 450°F. Roll dough out to about ¼ inch thickness and transfer to a pizza stone or oiled sheet pan. Spread the squash puree evenly onto the crust. Dollop the pesto on top and sprinkle the shallots on. Bake for 15-20 minutes. Remove and top with radicchio slaw, cheese and pine nuts. Return to oven for 3-5 minutes. Slice and serve warm!