



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

July 26-27, 2013

The Nuts and Bolts of the Shop Crew

by: Kelly Kuester

Like all of our different teams here, our shop crew needs to work together like a well-oiled machine to be efficient. Each member has their own responsibilities, but they also need to work and communicate well together to make sure all of our vehicles, tractors, and other equipment work efficiently each day. Our shop team consists of Rafael Morales Peralta, Jose Ramon Vargas Tovar, Rogelio Pacheco Medina (we found out about him in our June 13th newsletter), Juan Pablo Cervantes Correa, Tim Wirtz and Juan Vargas Cruz. So we start with preventative maintenance. **Rafael** and **Ramon** check all of our tractors, **Rogelio** checks the vehicles (including the CSA truck), and **Juan Pablo** checks all of our wagons. If there is anything wrong with the equipment, they fill out a work order and give it to **Juan** so he can put it on his list of things to fix. Juan does the diagnosis while **Tim** is the man who can find any part we need for our equipment. Most of our equipment is older so this isn't always an easy job. Then Juan is responsible for fixing it and getting it back on the road or in the field, whichever the case. I wanted to take the time to introduce you to some of these guys. I don't have the room to go on and on about all of them at this time, but we will get there before too long. You always have the option of coming out to our farm events to talk with our team in person to learn more about them and their lives.

First up is **Jose Ramon Vargas Tovar**. Ramon does not currently have any other family members working here at the farm. It is okay though; Ramon came to work with us in 2009 because of his best friend from Mexico, Antonio Cervantes, who is still working with us as well. Ramon comes from a family of 3 sisters and 5 brothers and all but one sister is younger than him. Ramon has been married to his wife Luz Maria for 10 years and they have two beautiful boys, Ramon Eduardo (8) and Christian Ulises (3). When he is in Mexico, he works on his family's farm where they milk 20 cows and have a few horses as well. He also spends time harvesting the crops for the cows to eat. Once he leaves to come here to work, his brothers take over his job there. He spends his time teaching his sons about

This Week's Box

NEW POTATOES: Cut into bite-sized chunks, toss with oil, salt and pepper and roast until golden brown. Just prior to serving, toss with basil pesto.

CARROTS: For a quick carrot salad, shred the carrots and toss with a few splashes of white wine vinegar, olive oil, thinly sliced fresh basil & fresh mint.

ZUCCHINI: Zucchini fritters are a great way to use this veggie. Top them off with sour cream, sweet & sour sauce or a fresh tomato salsa.

CUCUMBERS: Cucumber salad is the mark of summer—cool and refreshing. For an Asian inspiration, toss cucumbers, sweet onion slices and carrots with a toasted sesame & ginger vinaigrette. Top with sesame seeds or chow mein noodles.

BROCCOLI OR CAULIFLOWER: Use the stalks of broccoli to make the base for a cream of broccoli soup. Freeze the base and pull it out later in the winter; Cut cauliflower into florets, toss with oil, salt, pepper and seasonings of your choice. Roast until golden brown.

SWEET SPANISH ONIONS: Slice into thick slices and grill them along with steaks or burgers and other summer vegetables such as zucchini or eggplant.

RAINBOW CHARD: This vibrant green is rich in nutrients and flavor. Sauté the leaves and mix into an egg casserole or scrambled eggs.

GREEN AND YELLOW BEANS: Sauté with sweet onions in butter. Garnish with toasted almonds.

CHOICE: BASIL — Use thinly sliced basil to garnish pasta dishes and pizzas.

the farm and how to drive the tractors (more so the 8 year old, not the 3 year old). One day his sons will be doing his work for him on the farm so it is important to Ramon to teach his children how to do the job well. He does enjoy kicking the soccer ball around with his boys as well.

So while here on our farm, Ramon helps out (along with Rafael) in the shop by coming in early each morning to check over our tractors, including checking the oil, tire pressure, lights and cleaning off the tractors as needed. When I asked him what he likes to do on the farm, it was no surprise that watermelon harvest was on the list, as well as cilantro and beet harvests.

Next up I talked with **Rafael Morales Peralta**. Rafael came to us in the spring of 2010 on the heels of his eldest brother Manuel (started here in 2009). Unlike Ramon, Rafael has his 3 older brothers (Manuel, Jose Alejandro, and Alvaro), his sister's boyfriend (Juan Pablo) and his wife's brother (Luis Abraham) all working on our farm. He also has 4 younger sisters. Even though he has family here, it is still hard for him to be away from his wife of 9 years, Adrianna Patricia and their 2 children, Guadalupe Jimina (7) and Adrian Rafael (6). Every weekend they have a family 'grill out' at his parents' house with his brothers and their families. He also has both of his Grandmothers and sadly only one Grandfather left. He learned that his Grandfather passed away

while they were on the bus to come here so they were unable to make it to his funeral. With his family always first in his mind, Rafael spends his time in Mexico with his wife and kids playing soccer, riding bikes and going to the local 'play place' with the kids. Rafael does most of the cooking when he is at home with his daughter helping him out. According to him, his wife and son are sitting on the couch while they are cooking. He has been building his house for 2 years and his brother Alvaro helps him a lot with that.

While here at our farm, Rafael is what I call a 'Jack of all trades', only he seems to excel at all of them. Aside from helping Ramon with the preventative maintenance of the tractors, he is our main cultivator (and he is teaching his brothers as well), he also does some harvesting, planting, bed shaping, and fertilizer/compost spreading—just to name a few other things. I asked what he likes to do best on the farm and his answer surprised me a little. He said he likes the challenge of figuring out the details of cultivating a new crop. He says that it gives him a sense of self-satisfaction when he doesn't have to ask Richard a million questions and he gets it done by himself.

Last up on my list this week is none other than **Juan Vargas Cruz**! He is Mr. Fix-It and so much more. Juan joined our crew of H2A Visa workers in 2007 and has quickly made his way all around the farm. He has truly done it all on the farm, from harvesting to being our first H2A visa

worker to learn our MaterMac planter to fabricating a fix for our new potato digger. So the potato digger we purchased did not quite work with our planting set up and Juan came up with a fix in his head and was able to fabricate and attach a piece that fixed our problem. Juan admits that he really likes that kind of challenge. When not in the shop now, he is usually in the fields flame weeding or on Saturdays he spends time driving Ms. Andrea to the Dane County Farmers' Market and also helps work the stand. I hear that he sets up a very pretty display area as well as helping customers as needed.

Juan started fixing things when he was just a little boy. At the age of 7 he had fixed his uncle's transmission in his car. From there he kept learning and fixing and to this day he still is learning and fixing. Turns out he is also a pretty good welder too! Juan grew up with 4 brothers and 2 sisters and he falls in the middle of that bunch with 2 siblings younger than him. Juan married his wife Ana in 1998 (he just had his 15 year anniversary a week ago) and they have 3 adorable children, Juan Antonio (12), Misael Eduardo (9), and Manuela (3). He makes sure to call home every chance he gets. When back in Mexico, Juan and his family make ice cream and sell it. His wife Ana takes over the ice cream business when he is up here working. They make Lemon, Vanilla, Chocolate, and Oreo cookie flavors every day, but have made over 60 different flavors. He likes to take Ana dancing and enjoys taking the kids fishing, having picnics and grilling out for family gatherings. I asked Juan if he wanted to say anything to our CSA members and his answer was "Hello!" If you are planning to come out for our Harvest Party September 22nd, make sure you find and talk with Juan.

Vegetable Feature: Swiss Chard

By: Chef Beth

The beautiful Swiss chard plant is a hearty and nutritious leafy green that is sure to satisfy the bold home cook. Its leaves are filled with vitamins and minerals making it one of the healthiest greens you can consume. It is packed with vitamins A, C, and K, which makes it a power vegetable for maintaining strong healthy bones. Swiss chard has a flavor that is comparable to spinach and beets. The hearty leaves and stalks can be used in various dishes, from sautéing, to blanching. The greens should be cleaned, dried, and stored in an airtight bag in the refrigerator. Just like spinach, Swiss chard can be preserved and stored in the freezer for a comforting winter stew. Simply blanch and dry the leaves of any excess water and store in a freezer container. The chard stems are often preserved in a pickling-brine and placed in jars for later use.

At the farm, we grow a variety of colors. We grow golden, rainbow, and peppermint chards. During the growth of the chard, weeding is very important for the survival of the plant. The chard at a young state competes poorly with large weeds, so frequent weeding is very important. Once the plant matures, its large leaves can shade out the small weeds, and usually can hold its own. When the leaves are harvested, it is important to keep the crown of the plant intact. A few mature leaves are harvested from each individual plant at a time, and the crown is left to grow for the following harvest. The frequent picking of the greens stimulates the growth of new leaves. To rejuvenate the plant, old stalks of chard are picked and composted so the greens can be harvested throughout the early fall.

The great thing about chard is that both the stem and green can be used for different cooking methods. Simply wilt the greens in a pasta or soup dish, blanch and fold to make a healthy vegetable wrap, or toss into a homemade quiche. Sauté the stems or greens in butter with sweet Spanish onions and white wine and place atop a piece of grilled chicken or fish. Swiss chard is also great wrapped in filo dough as a traditional spanakopita appetizer, topped on a pizza, or blended into a fruit shake. Whichever adventurous way you decide to use this nutritious and colorful green, it is sure to add a great dimension to your next meal.

Swiss Chard Rolls

by Chef Beth

Makes 8 Rolls

8-10 large chard leaves, cleaned
 ¼ cup yellow squash, small dice
 ¼ cup cucumber, small dice
 1 half avocado, small dice
 ½ cup black beans, rinsed
 1 cup seasoned quinoa, cooked
 Juice from one lime
 ½ jalapeño pepper, small dice
 2 Tbsp mayonnaise
 ½ medium sweet Spanish onion, small dice
 1 tsp salt
 ½ tsp coarse pepper

1. Bring a large sauce pan of salted water to a boil. Carefully blanch each Swiss chard leaf by holding onto the stem, placing the leaf in the boiling water for 15 seconds, and then transferring to a towel. Pat each leaf dry with a towel and set aside.
2. In a mixing bowl, mix squash, cucumber, avocado, beans, quinoa, lime juice, jalapeno, mayonnaise, onion, salt and pepper together. One by one, place the large leaves, ribbed side facing up, flat side down, fill with a spoon full of the quinoa mixture. Each leaf will not be the same, so the amount of quinoa mixture will vary from each roll.
3. Fold in the sides of the leaves, and fold into a roll. Finish by cutting off the stem and cutting each roll in half and placing on a serving tray. Serve immediately.

Creamy Sundried Tomato and Swiss Chard Pasta Sauce

by Chef Beth

Serves 4

1 Tbsp olive oil	½ tsp coarse pepper
2 Tbsp minced garlic	¼ cup shredded parmesan cheese
¾ cup minced sweet Spanish onion	¼ cup fresh chopped basil
1 cup white wine	1 cup chopped Swiss chard leaves
3 oz. sundried tomato, no oil	Cooked pasta of choice
2 cups half and half	Garnish: shaved parmesan cheese
1 cup heavy cream	
1 tsp salt	Special Equipment: Emulsion Blender

1. In a heavy sauté pan, preheat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the minced garlic and onion and sweat until just golden. Pour the white wine into the pan, scrape the bottom of the pan, and cook for one minute.
2. Add the sundried tomatoes, cook for five minutes, stirring continuously until the tomatoes have soaked up the wine. Next, add the half and half and heavy cream, and bring the temperature down to low, being careful not to scald the cream. Cook the cream mixture for 10 minutes. Next add the parmesan cheese, basil, salt and pepper. Stir to combine. Transfer into a mixing bowl.
3. Using an emulsion blender, carefully blend until the sauce turns a light red and all the tomatoes are pureed. If the sauce is too thick for your liking, add milk or heavy cream, continue to blend. Add the chopped chard leaves.
4. Serve hot with pasta and garnish with shaved parmesan cheese. This dish is also great served with grilled chicken.