



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com

August 11-12, 2017

ATTITUDE

By Farmer Richard

This week we are continuing our on-going conversation about “the future of our food,” a discussion that came to the forefront in our newsletters as a result of the buyout of Whole Foods Market by Amazon. The last article in this series was entitled, “How’s the Weather” and was published two weeks ago. That article served as our first-hand account of our experiences with erratic weather patterns and being the person “downstream” from members of the community who are making poor choices on their land that impact others. In our case erosion from a neighboring property washed down into our valley causing our drainage systems to back up resulting in crop losses and a big mess to clean up. I concluded my last article with -“What’s next? We keep talking. Brainstorming. We need solutions to these issues, we need changes to policy, we need to figure out the course our future will take. We’re back to the ‘future of our food.’ I once again, encourage you to be part of these conversations so we, as a community, can proactively decide our future. There are many things that could be done! But, they take money, direction, leadership, ‘political will,’ regulation, incentives and education. Firstly we need understanding, cooperation and the right attitude.”

This week I’d like to revisit that concept of “having the right attitude.” Some years ago I had the privilege of visiting many farms in Europe over a month stay, both organic farmers and conventional farmers in the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, England and France. I learned so much and made many friends on that trip, but what struck me and made a lasting impression on me was their **ATTITUDE!** The farmers had a positive acceptance of government regulations meant for the common good of the community.

*(See our **blog** for the rest of Richard’s article)*

What’s In The Box?

SWEET ONIONS: This week’s onion variety is named “Zoey.” Zoey is another sweet onion that is mild, yet very flavorful.

ITALIAN GARLIC: Fresh, finely minced garlic is a great addition to fresh tomato or tomatillo salsa. Raw garlic is more pungent than cooked garlic, so gauge the amount you use accordingly.

GREEN BEANS: This is our last crop of green beans, as we lost our final planting to water damage several weeks ago. Next week we’ll spend our time picking edamame and maybe a few more green beans!

ITALIAN OR GREEN ZUCCHINI OR SCALLOP SQUASH: Zucchini and summer squash, a staple summer vegetable, are very fast growing and have to be picked three times a week just to keep up!

ORANGE CARROTS: Last week we mechanically harvested the remainder of our early planting of carrots. We have two beautiful fields of carrots that will be our fall harvested crop and include several different colors!

BROCCOLI OR WHITE CAULIFLOWER OR SWEETHEART CABBAGE: Every box will receive one of these three vegetables. We thought we’d have a little gap on broccoli, but started picking the next crop early this week, however the harvests are still a bit light. We cut the remainder of the sweetheart cabbages this week...no more cabbage until the fall. White cauliflower is starting to wind down now. We’ll have another crop coming in before too long.

JALAPEÑO: There is one jalapeño in your box. It is a small, dark green pepper and it is hot! Use it in either of this week’s featured recipes.

SUN ORANGE OR RED GRAPE OR CHOCOLATE SPRINKLES TOMATOES AND MIXED LARGE VARIETIES: See last week’s “What’s In the Box” section in the newsletter for descriptions of each small tomato variety.

GREEN BELL PEPPER: This is the green, blocky pepper in your box. It will eventually become a red pepper if left to ripen in the field.

ITALIAN FRYING PEPPERS: These are the longer green peppers with a pointy tip. They too will become a red pepper if left to ripen on the plant. This is considered a sweet pepper, so no heat.

GOLD OR PURPLE VIKING OR PETER WILCOX POTATOES: Our potato yields are down since the late July rains and storms we had. Many of our varieties, including purple Viking, will be very limited this year. Purple Viking is a potato with purple skin streaked with some pink. The flesh is white and this potato is good for roasting, frying, baking and even light mashing.

GREEN AND/OR SILVER SLICER CUCUMBERS: Read more about this selection in this week’s vegetable feature.

SWEET SARAH CANTALOUPE: This is our favorite cantaloupe variety. It “slips” off the vine when it is ripe, however if your melon has a bit of green on the rind, you can further ripen your melon at room temperature for a day or two. Keep your eye on it though so it doesn’t get away from you and ripen too fast.

SWEET CORN: Our early crops were very weather challenged! Poor germination in cold, wet soil and then add poor pollination from a latter weather event. We still hope for several weeks of good corn harvest. Richard has already been monitoring for corn ear worms, which can damage an ear of corn. Yes, there is just a small amount in the box today...the perfect amount to cut off the cob and add to cornbread or make a corn salsa! More corn coming, hopefully next week!

CHOICE - VARIETY OF EGGPLANT: For those of you who love or even just like eggplant, we thought we’d send some your way. If you missed our feature a few weeks ago, visit our blog to read more about each eggplant variety and how it is best used. You’ll also find pictures of each variety.

Cooking with This Week's Box!

Welcome back for another week of cooking and eating out of the CSA Box. This week I'm in the mood for simple food. Simple in the sense of basic cooking methods, classic preparations, simple seasonings, and basically just stepping back and letting the vegetables stand on their own. None of this week's suggestions are complicated or intricate. Some recipes may require time to marinate meat or bake something, so you'll have to plan ahead a bit, but nothing is hard or time consuming.

Lets start with this week's featured vegetable, cucumbers! This week I vote for the **Vietnamese Cucumber Salad** featured in our newsletter. This recipe consists of a bowl full of sliced cucumbers and onions tossed with fresh herbs, chopped peanuts, garlic and minced jalapeño dressed with a simple 5-ingredient dressing. It would be excellent served with **Vietnamese Pork Chops**. The pork chops are marinated for about 20 minutes before cooking, so marinate the chops first before you make the cucumber salad.

The next recipe I'd like to suggest is **Sauteed Sirloin Tips with Bell Peppers & Onions** served with **Potato Gratin**. For this meal, you will need to plan ahead and marinate the sirloin tips overnight.

(See our **blog** for the rest of this article & Chef Andrea's suggestions for utilizing every item in your box including recipe links!)

Featured Vegetable: Cucumbers

"Why Cucumbers? (Doesn't everyone know about cucumbers?)" This is the opening line to the chapter about cucumbers in Elizabeth Schneider's book, *Vegetables from Amaranth to Zucchini*. Cucumbers are a fairly mild-flavored vegetable with a high water content, but they are more than just crispy. In this country we may be most familiar with the American green slicer variety, but this is just one of many different types of cucumbers grown around the world. They do have characteristics that vary from variety to variety including appearance as well as flavor. For example, there are long Asian cucumbers that are long and sometimes kind of curled. There are also Armenian cucumbers that are described as "serpentine fruit" because of their long, narrow, curled shape. A few years ago we grew an Indian cucumber called Poonja Kheera.

(See our **blog** for the rest of this vegetable feature article to learn more about cucumbers!)

Spicy Stir-Fried Cucumbers with Shredded Chicken

Yield: 4 servings

12 oz skinless, boneless chicken breast, pounded ½ inch thick and very thinly sliced crosswise
5 garlic cloves, smashed, divided
1 Tbsp finely chopped, peeled fresh ginger, divided
1 tsp baking soda
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
¼ cup distilled white vinegar
1 tsp sugar

3 Tbsp canola oil, divided
12 dried red chiles, such as chiles de arbol—10 left whole, 2 stemmed and crumbled
1 pound cucumbers, cut into 1 ½ inch pieces
1 serrano chile (substitute jalapeño), thinly sliced
¼ cup chopped cilantro
Lemon wedges and steamed rice, for serving

1. In a medium bowl, toss the chicken with half of the garlic and ginger and the baking soda; season with salt and pepper. In a small bowl, stir the vinegar with the sugar and ¼ cup of water.
2. In a large skillet, heat 2 Tbsp of the oil until shimmering. Add the chicken and stir-fry over moderately high heat until the chicken is almost cooked through, 2 minutes; transfer the chicken to a plate. Add the remaining 1 Tbsp of the oil to the skillet along with the whole and crumbled dried chiles, cucumbers, vinegar mixture and the remaining garlic and ginger; season with salt and pepper. Stir-fry over moderate heat until the cucumbers are softened and most of the liquid has evaporated, 3 minutes.
3. Add the chicken and serrano/jalapeño and stir-fry until the chicken is cooked through, 1 minute. Stir in the cilantro and season with salt and pepper. Serve with lemon wedges and rice.

This recipe was featured in *Food & Wine*, October 2013.

Vietnamese Cucumber Salad

2 pounds cucumbers
1 large jalapeño, seeds and veins removed if desired, thinly sliced
3 scallions, finely sliced (substitute 1 medium onion, thinly sliced)
1 garlic clove, finely grated or pounded with a pinch of salt
½ cup coarsely chopped cilantro leaves
16 large mint leaves, coarsely chopped
½ cup toasted peanuts, coarsely chopped

¼ cup neutral-tasting oil (eg. sunflower oil)
4 to 5 Tbsp lime juice
4 tsp seasoned rice wine vinegar
1 Tbsp fish sauce
1 tsp sugar
Pinch of salt

1. Using either a Japanese mandolin or a sharp knife, thinly slice the cucumbers into coins, discarding the ends.
2. In a large bowl, combine the cucumbers, jalapeño, onions, garlic, cilantro, mint, and peanuts.
3. In a small bowl, whisk together the oil, 4 Tbsp lime juice, the vinegar, fish sauce, sugar, and a small pinch of salt.
4. Dress the salad with the vinaigrette and toss to combine. Taste and adjust seasoning with salt and more lime juice as needed. Serve immediately.

This recipe is from Samin Nosrat's book, *Salt Fat Acid Heat*. It was featured in an article on the *alexandracooks.com* blog.