



Live Earth Farm (Com)Post

A weekly newsletter for the Live Earth Farm CSA Community

5th Harvest Week

May 7th – 13th, 2003

Season 8

What's in the standard share:

Fruit:

Strawberries

Veggies:

Bag of baby arugula/mustards mix

Broccoli

Carrots

Collard greens

Fennel

Green garlic

Lacinato "dinosaur" kale

Lettuce

Young onions

Spinach

Mystery item

Herbs:

Italian parsley

Chives

(fennel fronds!)

and if you have an extra-fruit option:

More strawberries!

(over for more!)

About Community: In addition to you, our members, there is a diverse mix of domesticated creatures which make up the community of Live Earth Farm. Twenty chickens, five goats, a pony, six cats, two dogs, bees, and approximately 17 humans participate in the "dynamic, mutually dependent dance" of this farm. I like to

believe that there is a logical and defined role for each of us which is beyond simply eating insects, providing fertilizer, producing milk, controlling weeds, harvesting, planting, watering, and the many other

skillful and specialized tasks we provide during our brief experience on this land. Next week I hope to begin introducing you not just the crops we grow, but also to everyone else who partakes in the Live Earth Farm community dynamic. – Tom

"No heaven can come to us unless our hearts find rest in today. Take heaven! No peace lies in the future which is not hidden in the present instant. Take peace!"

- Friar Giovanni, AD 1513, from "a Grateful Heart"

Buy Fresh Buy Local

Although tucked away in the foothills of Mt. Madonna, we are a bit out of place in our neighborhood. Most Pajaro and Salinas Valley farms have evolved into predominantly large-scale, conventional operations – hugely mechanized and chemically intensive. They are replacing traditional crafts and customs, and with them the stability and pleasures of farm life and close-knit community. Most of the crops grown here on the Central Coast are shipped to markets thousands of miles away, and picked by workers who make a dangerous seasonal journey into our country from Mexico, leaving their families and communities behind. Although global trade may have a place in today's world, I believe that Community Supported Agriculture, farmer's markets, and choosing products that are produced as close to home as possible makes a significant contribution to building a stronger and more sustainable economy and a healthier environment, as well as stonger ties to the community we live in. 🌱

Field Notes

The art of weeding. With all the rain the weeds are thriving, and we spend much of our time keeping them in check so our crops have a competitive advantage. Constant observation and anticipation, and proactivity instead of reactivity, can make the difference between failure and success. Planting when the soil moisture is correct, at the right phase of the moon, at the right time of year for the crop or variety, even the right time of day can lead to a dramatic difference in germination, plant vigor, and plant resistance. When dealing with weeds, timing is especially critical. Remember 'weeds' are merely plants out of place, and weed competition is primarily a problem in the early stages of crop development. Our goal is to never weed, but to cultivate. Cultivation aerates the soil around the plants, and cuts off or buries young, tender weeds. If you actually have to weed, you are too late, and will have created far more work for yourself. The peach trees have a strong fruit set and are ready to be thinned. With a little more warm and dry weather they should be sizing up quickly. Typically the first peaches ripen by late June or early July. I sense a yearning for summer already!!!

New this week: parsley, broccoli, fennel and collard greens. You might confuse this week's parsley with its look-alike cousin cilantro (which you received the last few weeks). Parsley is a member of the carrot family. The variety we grow is flat-leaf Italian, which has a fuller flavor and is more tender than the curly-leaf variety. Collard greens are another overlooked and nutritious vegetable. Their dark green, flat, fan-shaped leaves are filled with vitamins and minerals. Collards are the favorite green in many southern recipes. The fennel bulbs you will be getting this week are on the small side (the rain slowed

them down some), but Debbie said to put 'em in the shares anyway. Fennel has long, rather tubular pale green stalks with fluffy fronds at the top. The base of the stalks fatten into a white, compact, succulent bulb (see pictures in Debbie's recipe database). 🌱

Member to Member Forum

I just wanted to let everyone know that I bought some of the almond butter from Anderson Almonds (talked about here last week), and the flavor is indescribably delicious! I dipped my finger in and took a taste and, wow!! If you like peanut butter, you will be blown away by this almond butter. I am not kidding. I'm going to repeat the info here again, in case anyone missed it last week. – Debbie

• **Almonds!** Mele (rhymes with 'jelly') Anderson of Anderson Almonds, a small, local, family-owned, certified organic farm, sells organic almonds and almond butter, and we have made arrangements for you to get them through your CSA share. The almonds are available raw, roasted, or roasted and salted, and the almond butter comes in 15 oz. jars. Here are the price/combo available (although she is flexible, so if you'd like some variation from this you can probably just ask): 5 lbs. almonds + 1 jar almond butter – \$32; Almonds only (5 lbs.) – \$25; Almond butter only – \$10. OR, a bulk order option: 6-pack almond butter – \$50, or a 25-lb. case of almonds (raw only) – \$120. If interested, place your order directly with Mele (phone 209.667.7494 or see their website www.andersonalmonds.com). We will deliver your almond/almond butter order the following week with your share.

Notes from Debbie's Kitchen

I'm going to try a different tack this week. Instead of just giving you recipes, I will talk more broadly about some of the veggies, offering tips on how to prepare and use them. - Debbie

let's start with Fennel

I love fennel! Fennel has a wonderful fresh anise/licorice fragrance and mildly sweet flavor. If you don't like licorice candy (I never did), don't be put off – this vegetable is marvelous. Both the bulb and feathery fronds can be used in cooking, though generally not the green stalks. The bulbs are celery-like in texture, and can be sliced thinly and used raw in salads, or sautéed with other vegetables, or put into soups, or caramelized like onions, or braised whole, or coated lightly with a bit of olive oil, salt and pepper and grilled. Or try slicing them into a potato gratin or quiche, and chop and sprinkle the fronds on top. The fronds make a beautiful garnish, but can also be added to cooked dishes. Since the bulbs we're getting this week are small, my recommendation would be to use 'em in a salad or combined with other veggies in a sauté.

cooking with Collards or Dino Kale

Both of these greens have firm, dark green leaves on rather tough stalks. The hands-down simplest way I've found for preparing either for cooking is (after washing), hold the stem in one hand and strip the green leafy part off with the other. Repeat for all

leaves and then discard the stalks. Stack the leaves, then you can cut them lengthwise once or twice, then crosswise, so that you have medium-biggish pieces. Now they're ready to use. Collards are often milder than mustards or kale, but take longer to cook, 15 to 20 minutes. Both collards and kale benefit from moist cooking methods (simmering or outright boiling). If you stir-fry them in a hot pan with oil and little moisture, you will have tough, chewy greens (I vouch for this from experience!). So try this: boil the greens in well-salted water (again, both collards and kale can take a lot of salt), maybe 10 minutes. Chop up some of your young onions and green garlic. Heat a few tablespoons of butter in a skillet until it begins to brown, then add onion and garlic (and optionally some red pepper flakes) and cook over medium heat, stirring, until lightly colored and soft. Add the greens and some of their cooking water (maybe 1/4 cup per bunch of greens used), cover and cook on low heat about 20 minutes. Taste for salt. Serve with your favorite hot pepper sauce. Another alternative is to add some raisins to the skillet-cooking step, so they plump nicely. You could brown some nuts, like pine nuts, in the butter at the beginning, then take 'em out and set aside during the simmering process, and add 'em back in the end just before serving. Another way you might go is to sauté up a bunch of bread crumbs in butter until toasty and golden, then boil or

simmer your greens in salted water 15 minutes or so until tender, then drain and mix with some olive oil, salt and pepper, and either stir in the toasted bread crumbs or sprinkle on top when serving.

the baby arugula/mustards mix

Tom says these will be small tender leaves, well washed and ready to use. When they are really small like this, I highly recommend their use in salads rather than cooking (though it wouldn't hurt to cook them if that's what you want). If the mix in the bag is wet, I recommend spinning the greens in a salad spinner to remove as much water as possible, then layering them in a dry cotton towel (or paper towels), rolling up and enclosing in a fresh, dry bag (you can dry and re-use the bag they came in). If you just stick 'em in the fridge wet in the bag, they won't last long – trust me. Here's a great salad idea: throw your cleaned baby greens with maybe some torn up butter lettuce in a big bowl. Wash, de-stem and halve a handful of strawberries and add to greens. Make a dressing with a dab of fruit jam (I used apricot), a splash of balsamic vinegar, a dab of dijon mustard, a pinch of salt, and some salad oil (walnut oil is nice if you have it). Toss greens and strawberries with dressing, adding some toasted nuts (optional). To toast nuts, I put 'em on a piece of foil in the toaster oven for just a minute or two (watch carefully – they burn easily!). Or toast 'em in a dry skillet.

Live Earth Farm Calendar

(see calendar on website for more detailed info)

Sat. Jun 21	<u>Summer Solstice Celebration</u> 4pm - 10pm with <i>Kuzanga Marimba!</i>
Aug 8, 9, 10	<u>Children's Mini Camp</u> Friday evening to noon Sunday
Sat. Sep 20	<u>Fall Equinox Celebration</u> 3pm - 9pm with <i>the Banana Slug String Band!</i>
Sat. Oct 26	<u>Halloween Pumpkin Palooza</u> all day with <i>the Banana Slug String Band will play here too!</i>

Have a recipe you'd like to share? Contact the newsletter editor.