

Common Ground Farm

July Newsletter 2008



NOTES FROM THE FIELD

So far this season, we have really been blessed with nice weather. For one, we've had plenty of rain, which makes things grow like crazy (including the weeds!) but it also means we have not had to irrigate once this season. This is one chore we are glad to set aside. The slightly cooler temperatures so far has meant that our greens season has lasted longer, and we've had more success with the cooler weather crops like spinach and lettuce. The flea beetles, which usually wreak havoc on the kale, broccoli, and many other "brassica" family crops, don't thrive in the cooler weather. Our soil health has improved remarkably over the past three years, and we think that has helped produce record yields so far this season. We think the harvests have been bountiful and we hope you have enjoyed it as well. The cooler weather does mean, however, that our beloved tomatoes and melons

are growing a little slower. Each season has something a little different to share with us. We will be harvesting loads of summer squash before too long, and cucumbers coming by the end of the month. The earliest peppers, the hot ones, are on their way soon. You'll also see four interns and two farmers in the fields to begin work as the sun rises. Our full team of willing workers has now arrived at the farm and the difference it makes is noticeable. We can tackle several items on the to-do list at once, and accomplish a LOT in a period of time much shorter than I would have ever expected. Man/woman-power hours really add up when you multiply by 6! Every one of our interns is excited to be here at Common Ground Farm, working the land, bringing in the harvest, and learning about farming first hand, every step of the way. It's a lot of fun to work with a group of comrades, too. We encourage each other, have something funny or insightful to say to make things interesting, and lots of voices to sing with. We start our days early these days, literally at the break of dawn. I was picking kale this morning when I think it was technically still dark out...but by the end of the first crate I picked, I could see more and the rooster had already been crowing for a while so we knew morning light was on the way.

We work fast in the cool of the day, harvesting everything while it's fresh. Tackling the harvest on Tuesdays and Fridays is quite a feat, as we have roughly 95 families arriving on each of those two days. With the 6 of us there all morning and the various volunteers coming out to help as well, we work non-stop from 5am to 12noon getting everything picked, washed, and put into place neatly in the walk in cooler in the barn. It never looks as if everything will actually fit into the walk-in but somehow we manage. Then we collapse for lunch and can't eat fast enough. Eating breakfast at 4:30am means that "starvation" (we farmers are always hungry!) comes around 10am, but there's too much to do and the sun is shining hot on our precious veggies by then. Got to keep them shady and cool to be fresh for the afternoon's pickup! We do field work in the afternoons on those days, wheel hoeing, thinning carrots and beets by hand, cultivating some crops with the tractor, trellising the tomato plants, mowing the walkway areas, planting, etc, etc! There is much to be done. Our days are long, and our bedtime is early, leaving us with little outside social life. But, for a farmer, life is the

farm, and it's incredibly enriching and satisfying. After a huge meal of mostly veggies, simply prepared, with simple accompaniments, that's really the case! Yummy eating to you all!

Take care,

Rebecca and Joe

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Greetings and welcome to summer!

Things are in full swing at the farm—buzzing insects, kids reveling in the berry patch and delighting in the chickens, members are getting sweaty in the fields and the greens, oh the greens—are we all going to turn green? This has been an especially bounteous season for greens. You know, the basic premise of a CSA is: share in the risk, share in the bounty, and we have had such crazy bounty of late—the weather and our additional interns have helped our crops go nuts! I am freezing what I can and eating the rest. Check out the recipes in the newsletter for a killer recipe for all your greens! Speaking of interns, Tracy (last name) comes as our latest addition to the farm by way of NYC—welcome Tracy!

I want to welcome Nicole Raskopf to our board. Nicole has joined as our treasurer and has also volunteered to coordinate fundraising efforts. Many of you have participated in our fundraising in the past, but if you are a new member, you may not be aware that the money members pay for their food does not build capital for us. We have an old used tractor, a washing machine that spins vegetables (thanks Terese Olson for that donation!) a couple of tubs to wash our foods and lots and lots of hands. What's not covered? A tent for our workshops, any major equipment purchases, a vehicle for market (currently Joe and Becca use their personal vehicle)—the list can go on and we will keep members

informed of the needs of our farm, but needless to say we are thrilled to have a coordinated fundraising effort under Nicole's stewardship!

I think many of you will be excited to learn that we will be installing some new scales in distribution. We have outgrown our old system. Members, dears that you are, have basically politely suggested that perhaps we could improve in the area of scales—point taken! So, thanks to a generous gift by the Verplank Historical Garden at Stonykill, via member, Tina Cianculi, we are installing four hanging digital scales as soon as we get them in our hands!

We have also kicked off a partnership with Wild Hive Farm, a sustainable bakery which mills local, organic grain for its breads as well as flour and polenta and grains. Right now they are only delivering on Fridays but Tuesday members are always welcome to order.

I also wanted to report on an exciting collaboration that our farm is involved with—right now called the Hudson Valley CSA Coalition—all non-profit CSAs: Phillis Bridge and Brook Farm in New Paltz and the Poughkeepsie Farm Project—we are exploring areas where we can work together in the areas of food justice, fundraising, food access, CSA start-up and more. Right now we are working on a grant that will help us build a formal coalition, working with a group that wants to start a CSA in East Fishkill, working with Cornell Cooperative Extension on community food assessment and exploring a joint fundraising effort to help fund our low income shares and other food justice projects.

Lastly, I wanted to thank Carl Campbell, who has served as our website coordinator for the past four years—Thanks Carl and we will miss you! And I also wanted to thank and welcome Vyn Raskopf as our new Webmaster—welcome Vyn! So many changes—stay tuned and we hope to create a site where members will be accessing us more regularly for timely farm news and information.

Until the melons come in! Lisa Jessup, Director

EDUCATION DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Our first-ever children's Summer Program was a delightful week, a romp through garden, pond, barn and fields with eight children plus my wonderful helper, Emma Pogge. We caught turtles and a frog and lots of snails, we made our own ice cream (yum!), we worked hard in the Children's Garden, tasted salad greens, summer squash, raspberries and peas, did tons of arts and crafts projects, and thoroughly enjoyed hanging out together in the summer weather. There is one more session coming up, with a few spaces left. The program is for children ages 6-9, and runs half days on August 5 – 8.

Wish List for Children's Programs

In the spirit of the 3 R's (reduce, reuse, recycle), not to mention keeping our budget under control (!) we are seeking donations of the following:

An watertight fish tank

Art supplies (colored pencils, children's paints, paper, markers, mosaic supplies)

Child-size garden tools

Childrens books on gardening and nature topics

To make a donation, contact Jen, above.

Preschool Programs will resume in the Fall. Check coming newsletters for dates.

Jen Clapp, Education Director

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SUMMER PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN AGES 6 -9

Summer is a time for fun, sun and exploration! It is also a bounteous

time in the garden, with lots of fresh foods to taste. Each day we will spend some time working in the garden, visiting the chickens, and seeking out something delicious to eat. Some of our activities include: making ice cream, smores and iced tea from the garden, making terrariums, stepping stones and sun prints, campfires, scavenger hunts and lots of old-time summer fun. To register, contact Jen as above.
Tuesday through Friday, 9am – 12:30pm
August 5 – 8

All Ages Make & Take Art Project at the Farm
With Erin Serpico and Laetitia Salcedo
Tuesday, August 19 from 3pm – 5pm
Pre-registration not required. Younger children may need the assistance of an adult.





Workshops for Adults

PICKLING, CANNING AND PRESERVING WORKSHOP
Saturday, August 9th 10am - 1pm

Come and learn the basics of vinegar picking and canning for preserving your harvest of veggies with member Lee Ann Pomplas. Find out how you can enjoy the harvest long after the growing season is done! This is always lots of fun, and everyone gets to bring home the fruits of our labor. RSVP required, as space is limited-- sign-up at distribution, call Lee Ann at 265-4265 or email lpomplas@hotmail.com. There is a \$5 materials fee.

RECIPE IDEAS

A few weeks ago, as I was putting my kids to bed, my son said he wanted dinner. Perplexed, I reminded him that he'd had dinner already. "That wasn't dinner," he replied. "What do you mean it wasn't dinner?" I said, sure he was angling for more time. "Dinner is when you eat all together." After the twinge of guilt, I gave him a snack and vowed to have more "real" dinners. I did not, however, see any way to manufacture more time. Instead, I have started to make the sorta-homemade meal that has us eating together more often. Here are a few that use farm produce and can be done in ten to twenty minutes

Quick Latino Dinner

Add chopped scallions or onions and cilantro into mashed avocado with lemon or lime juice, salt, and a bit of ground cumin, leaving a plain bowl of avocado for those who dislike the herbs and/or onions. Mix leftover rice or make rice to mix with **canned, seasoned black beans**. (try Trader Joe's Cuban Style Black Beans) and heat. Add chopped cooked farm veggies or just cook them as you are heating the beans.

Place a bit of butter or oil in a pan, add a tortilla, cheese, and another

tortilla until melted, flipping once. Add a few cooked veggies inside before adding the top tortilla. Cut in quarters.

Open a bag of organic tortilla chips, some sour cream, salsa and a bottle of hot sauce for whoever wants a little heat.

Raw Veggie and Grain Salad

Whisk together olive or other oil, salt, a bit of pepper, lemon juice and a scoop of **frozen orange juice** to taste. I like it a bit sweet.

Make quinoa or a favorite grain.

Thinly slice or finely chop crunchy veggies like fennel, kohlrabi, celery, napa cabbage, or whatever.

Chop a tart apple and add to the veggies, or keep it separate for picky eaters. Oranges or canned mandarin oranges work well, too.

Add 2/3 of the dressing to the warm grain and the rest to the veggies.

Toss together or serve separately. Season to taste. It is easy to add a protein to this like **store bought roast chicken** or **goat cheese**.

Quick Meat Sauce or Sandwich Filling

Heat olive oil in a pan.

Chop carrots, celery, and onions and add to pan. Any other sturdy farm veggies would be good here, too.

When the onions are softened, add ground beef, turkey, textured vegetable protein, or crumbled boca burgers until cooked or heated through. Drain fat if necessary.

Add a **jar of marinara sauce** and a big spoonful of **tomato paste**.

Fresh tomatoes would be nice here or at the beginning, if you prefer them cooked down. You can also add a **can of plain tomato sauce** to add volume.

Season to taste and cook to desired thickness. A little thinner for pasta or mixing with a grain, thicker for filling sandwich rolls.

Lima Bean, Bacon Soup

Cook a 1/2 pound of bacon and drain all but 2T of fat. Crumble or chop bacon.

Slice leeks or other onions and sauté in 2T of the bacon fat

Add 5 or so cups of **chicken stock** (boxed, homemade, or bouillon and water), a box of **frozen lima beans**, and some fresh or dried oregano

Cook 15 minutes and puree with a hand blender. Serve with bacon and fresh herbs on top.

A veggie version can be done sans bacon and with vegetable stock. Sounds weird but is so tasty and loved even by lima bean haters!

From Janet Perles

Quick Fennel Picnic Salad (by Mark Bittman)

- Slice a few bulbs of fennel and some tart apples; dice some jicama. Toss together with freshly chopped tarragon, basil or chervil (if you can find it), olive oil, salt, lots of pepper and lemon juice. Celery is good in this, too, as are oranges and cheeses, especially sheep's cheeses.

Poached Greens (by Mark Bittman)

- Poach a couple of pounds of dark leafy greens, like kale, collards or spinach. Drain, cool, squeeze dry and chop. Then toss with oil, salt and lots of lemon juice. Serve with more lemon, oil, salt and pepper. Call it horta.

From Kelly Kingman

Live Kale Salad

30 minutes/3-4 servings

1 large bunch greens (kale, swiss chard, spinach, etc.)

1/4 cup olive oil

1 large lemon-juiced

- 2 Tbsp nama shoyu, Braggs liquid aminos or soy sauce
- 1 Tbsp apple cider vinegar-raw and unfiltered
- 1 Tbsp agave nectar
- 1 clove garlic-minced
- 3 stalks green onion-rough chopped
- 1/2 jalapeño, deseeded and minced
- 1/4 cup fresh herbs, minced
- 1 large red bell pepper, diced
- 1 large carrot, grated
- dash cayenne pepper
- Celtic sea salt, to taste
- Fresh ground black pepper, to taste
- 1/3 cup white and/or black sesame seeds

Prep

1. Chop up greens in bite size pieces and place in large mixing bowl with all of the other ingredients. Allow to sit for 20 minutes or longer, up to overnight for greens to soften

Variations

1. Replace veggies and herbs with any of your favorites

*Originally in Vegan Fusion

From Nicole Raskopf



