

Common Ground Farm

P.O. Box 59,
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NEWSLETTER numero seis

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too...
Keats, from "To Autumn"

From the Farmer: Reality Nibbles

I'd rather write this about swallowtail butterflies, the mud crusted on the bottom of my boots, or school anxiety dreams. Instead, I'm writing about money, budgets, and labor. I begin by saying that this has been a remarkable first season. We did the impossible: we started a working, productive farm with **no money**. The CSA structure (and some rather gutsy people) allowed us to be that bold. Because you adventurous first-time members paid upfront, we literally had "seed" money to get us going. But like most new businesses, we struggle. We hope to break even by 2004.

This year, with 50 members paying \$500, you can see what we're pulling in. We had capital expenses such as the fence, the well, the pump, irrigation, and ongoing expenses, such as seeds, plants, equipment. We met those first season needs through loans and invaluable, donated time and labor. We have more capital needs, such as a walk-in cooler and, possibly/hopefully, a greenhouse. Then there's the ongoing expense of personnel, mostly my salary. I make \$20,000/yr. (The basic "living wage" for a single person in Dutchess Co. is about \$37,000.)

So your money mostly goes to my labor. As my helpers in the field know, growing organic food takes lots of labor -- hands-on, personal, detailed observation, dedication and hard work! That's why it's more expensive than conventional food. But Common Ground Farm isn't about selling cheap food -- it's about providing good food, a connection to the land, and a sense of community. From members' comments -- "This is the best thing I've done this summer" and "This is the best thing I've ever done" are recurring remarks -- we think we've made a good start.

So what's my point? The idea here, as it is for all CSAs, is to produce high quality food for a fair price - **fair** means the workers are getting a living wage. We plan to expand. And when we get bigger, we'll need to farm more acreage, and I'll need an assistant grower. Expansion has its costs as well as its benefits. Nevertheless, we'll continue to be bold. We'll be looking to sell more full working or nonworking shares, so, if you're enthused, tell others.

I hope you will sign up for next year. *We aim to be around for a long time...*

Coming up: Harvest Festival
Sunday, October 6

A fun family day. Stony Kill's biggest annual event. Live music, games, hay rides, displays, food. Corn is the theme. Common Ground will have a table featuring an educational, amusing children's activity. Be sure to stop by!

Herb Patch

Soon it will be time for beautiful bouquets of dried flowers. We're getting some ready for autumn distribution days, and they'll be fragrant with some of our own herbs, mainly **sweet Annie** and **lemon basil**.

Sweet Annie is usually called southernwood. It has a fragrance reminiscence of wild sage in the rain on a rocky New Mexican slope, or, as a friend remarked, "like something you put in your pillow to make you sleep". And in fact Culpeper, the Elizabethan herbalist, said southernwood "is a composer, and always disposes to sleep".

Lemon basil is our old friend, the basil we put in tomato sauces and salads, but with what a zing! And speaking of fruit scented herbs, the permaculture garden currently boasts a large clump of pineapple sage in blossom (red flowers). Pick a leaf, crush it and take a whiff – pure piña.

Sage is a great pal and it comes various flavors and color combinations. Native Americans burn it under the noses of headache sufferers; the smoke is said to be a cure. Culpepper prescribed sage juice and vinegar for the plague. He ascribed many virtues to sage tea, among them a diuretic affect and the ability to turn the hair black.

Sage of course is great with onions in Thanksgiving turkey -- or any turkey.

"Have a Tomato, Plato"

Cab Calloway, from his song "Everybody Eats When They Come to My House", which features memorable lines like "don't be so picky, Dicky", "pass the cacciatore, Dora", and "do have a bagel, Nagel"...

Uncooked Tomato Sauce

6 medium to large California tomatoes, cut into large chunks

1 sm. garlic clove, minced

½ med. onion, chopped

1 tbsp. coarsely chopped fresh basil

3-4 tbsp. balsamic vinegar

6-8 tbsp. olive oil

salt & black pepper to taste

Tabasco or other hot stuff to taste (optional)

Drain off & discard liquid from tomatoes. Mix tomatoes with remaining ingredients. Let mixture stand at room temperature for about 20 min. Toss with hot pasta, top with grated Romano or Parmesan cheese.

Tomato Garbanzo Salad

3 c. (about 1-1/2 lbs.) diced, fresh tomatoes

1 c. chopped red onion

¼ c. chopped parsley

1-1/2 tbsp. lemon juice

1 tsp. finely chopped garlic
½ tsp. dill
½ tsp. red pepper flakes
1 tsp. salt
¼ tsp. pepper
1/3 c. olive oil
3 c. (two 15-1/4 oz. cans) garbanzo beans, drained
2 hard cooked eggs, finely chopped

Combine tomatoes & the next 8 ingredients. Stir in olive oil. Fold in beans & hard cooked eggs. Eat! Eat! It's good for you.

Poetry Corner

Black Wire

Autumn is the hair of the witch:
dry leaves skittering at the door,
scurry of squirrels feet racing for cover,

clatter and chuckle of wind over
the dry creek bed, knuckle of cold
on the roofs of town, twisted dark stem

of a zinnia kissed by frost,
and deep in the heart a keen like
humming along a black wire, taut.

Keen for the yellow flight of the bee
between the bright rains of summer.

Simona

Do you have a poem, seasonal or otherwise? A little story, a song, recipe, herb fact? Send to Janetruhe a aol.com or at Common Ground p.o. box. Remember:

What is pronounced strengthens itself.

What is not pronounced tends to nonexistence...

Czeslaw Milosz