



News
from

Harmony Valley Farm

An Update for Our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

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The Real Pioneer

A few weeks ago we had no less than three photographers visit our farm and shoot endless numbers of pictures and nearly as many thought provoking questions. It makes one think about who we are and why we do what we do. They ask how we got to be accomplished organic farmers. In response, we ask ourselves the same thing, "How *did* we get to this point?" We may not have had astute answers at the time, but now that days have passed some things are more clear.

Two of the visitors were writing books with similar themes about pioneers in organic farming. Michael Ableman, an accomplished California farmer, asked questions born out of his own intimate knowledge of organic farming. The other, Rick Donhauser, is a photographer first and a biographer second and a farmer not at all. He brought a very accomplished interviewer with him and after gentle probing she exercised her remarkable listening skills to help her formulate follow up questions. She was especially interested in what led us down this unique path. Why have we succeeded when conventional wisdom said it couldn't be done?

Clearly, one reason is the open minded way we go about our work. Being a keen observer and having the confidence to make changes based on those observations was what Richard has always been especially adept at. Exploring better ways of doing a job and developing systems that are effective are important when one is in a field that has been somewhat on the fringe, neglected by others, as organic farming had been when Richard first pursued it. It was a generous dose of brash self-confidence that gave him the desire to forge his own path when the experts and even his family said he was crazy. "It can be a very lonely place," he concludes.

Remembering back Richard says,

"When I visited Grandma in the nursing home years after my Grandfather's death, she said, 'Your grandpa would approve of what you are doing.' It wasn't completely clear to me then, but I was beginning to understand that my Grandpa didn't really approve of what others in the family had been doing in the name of farming. Now I see Grandpa as the real pioneer."

When the second World War ended and the corporations that made the war machines, explosives and defoliants found themselves heavily invested in products that were no longer needed, they turned to farmers for a market. They tried to get farmers to plow their fields with surplus jeeps. Eventually, when that effort failed, they turned to making tractors in the same manufacturing plants. They sold the ammonium nitrate explosives as nitrogen fertilizer and the defoliants as weed killers. With slick ad campaigns, and the support of government agricultural organizations and educators, they convinced most farmers that their new products held the only key to progress. But Richard's grandpa remained a skeptic. He and a very few others knew, for example, that the air around us is 70% nitrogen and nature has provided us with legumes (peas, beans, alfalfa, etc.) that have the unique ability to take nitrogen from the air and fix it on their roots in the form of nodules. With crop rotation it can provide much of the nitrogen you need for your next crop. So, why would any farmer buy ammonium nitrate?

Richard adds, "When my mom was here earlier this summer I asked her more questions about grandpa. Was the choice to use chemicals, or not to use them, controversial? Was Grandpa considered a rebel? There he was on his 20 acre self-sufficient homestead, reading Rodale's Organic Farming and Gardening magazine in the 40's, raising enough organic vegetables, raspberries and strawberries to feed the extended fami-

This Week's Box

- Broccoli Romanesco**
- Bunched Beets**
- Italian Garlic**
- Red Onions**
- Sweet Spanish Onions**
- Mixed Sweet Peppers**
- All-Red Potatoes**
- Cucumbers**
- Salad Mix**
- Summer Squash**
- Winter Squash**, Orange Amber Cup, Delicata (striped torpedo shape), Swt. Dumpling for some
- Mixed Tomatoes**

About the Box

The following items will need to be refrigerated: Salad Mix, Raspberries, if you get some, Peppers, Romanesco, cukes, beets and Summer Squash.

These items are best kept at room temperature: Tomatoes, Winter Squash and out of the light, Potatoes, Onions, and Garlic.

Again, the winter squash will come faster than you can eat it. We intend you to store some of it. Cool room temp is ideal. If it seems to need to be used more quickly than you find yourself eating it, you can roast it, scoop it out and freeze it. Then it can be used in all sorts of ways late in the winter.

A little known fact, corn ear worms eat bell peppers. In late summer, when the corn can be wormy, the peppers, too, can have the same worms. It takes a good eye to see the tiny hole they drill by the calyx to enter. They eat in safety inside the pepper and then, when they are nice and fat, they exit through a much more obvious hole. We try to detect all peppers that contain worms, but it is not easy. It has been a wormy year, so if you are very worm adverse, do a careful inspection yourself around the calyx.

Paige Writes on Romanesco

"One of nature's most spectacular creations", "otherworldly", "uniquely striking", "it might be part starfish, part wedding cake"... these are just a few of the comments that have been used to describe Broccoli Romanesco. Although the name suggests this vegetable is a variety of broccoli, Broccoli Romanesco is actually more closely related to cauliflower. In fact this vegetable predates the common white variety of cauliflower we are all familiar with. Like regular cauliflower, Romanesco has a tightly compacted head of florets attached by a cluster of stalks—but there the similarity ends. Beautifully pale green in color, its florets are not rounded but prominently emerge as perfect pyramids of spiraling, pointed cones. It is no doubt a feast for the eyes.

Originally cultivated in northern Italy, Broccoli Romanesco has been favorably eaten in that country for many years but has made little gain in popularity abroad until only recently. Although it can be found in California, it is rare in the United States still today because it is extremely difficult to grow outside of its home setting. The flavor of Romanesco is more delicate and sweeter than regular cauliflower with somewhat nutty undertones. It can be used interchangeably with cauliflower and broccoli in recipes, but beware of overcooking. Broccoli Romanesco acts very much like cauliflower in that it can quickly turn to mush. It also, like cauliflower, will absorb a lot of water, so try medium to low moisture cooking applications like steaming or baking, rather than boiling. Romanesco can be cut into florets and cooked, but for an even more stunning presentation try steaming the head whole.



The Turnip Trio brandishing some colossal specimens at last year's harvest party. Don't miss it this Sunday, Sept. 21. Dress warmly!

WARM CAULIFLOWER SALAD WITH RAISINS, PINE NUTS, AND PINK PEPPERCORNS

(From Elizabeth Schneider)

1 medium Broccoli Romanesco
2 tb. pine nuts
¼ c golden raisins
¼ c fruit vinegar, such as raspberry, pear, etc
¼ c diced red onion
½ pink peppercorns (available through Penzies)
¼ tsp. kosher salt
1 ½ tb olive oil
2 tsp capers (preferably tiny nonpareil)
½ tsp cornstarch
2 tb water

Trim heavy stem base and leaves from Romanesco. Set stem side down in a heavy pot with ¾ inch boiling salted water. Cover and cook over moderate heat until tender, about 7-8 minutes. Meanwhile toast the pine nuts, stirring in a small heavy pan over moderately low heat until golden. Remove to cool. In the same pan combine raisins, vinegar, onion, peppercorns, salt, oil, and capers. Cover and bring to a simmer over low heat. Stir together cornstarch and water. Add to pan and stir constantly until mixture thickens and turns clear. Remove from heat. Cut Romanesco into 8 wedges, nap with sauce and serve.

WINE BRAISED ROMANESCO WITH ORANGE ZEST

olive oil
2 cloves garlic chopped
¼ tsp crushed red pepper flakes
1 medium Broccoli Romanesco broken into florets
Zest of 1 orange
1 ½ c dry red wine

Heat enough olive oil to coat the bottom of a heavy gauge pan. Add the garlic and red pepper flakes and cook until slightly browned. Add florets and orange zest and toss to coat. Add wine and simmer rapidly for 2-3 minutes. Reduce heat and simmer for roughly 10 until florets are tender. Remove and reserve florets. Return wine and juices to heat and simmer until reduced. Nap florets with sauce and serve.

From the Front

lies of his 8 children. He had fruit trees, 2 cows, chickens, geese, generated his own electricity and pumped water with wind. He wasn't "off the grid," he was just never on it! He rarely left home. Grandma did have a telephone and she drove the '49 Chevy to town once a week to church -- but grandpa didn't partake.

So I asked my mother how Grandpa was regarded by his neighbors. Did they comment on his organic ways? I was surprised at my mother's response. 'Grandpa was considered old-fashioned. Chemicals were touted as being good and modern and few questioned it. Those who did were considered foolishly old-fashioned. Nobody said chemicals were bad, even when your father noticed he got sick every spraying season. But, those companies lied to us. No one imagined there could be long-term consequences. They knew and they didn't tell us the truth.'"

So, yes, Richard's Grandpa was a bit of a rebel and suffered the criticism of his peers, but he forged his own path anyway. He was right, even if his neighbors didn't know it then, and many don't believe it now. He'd be proud to see this farm which springs from his inspiration in so many ways.

Thanks to Rick Donhauser and Michael Ableman for asking questions and prompting us to ponder a little.

Produce Plus:

Last Week for Basil, 1 lb. for \$6.00, may have some imperfect leaves. Still nice, genuine basil flavor! If you still are wanting to make pesto, don't hesitate. We could have a frost any day.

Roma Tomatoes - 25# for \$18. These are great for drying and making sauce. May have some surface blemishes.

Bulk beets - red, for making beet pickles, 10 lbs. for \$9.00 or \$25 lbs. (just over 1/2 bushel) for \$16.00.

Later in the fall we will offer shallots, garlic, cipollini onions.

In Onalaska, Viroqua, La Crosse or Mazomanie, call the farm to place your order. Send your check in the mail. Pick up at your site. **In Madison**, contact Cheryl, the produce plus volunteer coordinator, **249-1970** OR chucklykat@hotmail.com Pick up and pay at market. All orders must be placed by end of day on TUESDAY.