



# Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993  
Local & Madison Edition

September 3-4, 2010

## Who Makes it Run? by Tom Meier

You know Harmony Valley Farm by the produce we send to you in your CSA box. But how does all of that yummy stuff get TO the box? It takes a tremendous amount of wildly varied mechanized equipment to plant, cultivate, harvest, clean and package your vegetables. 19 tractors, 15 trucks, countless implements including some from Italy, washing apparatus, forklifts and pallet jacks. And let's not leave out all of the sheds, barns, coolers and green houses that are part of the farm. ALL of it breaks down and needs periodic maintenance. Let us introduce you to the two guys who keep it all in running order. At first, it would seem like an odd pairing but rest assured they are a fully functional and complementary team. Let's compare and contrast.

Our Maintenance Manager is Rex Gabrielson. Rex grew up near Esofea, up-river from Harmony Valley. He worked on farms as a young man and his first job as a mechanic was re-building a lawn mower at age 11. Rex now lives over the hill in Coon Valley and has four children. His musical preferences tend toward country classics like Satin Sheets by Jeanne Pruett. Rex has never been on vacation in his life.

Rex's assistant is Padraic "Paddy" Heberlein. Paddy grew up in Viroqua, England and Montana. He went to the Waldorf School, Youth Initiative High School, Laurel High and Viroqua High. His fascinations include refining fuels from carbon based waste, the afterlife, chemistry, physics and music festivals. Many of Padraic's contemporaries have moved to Oregon or Washington but he is staying in the Driftless Area. He feels that this is home because of the natural beauty and that real patriotism is loving where you live. Padraic is a mix master, composes music and attends many music festivals such as Rothbury in Michigan. He loves all music but his tastes run more towards The Thievery Corporation. Paddy just moved into a cabin in Chaseburg and he rides to work with Rex.

Rex started his career as a block tender for a concrete block laying company. He joined the National Guard in 1982 and served in the first Gulf War. While in the military he was part of the 107th Maintenance Company and worked on wheeled vehicles in Saudi Arabia. Rex has fabricated crane parts and structural steel for Target, Walmart and Walgreens stores. He struck out on his own and worked at a couple of automotive garages in the area. At one shop he restored an orange Plymouth Barracuda from the ground up. Then Richard found him and eventually convinced him to come to work at Harmony Valley Farm.

After high school Padraic went to U.W. Madison for awhile then went to work for Wisconsin Feed Mill Builders. Building feed mills is where he learned to weld and he frequently worked

## THIS WEEK'S BOX

**RED OR YELLOW GRAPE TOMATOES:** Layer salad mix, halved tomatoes, sour cream and sprinkle diced jalapeno on top of a crispy corn tortilla for a spicy tostada.

**TOMATO VARIETY BAG:** Spread ricotta cheese on thick toasted bread with a big slice of tomato and sprinkle with fresh basil.

**EDAMAME:** Place 2 garlic cloves, 1 roasted chile pepper, 2T olive oil, 1 Tsp hot sauce, and ½ tsp cumin into a blender and puree until smooth. Add in 1 cup cooked, shelled edamame and continue to puree until smooth. Add water as needed to achieve dip consistency. Season to taste with salt and pepper before serving and you have edamole, a tasty dip with more protein and fiber than guacamole.

**UKRAINIAN OR SWEET BELL PEPPERS:** Sauté garlic, onion, tomatoes, peppers and herbs and puree for a tomato pepper sauce that can be used for beef, chicken, pasta or dipping.

**PIMENTO PEPPERS:** Add diced pimento peppers to cheese sauce for a festive cheese dip.

**MINI-SWEET PEPPERS:** Stuff mini-sweets with cooked rice and herbs, top with cheese and bake for 10 minutes at 350° F. See vegetable feature on back of newsletter.

**JALAPEÑOS:** Slice jalapeños and sauté in butter with chicken breast and honey for a sweet and spicy chicken dish. This is a good week to make jalapeño poppers or toss in a bag and freeze for winter use.

**POTATOES:** Cut lengthwise into wedges and fry in oil until golden brown. Set aside to drain. Mix sour cream and basil pesto for a sauce. Spread sauce on pre made pizza crust add potato wedges, crumbled bacon, diced peppers, chives and shredded cheese and bake for a couch potato pizza.

**SAUTÉ MIX:** Lightly saute in oil with S&P and a squeeze of lemon. Top with almonds or walnuts and shredded cheese and tomatoes. Use as a bed for chicken or fish.

**BABY RED/GOLD/CHIOGGIA BEETS:** Not just for savory recipes –find a recipe for Red Devil cake, a chocolate beet cake!

**ITALIAN GARLIC:** 'Tis the season for Bruschetta. Fresh garlic, diced tomatoes, fresh basil and a sprinkle of cheese on toast makes a great appetizer and is easy to do.

**BABY BOK CHOI:** Stir fry bok choy with ginger, garlic and squash; serve hot on a bed of arugula.

**CHOICE: BASIL-** Margherita pizza is one of my favorites. A wonderful blend of fresh garlic, sliced tomatoes, fresh basil and a blend of feta, fontina, mozzarella and parmesan cheeses makes this pizza absolutely delicious!

**Harvest Party Sunday, Sept 26  
at the farm Noon - 6pm**

50 to 150 feet off the ground. Paddy prefers old school stick welding and can lay down a mean bead. Fabricating with metal is his favorite kind of work.

Rex likes working here because he is trusted and has autonomy. He likes to plan his own work and teach others about maintenance, repair and fabrication. He will teach you as much as you would like to learn but would really prefer that you listen when he requests that you do something according to procedure. And don't take a tractor that is in for repair out to the field... that would be bad.

Padraic likes working at Harmony Valley Farm because of the variety. Every day in the shop is different for him. He wants to learn as much as he can about maintenance, repair and fabrication from Rex. Padraic loves to get dirty. Seriously, really really dirty.

One of the reasons we all like having Rex here is that he is very responsive. If you are out in the field, have a breakdown and call him on the radio his first question will be "Where you at?" Moments later he will arrive in a pickup truck and usually he can fix the problem with Welper (Welder's Helper, a multi-function pliers). He never makes you feel bad when you break something. Another thing that we like about Rex is his ability to diagnose a mechanical problem. No replacing one part at a time until it works for him, no sir. He gets right to the heart of the problem and that makes for shorter downtime for us. Rex excels at giving constructive feedback and works hard to keep the team together and

working in harmony (yuk yuk) when times are stressful.

We like having Pdraic here because of his work ethic. He comes to work early every day and frequently works late. When he is done with his lunch he heads back to work ahead of time and makes the sparks fly. If you ever walk into the shop, Paddy will drop what he is doing and help you out. His work is precise and he has an eye for detail. The washing and packing operation love the fact that no equipment comes back from him cobbled together with duct tape and wood blocks. Each piece is carefully fabricated, freshly painted, safe and good to go. He likes to work in bright and shiny stainless steel, which is key when processing vegetables.

We all know how hard it is to find a good mechanic. Here at Harmony Valley Farm we are fortunate to have two renaissance men. Starting with the tractors, planters, cultivators and harvesting machines in the field, to the barrel washer, pressure washer, salad sorting belt and potato bagger in the packing shed, and on and on. They make it all run and they enable us to get the vegetables to the box!

Both recipes below for **Stuffed Mini Sweet**s are great for appetizers or as a side. When serving as an appetizer, serve on a bed of nasturtiums or salad mix. This makes for a fun and colorful presentation to wow your guests. Each recipe serves 5 people.

*Recipes By Chef Katie Routh*

### **Mini Sweets Stuffed with Feta, Avocado, and Sungold Tomatoes**

5 mini sweet peppers  
½ cup feta cheese  
½ cup sungold or red or yellow grape tomatoes, cut in ½  
½ lime, juiced  
1T jalapeno, fine diced  
2T basil, finely chopped  
1tsp salt  
1tsp black pepper

-Mix all ingredients except mini sweets in a medium bowl. Remove the stems and seeds from the mini sweets, leaving whole. Stuff each mini sweet with the feta mixture and serve.

### **Mini Sweets Stuffed with Feta, Green Tomatoes, and Honey**

5 mini sweet peppers  
1T extra virgin olive oil  
1 cup green tomatoes (1 large or 2 small), small diced  
2tsp honey  
½ cup feta cheese  
2T mint  
1tsp salt  
1tsp black pepper

Heat oil in medium sauté pan over medium heat. Add green tomatoes and cook for 3-4 minutes, until soft. Take off the heat, place in a medium bowl, and add the honey. Let cool to room temperature. Meanwhile, remove the stems and seeds from the mini sweets, leaving whole. Mix the rest of the ingredients with the green tomatoes. Stuff each mini sweet with the feta mixture and serve.

## **Vegetable Feature: Mini Sweet Peppers**

We at HVF encourage suggestions and feedback from our CSA members. We have tried some vegetables that we have not necessarily cared for and also had some real winners. One of our favorite sweet peppers at Harmony Valley Farm is the mini sweet. They are a fantastic addition to our line-up of vegetables from long time CSA members David Griffeth and Cathy Loeb. They are food connoisseurs that like to visit the farm at least once a year, bringing new food items that we haven't cooked with and vegetable suggestions. David and Cathy are always excited about food and we thank them for their suggestions. Because of their enthusiasm about miniature spaghetti squash, we are trying them again this year. The mini sweets are definitely a hit, but there have been a few not so good suggestions too (black garbanzo beans)!

About 4 or 5 years ago, David helped at the CSA fair in Madison and was excited to tell Richard about mini sweet peppers. David was persistent enough that Richard stopped at Willy Street Cop and picked up a couple packs of mini sweets that were grown in Mexico. He came home and immediately seeded them. They were planted in the greenhouse in March and you know what they grew! The first year there were only about 20-30 plants. Mini sweet pepper seeds are the first pepper seeds that Richard has saved. Over the past years we have multiplied the seed and this past year saved about 10,000 seeds and planted 7,100 plants! Saving seeds is a huge venture. We pick the plants with good stature (ones that are sturdy and not falling over and disease free) to select peppers to save seed from. Cross pollination by insects in peppers is rare, but a possibility. So we try to plant the mini sweets in a block to preserve their purity. We have been good at maintaining a good foundation that we call RD crop. It is unlikely, but may happen that you may run across hot mini sweet peppers. Enjoy it and think to yourself, you may be the only one lucky enough to try it!

As the name states, mini sweets are a small sweet pepper. When ripe they turn red, yellow, or orange. They have thick fleshed walls which makes them great for stuffing. For a fun and easy appetizer, cut the stem off the mini sweet and take the seeds out. Stuff the peppers with vegetables, cheese, meat, and/or seafood. Try Brebis cheese with basil, fennel, lavender, and a little honey. Because mini sweets have so few seeds they are great to eat out of hand, which makes for a quick snack. They also make great dippers for hummus or other vegetable or bean dips. Mini sweets are great on sandwiches or in salads. For some crunch in an avocado chicken salad sandwich, add sliced mini sweets. Adding mini sweets to an arugula salad gives the sweet and spicy flavors that so many people love. Mini sweets can also be added to pizzas either before or after baking.

As well as eaten raw, mini sweets are delicious cooked. Add to your next stir-fry or sautéed summer vegetables. They would make a nice addition to an omelet in the morning. Like most peppers, mini sweets are great grilled. Grill whole over medium-high heat until dark. Cut in half and remove the seeds and stem. Top a blue cheese burger or eat as a side. Add some zing to your tomato sauce. Cook mini sweets, garlic, basil and tomatoes until soft, then puree and season. Add cream to make a creamy pepper tomato soup.

Enjoy mini sweets in the winter by freezing them. There is no need to take the stem off or the seeds out. Their walls are sturdy, so when you are ready to use, you can slice whole and frozen. Peppers that have been frozen are best eaten cooked. When you pull them out of the freezer in February, you'll be glad to taste a little sweet remembrance of summer. For now, store mini sweets in the warmer part of your refrigerator until ready to use. They will keep for about a week.

### **Grilled Vegetable and Chickpea Salad**

Serves 6

*By Chef Katie Routh*

2 cups chickpeas, cooked  
1 cup cucumber, diced  
2 T mint, finely chopped  
3 mini-sweet peppers, remove seeds and stem and cut in half  
2 peppers, remove seeds and stem and cut in half (*Mix hot and sweet peppers based on desired level of heat*)  
4 tomatillos, sliced in half  
1 lime, cut in half  
2 tsp salt  
1 tsp black pepper  
2 T extra virgin olive oil  
6 oz feta cheese, optional

-In a medium bowl, mix chickpeas, cucumber, and mint. Set aside.

-Toss peppers, tomatillos, and lime with a splash of extra virgin olive oil. Grill over medium heat until vegetables are soft and you can see grill marks. Yes, grill the limes too!!!

-Let the vegetables cool.

-Cut the peppers and tomatillos into bite-sized pieces.

-Add to chickpeas and cucumbers. -Squeeze the limes over the vegetables and add salt, pepper, and oil. Adjust seasonings.

*Crumbled Feta Cheese would also be a nice addition to the salad, if desired.*