



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

May 15-16, 2015

Spring Farm Update

by Farmer Richard & his sidekicks Andrea & Captain Jack the Dog

Spring is different every year and as we write this update temperature is on our minds. We were happy to see the snow melt away towards the end of March.....and then woke up to a winter wonderland on March 23! Once the snow melted again and things dried out, we were able to dig overwintered parsnips and sunchokes.... just before it rained! After some rainy, cold days, we were thankful for warm days in April which allowed us to get some field work done. We planted all the parsnips as well as the first beets, carrots & peas. The transplanting team worked hard to plant all the onions and then moved right into transplanting the first crop of head lettuce, fennel, basil, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage and kohlrabi. They also managed to get the parsley and Brussels sprouts in the ground! Thankfully everything was in place before the next wave of rain. This past week has been cool and wet. In fact, it's downright chilly today and there is a chance of frost! Don't worry.... the crew covered the strawberries yesterday to protect the blossoms so there should be plenty of strawberries to pick on June 21 at Strawberry Day! (Mark your calendars!)

Weather talk aside, we've had a pretty good spring and have a lot of good field updates. First, our asparagus and rhubarb crops are producing beyond our expectations! Both of these perennial crops take about 3 years to establish before we can do any substantial harvests off them. Over the past few years we've put in new rhubarb and asparagus plantings. Richard & Jack have been waiting patiently (Andrea not so patiently) for our new fields to become established and this is the first year we can harvest from all of these fields! Despite the cool weather we're still seeing some impressive asparagus harvests. The rhubarb field is also producing well and the bright red stalks are gorgeous!

As we look ahead to June, we should mention that our first two pea plantings are in and looking good. Sugar snap and snow peas should be ready for the first to middle part of June. The pea vine looks like it might be ready as early as next week. The strawberry field is blossoming and the plants look healthy. We do watch the weather closely though (that darn weather topic again). The blossoms can't take the frost, so we've covered the field with our giant field blankets to get them through the week...just in case Jack Frost pays our valley a visit.

Anyone interested in garlic? We're happy to report the garlic crop appears to have overwintered nicely with about a 99% survival rate! We're planning to harvest green garlic next week....and before we know it we'll be enjoying garlic scapes and fresh, juicy bulb garlic.

Our pastures are lush and green and the cattle love their days grazing the hillsides. Our goat pasture is full of young energy with nine new kids and more on the way! We're also happy to report we have pigs roaming our pastures again! Last week we got 15 piglets. It took them a few days to acclimate to their new home, but it looks like they've adapted well. They've also grown accustomed to the nightly deliveries of compost from the packing shed. Just like us, they are enjoying many spinach salads for dinner. The chickens moved to the pasture with the pigs. They're a little more vulnerable to pesky predators, but are learning to defend and protect themselves.

This Week's Box

NETTLES: IMPORTANT INFORMATION—The nettles are bunched together and packed in a plastic bag. They do have little hairs on the stems that can cause a sting when you touch them. Most of the sting is removed with washing, but to be on the safe side we've put them in a bag for you. When you are ready to use them, use tongs (or wear gloves) to handle them and always cook them before eating them. If you put them in boiling water for just 30-45 seconds or so, the sting will completely go away. After 30-45 seconds, remove them from the boiling water and run under cold water. Squeeze out the excess water and then take the leaves off the main stem. Discard the stem and use the leaves.

RAMPS: If you have a favorite ramp dish from previous seasons, now is the time to make it as we have officially reached the end of the season. If you haven't tried ramps with eggs yet, a simple breakfast is ramp & asparagus scrambled eggs or if you want to get fancy you can make a quiche!

SPINACH: This is the first taste of our spring-planted spinach. Enjoy a spinach salad with diced raw asparagus, ribbons of sorrel and a rhubarb vinaigrette (recipe can be found on our website in our online recipe archive).

OVERWINTERED PARSNIPS: Parsnips & sunchokes go well together to make a creamy soup. They also make tasty baked fries that can be seasoned with dried herbs or even dusted with a little parmesan cheese at the end.

OVERWINTERED WHITE SUNCHOKES: Remember, "anything you can do with a potato you can do with a sunchoke." In addition to soups, roasting or sautes, you can also eat them raw in salads. Sunchoke contain inulin, a non-digestible fiber. Some individuals may have some tummy discomfort if they eat too many sunchoke at a time. If you're trying them for the first time, eat a small portion to start with until you see how your body responds to them.

CHIVES: Blend chives with olive oil, salt and pepper to make a thick puree that can be stirred into sour cream, mayonnaise or yogurt to make dips, spreads or creamy dressing. You can also use the chive puree to top off grilled steak or roasted chicken.

SORREL: See the vegetable feature and recipes on the back of this week's newsletter for more information and recipe ideas.

ASPARAGUS: Brush asparagus spears lightly with oil and toss them on the grill. Serve them with a squeeze of lemon and grated cheese for a super-simple side dish.

SAUTÉ MIX: Sauté mix is a blend of baby greens & kale. It can be eaten as a raw salad or quickly sautéed and enjoyed as a cooked green.

RHUBARB: Rhubarb is traditionally known for its use in desserts and baked goods. Rhubarb custard pie is one of our favorites, but you can't go wrong with a simple rhubarb crisp either. Farmer Richard likes to eat this for breakfast with a touch of cream!

Manuel and Juan Pablo have done five plantings of "salad greens." This is our first week of harvest from our spring-planted salad greens. We should have salad mix, baby kale and more baby arugula coming soon! We're also learning how to use a new vacuum seeder we got this spring. We'll use it to plant our cilantro, dill, bunched arugula, baby bok choy and radishes. It was fun having a shiny, new piece of equipment. It's dirty now, but seems to be working well and we're thankful to have it as it will help us fine-tune the plantings for greater precision.

Jack is happy to have the field crew back from Mexico so he can play ball at lunch time. Richard has been hunting for morel mushrooms in his spare time and Andrea is having fun cooking them along with asparagus, spinach, ramps and all of the other tasty green things available now!

Kelly & Beth have been busy in the office preparing for the start of deliveries. Lately they've been working on processing orders for maple syrup. Our friend and neighbor, Alvin Miller, had another pretty good year for making maple syrup. If you haven't taken advantage of this offer yet, don't wait. We've extended our deadline until May 20th, but that's the absolute last day for orders! Alvin needs time to bottle the syrup, so make sure you send your order in as soon as possible so Alvin knows how many bottles to fill!

We're happy to have another season of CSA underway. While farming isn't easy, we are blessed with great customers and a great crew! Our crew has been practicing flexibility for the past several weeks. On warm, sunny days they stay late to get the work done. On rainy and cold days they help in the packing shed and greenhouses doing whatever needs to be done. Without a hard-working crew, we couldn't be the farm we are today. We're glad that you'll be sharing with us in the bounty of this year's harvest. Rest assured we have a lot of delicious food coming your way!



Vegetable Feature: Sorrel

Sorrel is a perennial plant we look forward to every spring and is among the first greens of the season. It is actually in the same family of vegetables as rhubarb! Sorrel leaves have a pointy, arrow shape and are thick in texture and bright green in color. You'll recognize sorrel by its tart and citrus-like flavor. It has a bright flavor that will call your taste buds to attention.

Sorrel can be eaten both raw and cooked. Raw sorrel can brighten any salad and is excellent when blended into cold sauces, vinaigrettes, dressings or dips. Because of its bold flavor, it is often treated more like an herb when used raw. When cooked, sorrel behaves in a very interesting way. First, its color changes from bright green to a drab olive green almost immediately. Don't worry, this happens to everyone and it's just the way it is with sorrel! The other interesting thing about sorrel is how it "melts" when added to hot liquids. The leaves will almost immediately change color and then start to soften. The longer it's cooked, the more the leaves break apart and you can stir it into a coarse sauce. This is one of the reasons it's often used in soups and sauces.

The acidity of sorrel makes it a natural companion to more rich foods such as cream, butter, sour cream, yogurt, duck, and fatty fish (salmon & mackerel). Additionally, it pairs well with more "earthy" foods such as lentils, rice, buckwheat, mushrooms and potatoes.

If you are interested in preserving sorrel to use during the winter, here's an interesting idea from Deborah Madison's book, *Vegetable Literacy*. She recommends making a sorrel puree to freeze. "Drop stemmed leaves into a skillet with a little butter and cook until the leaves dissolve into a rough puree, which takes only a few minutes. Cool, then freeze flat in a ziplock bag....Just a dab will add spirit to the quiet flavors of winter foods: break off chunks to stir into lentil soups, mushroom sauces or ragouts, or an omelet filling."

Spiced Lentils with Nettles & Sorrel Yogurt Sauce

By Andrea Yoder

Serves 2-3 as a main dish or 3-4 as a side dish

Spiced Lentils

1 Tbsp olive oil
¼ cup ramp bulbs or green onion bulbs, sliced thinly
1 ½ tsp ground coriander
1 ½ tsp ground cumin
1 tsp dried thyme
½ tsp ground cinnamon
¼ tsp ground nutmeg
Pinch of ground cloves
¾ tsp salt, plus more to taste
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1 cup beluga lentils
2 ½ cups water
1 cup blanched, roughly chopped nettle leaves
2 Tbsp lemon juice
½ cup thinly sliced chives or green onion tops

Sorrel Yogurt Sauce

½ cup Greek yogurt
1 ½ Tbsp olive oil
¾ cup sorrel leaves, sliced into ribbons
Zest of one lemon
½ tsp salt, plus more to taste

1. Combine all ingredients in a food processor. Blend until the sorrel leaves are well-incorporated.
2. Let the mixture set for 5 to 10 minutes to allow the flavors to develop. Taste the sauce and adjust the seasoning with additional salt as needed.
3. Store any extra sauce in the refrigerator.



1. Heat olive oil in a 10-12 inch sauté pan over medium heat. Add the sliced ramp or green onion bulbs and sauté until softened, about 1-2 minutes. Add the coriander, cumin, thyme, cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves, salt and black pepper. Stir to combine the spices with the oil and onions. Continue to stir and cook for another 1-2 minutes or until fragrant.
2. Add the lentils and water and stir to combine. Bring the lentils to a boil, then reduce the heat slightly to maintain a gentle simmer. Partially cover the pan and simmer for about 20 minutes or until the lentils are just tender.
3. Remove the lid from the pan and stir in the nettles and lemon juice. Continue to cook for another 5-6 minutes. If there is still a lot of liquid in the pan, cook uncovered. If there is a small amount of liquid remaining, put the lid back on the pan to finish cooking. You want a small amount of liquid remaining when the dish is done, but it should not be soupy.
4. Turn off the heat and season with additional salt and black pepper if needed. Stir in the chives or green onion tops. Serve warm or at room temperature with 1-2 Tbsp of Sorrel Yogurt Sauce.

Sorrel Hummus

Yield: 1 ½ cups
2 garlic cloves
1 ½ oz sorrel leaves, roughly chopped (approximately 1 cup)
1 ½ cups cooked chickpeas (one-15 oz can)
¼ cup tahini
Grated zest of 1 organic lemon
1 ½ Tbsp freshly squeezed lemon juice
½ tsp sea salt, plus more if desired
1 ½ tsp raw honey or pure maple syrup
¼ cup water
Cold-pressed olive oil, for serving*



1. Put the garlic in a food processor and pulse to mince. Add the sorrel, chickpeas, tahini, lemon zest and juice, salt, honey, and ¼ cup water, and blend on the highest setting until smooth. Season with more salt if needed.
2. Transfer the hummus to a serving bowl, drizzle olive oil over the top, and serve. Store any leftovers in an airtight container in the fridge for 3 to 4 days.

*Note: If you are using the hummus as a spread, add 1 ½ tsp olive oil to the food processor and blend it into the hummus.

Serving Suggestions: This sorrel hummus is delicious served with pita bread, corn chips or fresh vegetables as an appetizer or snack. You can also use it as a spread for sandwiches, flat bread or wraps. When we tested this recipe, we chose to spread the sorrel hummus on a tortilla and stuffed it with fresh spinach and diced raw asparagus tossed with a little drizzle of olive oil, salt and pepper. The hummus is bright and lemony and in Farmer Richard's words.... "also rich & creamy. I like the contrast of the crispy asparagus with the creamy hummus." This spread goes well with any spring vegetable including radishes, green onions, blanched nettles, baby white turnips and more!

Recipe Source: This recipe was borrowed from Sarah Britton's beautiful new cookbook, *My New Roots*. This book was just released this spring and it's packed full of nourishing plant-based recipes organized by the season. Sarah also has a blog by the same name, *My New Roots* (www.mynewroots.org). Her recipes are vegetarian and often vegan friendly, although they are also adaptable to include in meals for meat-eaters as well. Another bonus of both her book and her blog.....the gorgeous pictures!