



# Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993  
Twin Cities Edition

August 19, 2010

## Enough of This! by Richard deWilde

We have had a challenging season since it started raining the end of May. Fifteen inches of rain in June and July made it very challenging to keep plantings on schedule, cultivate weeds and even to find a dry day to hoe or pull weeds. Week after week, we had one day when it was dry enough and we hit those days running. Our valiant crew worked late to make things happen and we were doing pretty well with a difficult situation. But the weeds we pulled put down new roots when it rained, so we carried them off the field. We planted, but heavy rains washed the seeds away, resulting in poor stands which the weeds quickly took advantage of, filling in the open spaces. Already behind on hand weeding, more and more was needed! We protected and supplied our plants with foliar leaf protection, and nutrients to prevent disease and malnutrition in a very wet environment.

But with the undying optimism of the farmer, we said "Just hang in there. August tends to be dry, the weather will turn, we can still have a good year." And turn it did, but for the worst! We had 4.7 inches of rain on August 8-9, and then another 4.2" on the morning of Friday the 13th, in less than 3 hours.

Our fall plantings of beets, carrots, lettuce, daikon and winter radishes germinated fast in the heat and humidity, but then more rains came and washed away the tiny seedlings. We quickly replanted, but another deluge washed out those! Our road to Dorothy's bench washed out 4 times, each time worse than the last, so we totally reworked it, cleaning out the drain ditch of trees and brush, reshaping the road and bank, and adding a second diversion. After six tri-axle loads of new rocks, plus mulch and seed, we put in water breaks of wood stakes and straw –and it worked! It held! We also installed 2,000 feet of field roads at our Hammel Lane farm: Geotech fabric under 12" of rock, topped with gravel – it too held, with minor repairs. Ends up we cleaned out the 800-foot drainage ditch at Hammel, just in time! It held and diverted a torrent of water from the hills into the river, as it should, rather than into our fields. We still have to regrade and seed the berms for wildlife and bumble-bee habitat. Sadly, we lost much topsoil! Some filtered out in our grass strips, some lost to the Mississippi Delta.

On the morning of Friday the 13th, I drove around in a continuous downpour, watching water run and taking notes on where we could divert water here or raise a berm there – very important for future rain events. At

## THIS WEEK'S BOX

**SWEET CORN:** Slice corn off the cob, sauté in a little butter and add to salsas, salads or mix with rice, black beans and diced tomatoes for a nice side dish.

**RED AND YELLOW GRAPE TOMATO:** Cut in half and add to salads and pasta, top pizza or enjoy by themselves.

**TOMATOES-VARIETY BAG:** Slice thin pieces of tomato and layer with thin onion slices, fresh mozzarella and sprinkle with Italian dressing.

**SUMMER SQUASH:** Cut into small cubes, dredge in flour, egg, then coat in cornmeal and fry in oil. Serve on top of salads as croutons.

**EDAMAME:** Boil edamame pods in salted water for about 5 minutes. Rinse in cold water to stop the cooking process, pop them out of their pods and use in pastas and vegetable salads and grain salads. Try edamame with wheat berries for a whole grain protein combo.

**POBLANO PEPPERS:** See feature article on back. These peppers are dark green, blocky peppers and do have a little heat to them.

**ORANGE UKRAINE PEPPERS:** This sweet pepper is yellow-orange-red in color. Roast shallots and/or onion and garlic; blend with 1½ cups of diced Ukraine pepper and you have a tasty pepper sauce to top pasta, fish or chicken.

**PIMENTO PEPPERS:** These red and yellow heart shaped peppers are sweeter than red bell peppers and make a great addition to cheese sauces or diced and added to ground beef for burgers.

**JALAPEÑOS:** Just a little goes a long way. Mince pepper and add to just about any dish for a little kick or stuff with cream cheese and roast or batter and fry for jalapeno poppers.

**CARROTS:** Use a zester to make carrot curls to top soups and garnish salads. Kids love eating these thin curly carrot pieces.

**PETITE FRENCH GREEN BEANS:** Sautéed green beans with bacon crumbles or green beans mixed with corn kernels sounds pretty good to me.

**HONG VIT RADISH GREENS OR SPIGARIELLO:** These spicy and delicious greens with the pink stem have a great radish taste without overpowering any dish. Use in salads or sauté with other greens. Spigariello is also known as leaf broccoli, and resembles broccoli leaves or kale. It can be steamed, sautéed, stir-fried, or boiled. Mix it in when cooking other greens such as kale, collards, and mustard greens. Spigariello can also be substituted for other leafy greens in a multitude of your favorite dishes and gourmet recipes.

**MELONS (CANTALOUPE TYPE):** You'll have either Sweet Sarah, French Orange, Butterscotch or the Canary variety. Make a chilled soup by cutting melon into cubes, add 1-2 cups orange juice and blend. Mix in ¼ tsp cinnamon and 1 T lime juice, chill for at least an hour, garnish with mint leaves.

**ITALIAN GARLIC:** Pickle some garlic cloves in a spiced brine of white wine, white vinegar, sugar and herbs. Let brine sit until herbs sink to bottom and sugar is dissolved. Fill a jar with garlic cloves and large diced peppers and slowly pour flavored brine over the top of garlic and peppers to keep herbs from transferring and seal with a hot lid. Place in refrigerator for 2 -4 weeks.

**YELLOW AND RED ONIONS:** Caramelized onions bring a flavor like none other to any dish, sandwich, soup or salad.

**CHOICE: EGGPLANT:** Cut 4" strips of eggplant and coat in flour, garlic powder, dried basil, oregano and parsley and salt and pepper mixture. Place in hot oil and fry till golden brown and you'll have eggplant fries.

some point, it goes beyond even the best management. 4 inches in less than 3 hours on top of saturated soil and already high water was too much to prevent. We lost some, but not all, of our stream bank rip-rap repairs, all of the creek fences washed out again and we spent a whole week getting our 18 head of Angus beef back together in the paddocks that we manage for grazing. The good news is that they are all back together and did not get co-mingled with a neighbor's cows, which makes for a very difficult extraction. Angel, our "cow whisperer" joined the last six with the other 12 on Saturday.

Our fields did not fare as well as the animals and the new roads. Everything suffers from a 4" deluge, but new seedlings are especially vulnerable. Our fall carrots, beets, turnips, radish, daikon and several weeks of salad greens are greatly reduced. A new culvert/berm and road at Clair's (land we lease) burst and flooded this year's leeks – a total loss. Our celeriac has been suffering in the wet and now looks even worse. Our watermelons and some very nice cantaloupe were in the wrong place at the wrong time when the river rose to capacity and burst its banks in a few places – we won't be harvesting that field anymore this season.

Okay, it could have been worse – that old optimism tries to resurface. We still have many good

crops: the peppers, tomatoes and one last crop of sweet corn look great. There is still time to plant fall salad and spinach crops, but we just turned in an insurance claim for 34 crop periods of loss. Of course, the claim goes to the same USDA program that returned 1% on our 2007 & 2008 flood losses. We appealed and won but they have done nothing. We went to our attorneys and they said, "No one takes on the USDA. Sorry, they do what they want." The old optimism fades. It is cool and dry this week and we'll plant again tomorrow. Maybe, just maybe it will turn around now?!? I'm fueling up my bulldozer, ready to do more water diversion improvements. USDA or heavy rains – I don't give up easily.

To summarize: We are fine, so is the crew, and the animals are all accounted for. The only casualties were the plants in the fields: No leeks at all this year, a reduced carrot crop, and we'll have to wait and see how the celeriac, beets, turnips and winter radishes fare. Most of the fall brassicas (cabbage, kohlrabi, broccoli & cauliflower) are a big question mark. The good news: The winter squash field looks good, the sweet potatoes were spared, and the onions were safe, drying in the greenhouses. The parsnip fields are holding – we finally finished weeding for the second and last time. The tomato and pepper field is gorgeous – we'll be picking them until the first frost in September. And of course, we still have our loyal & concerned CSA members, standing beside us all season long, no matter the conditions. Thank you for being more than fair weather friends.

### Produce Plus for 8/26

**25# Roma Tomato \$30,**

**10# Red, Gold or Chioggia Beet \$18**

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#### Marinated Roasted Peppers

From *Vegetable Love* by Barbara Kafka

Here are some basic recipes for marinated peppers. A couple garlic cloves and whole or chopped herbs can be added to both recipes. Each recipe makes enough marinade for 6 roasted peppers. After roasted, core, seed, and peel the peppers, then cut into 1 to 1½ inch strips.

#### Roasted Peppers in Oil

1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil  
1 tsp minced sage  
2 tsp kosher salt  
½ tsp freshly ground black pepper  
Marinate peppers at room temperature for 2 hours or in refrigerator for up to 2 days

#### Roasted Peppers in Vinegar

¼ cup balsamic vinegar  
1 ½ tsp kosher salt  
¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper  
Marinate peppers at room temperature for 3 hours or in refrigerator for up to 4 days

## Vegetable Feature: Peppers

Over the pepper season you will be receiving both sweet and hot peppers in your boxes. Be sure to keep them separate in case you grab a hot pepper and meant to cook with a sweet! Peppers can be harvested in their green stage or allowed to ripen on the plant. They will turn red, yellow, or orange, depending on the variety. Varieties such as Bell, Italia, and Ukraine develop more flavor and sweeten as they ripen. Señorita Pimentos are squat, thick fleshed, deep red or bright yellow when ripe, and are great peppers for stuffing. For hot peppers, we've sent fresh jalapeños and dried Super chiles, a Thai style pepper, typically either bagged or made into ristras. You will see habañero peppers in the cheese share in our Rhubarb Habañero Cheese that we make with Castle Rock Dairy. Guajillo, poblano, roaster, and jalapeño peppers are all hot peppers that will be in your boxes throughout the season. Always remember, the smaller the pepper the hotter the heat.

This week you'll receive either Wisconsin Roaster or Poblano peppers. We plan to pack the other pepper in your box next week, so don't worry, you will get to try both. Poblano peppers originated in Mexico. They are a beautiful dark green, heart shaped pepper. They are mildly hot and are a great stuffing pepper. When dried, poblanos are called anchos. The Wisconsin Roaster is a hybrid, a mildly hot pepper developed at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. Every year Richard speaks to a class at the university in exchange for seeds. The UW peppers are a cross between two peppers that are kept a secret, but we believe it's an Anaheim and a bell pepper. Not many people are lucky enough to be able to taste the Wisconsin Roaster, but we are glad to have it at Harmony Valley Farm. This year, we planted the new Wisconsin Roaster Improved. It's a hot pepper with a little more heat than the Wisconsin Roaster. It is compared more to a poblano than an Anaheim, with its darker color, wider shape and thicker wall. Both Wisconsin Roasters are harvested at their green and red states.

We save some of our own seeds for several of our pepper varieties. It is a time consuming project, but well worth it. The seeds are taken out of the peppers and then dehydrated. They are then placed in a plastic bag and kept in the seed cooler until next planting. We don't plant all the seeds, just in case something should happen to the crop. On the hot side, we save habañero and Guajillo seeds. On the sweet side, we save Ukraine and mini sweets. We try to save at least 5,000 mini sweet seeds per year. Mini sweets only have 3-6 seeds per pepper, so it takes a lot of peppers to save that many seeds! If you can resist popping them in your mouth as soon as you get them, they are great sliced and used to top a sandwich, pizza, or salad.

Any pepper, sweet or hot, can be roasted, pickled or frozen. Roasting peppers is a great way to add an interesting flavor to a meal and it is easily done. There are three ways to roast a pepper: Fire, oven, and broiler.

**Fire Roasted:** Roast peppers directly over gas burners on medium high heat. Rotate with tongs until all sides are charred and starting to peel.

**Broil Roasted:** Place the peppers on the top rack under the broil until blackened, turning as necessary.

**Oven Roasted:** They will not have as much color on them, but still works great. Place the peppers in a pan in a 500°F oven. Cook for 45 minutes, turning every 15 minutes.

For any of the above methods, when the peppers are done, place in a bowl and cover with plastic wrap until cooled. Once the peppers are cool enough to handle, pull out the cores and drain the liquid carefully. Gently open the pepper so it is in one flat piece. Scrape the seeds and blackened skin from the peppers. Drain on a paper towel. Now you can chop or slice and add to any meal, puree and add to a sauce or dip, or even stuff the roasted pepper. Marinated roasted peppers are a great way to preserve peppers and make a great accompaniment to appetizer platters.

Freezing peppers is another easy and quick way to keep peppers. Simply de-stem the peppers and place in a plastic freezer bag. You can also slice them and freeze, so they are ready for your winter tacos, stir fries and pizzas!

When storing peppers, be sure to keep the hot and sweet varieties separate. Store peppers in a plastic bag in the warmer part of your refrigerator until you are ready to use.

#### Roasted Peppers with Vegetable Mousse by Chef Katie Routh

Serves 6

<b>Vegetable Mousse</b>	¼ cup carrots, small diced
2 cups carrots, rough diced	¼ cup squash, small diced
1 egg	1T fresh mint, finely chopped
1 egg yolk	2T fresh basil, finely chopped
1 oz cream	2T fresh parsley, finely chopped
	Salt and pepper to taste

6 Roasted Wisconsin Roaster, Poblano, or Ukraine Peppers, cleaned and kept in one piece

Preheat oven to 350°F. Cook the rough diced carrots in water until soft. Drain and place in oven for 5-8 minutes to dry the carrots. Place carrots in food processor or blender and blend until smooth, occasionally scraping down the sides. Add eggs and cream and blend for 1 minute. Place in a medium mixing bowl. Gently mix in the diced carrots, squash, mint, basil, and parsley. Season with salt and pepper.

Lay the roasted peppers out on a cutting board or counter. Divide the mousse between the 6 peppers. Roll the pepper so the mousse is completely covered by the pepper. Place in a baking pan, cover and cook for about 30 minutes until the mousse is firm. Let sit for 5 minutes before serving. These would make a great appetizer or a side dish. You can also cool to room temperature and cut into ½ inch slices and serve as bite-sized snacks.