



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

August 18, 2011

It's All in a Day's Work by Captain Jack de

Wilde, Farm Dog Hello everyone. I am Captain Jack de Wilde, official Hospitality Coordinator at Harmony Valley Farm. Oh, by the way I'm a Border Collie Dog. My job is to greet employees, guests, and other visitors, show them around the farm and make them feel welcome.

Harmony Valley Farm is a pretty busy place. Our day usually starts at 4:30-5 am when the alarm clock starts going off. Richard and I usually make some coffee, then go outside to check the weather and empty the rain gauge before we settle down at the conference table (kitchen table) to start planning for the day. Actually, Richard and Andrea start planning...I go take a little nap until about 7 am when I position myself by the front door so I can start greeting everyone as they come to work. Around 7 am Chef Boni usually comes in, gives me a hug and then gets busy preparing lunch for the crew. Usually my next victim is Kelly, our awesome bookkeeper and one of my best friends. About 7:30 am Benji or Fresvindo come in to get the plans from Richard so they can get the harvest wagons loaded and the tractors hooked up. Jose Antonio or Nestor come in and find out the locations for the field toilets for the day so they can get them in place. Juan usually comes in to get the key for the gas barrel so he can fuel up the harvest vehicles, and David and Rafael are already at work inspecting tractors, greasing and other fun dirty things (that I don't get to do because I'm a white dog). By this time, Richard and Andrea are gathering their papers so they can go downstairs to get the crews going. I usually eat my breakfast and play ball with Terri while they are taking care of business. By the time I'm done and Terri's ready to start checking her email, Richard is back in the office lacing up his boots and getting ready to head to the field. One of my jobs is to assist Richard with his morning field rounds. I say my good-byes and head to the truck to let the day's adventures begin.

I love going to the field because there is always a lot to see, hear, smell, and most of the time eat. Since we are certified organic, our crops and land don't have a lot of pesticides or bad chemicals on it like farmers that use conventional farming practices. I think maybe this is one of the reasons why I see all kinds of beautiful butterflies and insects now. Lately Richard and I have been seeing a lot of big black and yellow butterflies as well as some exotic minor butterflies that are very colorful. I like to just sit and watch them flit and fly around. Richard says the insects and butterflies like hanging out in our fields because our crops have a lot of flowers and there is a lot of biodiversity.

Lately we've been spending a lot of time in the sweet corn field. During corn harvest season,

THIS WEEK'S BOX

RED OR YELLOW WATERMELON: Check vegetable feature and recipes in newsletter.

SWEET SARAH AND/OR FRENCH ORANGE, BUTTERSCOTCH, SUN JEWEL OR MINI MUSK

MELONS: Sweet and juicy. Serve chilled, seeded, peeled and cubed or use a small scoop to make round melon balls to add to fruit salads. See last week's newsletter for descriptions of each melon. Just the right size for one or two people, and for your CSA box!

RED OR GOLD POTATOES: New potatoes are excellent boiled or pan-roasted. Cut the washed potatoes in quarters, unpeeled, and toss in oil, sprinkle with salt and pepper and roast for 35-40 minutes or till tender and browned slightly. Delicious as is or cool and put the roasted potatoes in a potato salad.

SUMMER SQUASH: Summer squash can be cut into chunks, strips, rounds or discs, or grated then deep-fried, sautéed, steamed, stewed, marinated, stuffed, grilled, baked or eaten raw. The possibilities are endless!

CUCUMBERS: The thin skin of the cucumber does not require peeling, just slice and enjoy the mild crisp flesh and edible seeds. Add cucumbers to salads, sandwiches, vegetable trays, and in cold soups such as gazpacho.

ITALIAN GARLIC: The garlic is made up of sections called cloves, each encased in its own parchment-like membrane. The edible cloves release more of their essential oils when crushed, chopped, pressed or pureed and provide a sharper more assertive flavor than slicing or leaving it whole.

SWEET SPANISH ONIONS: It is hard to ignore the aroma of frying onions, it stirs the appetite. The pungent flavor and odor is prized for the magic it makes in a multitude of dishes. Store in a cool, dry place with good air circulation.

ARUGULA: Arugula is a salad green with a peppery mustard flavor and makes a lively addition to salads, soups and sautéed vegetable dishes. I like to add arugula leaves to my pasta sauce for a tasty zip to the pasta dish.

EDAMAME: The Japanese name for green soybeans is edamame. The green pods contain small green beans and should be boiled whole in salted water for 4-5 minutes. Drain the soybean pods and rinse in cold water to stop the cooking process. Now the beans are easy to pop out of the pod for eating as is or added to salads, soups, or stir fries.

SWEET CORN: Roasted, boiled, or steamed- corn should be used as soon as possible for the best flavor. Strip off the husks and silk just before cooking. If roasting on a grill, leave the husks on, just remove the silk and soak the corn in cold water before grilling.

VARIETY BAG OF TOMATOES: Store at room temperature; cold temperatures kill the flavor. Enjoy raw, roasted, cooked or made into a soup or sauce.

SUNGOLD OR RED GRAPE TOMATOES: These beautiful little tomatoes are so perfect for salads, to top off a pizza, or just wash and eat like candy. The Sungold and red grape tomatoes are slightly less acidic and although have been very popular in salads they also make a good side dish when sautéed with herbs.

ROASTER PEPPERS: Long blocky green peppers with a medium heat; add to your favorite recipes for a little background heat. The thin flesh will cook quickly and will blend into sauces and soups. They are also great for stuffing.

ORANGE/RED UKRAINE: Sweet peppers can be used in so many ways: raw, cooked, stuffed, stir fried, on a vegetable tray, or roasted, peeled and marinated in olive oil. Combine fried onions and peppers and you have a perfect topping for hamburgers or Italian Sausage.

CHOICE: EGGPLANT & BASIL: Remember, one portion of each per veggie share, not per household. If you arrive late in the day and there is a lot of Choice left but not many veggie boxes, feel free to help yourself. The goal is to have little or none leftover at the end of the day.

we go to the sweet corn field every Wednesday and Friday morning to help the crew. We have a fence around our field to keep unwanted critters out....and let me tell you there are a lot of critters that roam around that fence at night! I usually spend quite a bit of time sniffing the fence line to see who was there. Raccoons, deer, and rabbits are mostly what I smell.

After I finish my investigation, I check out the harvest to see how that's going. The crew takes buckets of ice to the field. I didn't understand why at first, but then I learned that Richard has

this thing with picking sweet corn in the morning, icing it in the field immediately, taking it to the cold cooler and then packing it in boxes and sending it to our friends so that it's just barely 24 hours old and cold when you get it. If we do this every time, you should get some pretty sweet and delicious ears. We have 4 plantings of corn. We are just starting to harvest planting #3, so I think we'll be visiting this field for several more weeks.

We have another field with a fence—our watermelon and melon field. This fence has an electric tape around the bottom to keep the raccoons

out of the field. Richard gets really irritated when the raccoons go into the field and take a bite out of a lot of melons but never finish eating one. Personally, I'm not a fan of electric fences (ever since I got a little shock on the cow fence earlier this year when I was supervising fence building), but I can see why Richard puts it up.

We like to grow seedless watermelons, which can be pretty challenging. Watermelon seeds are very expensive, are hard to germinate, and it's challenging to find small varieties that will fit into your boxes. When you pay a lot for a seed, you really want to take care of it so it becomes a viable plant. We carefully prepare the greenhouse flats and make sure they are warm enough for the first several days after planting the seeds. If we do things right, we can get excellent germination. Seedless melons can't pollinate themselves, they require another plant to provide pollination. Therefore, we grow both seedless and seeded watermelons because the seeded varieties will pollinate the seedless ones. This means we have to make a very careful plan for the transplanting crew so the varieties are spaced correctly in the field. We also try to alternate the varieties depending on the color and pattern of their rind so we can tell them apart. Once they start to grow, the vines can travel pretty far and the margins start to get blurry. It's kind of fun guessing what color melon you are going to get when you cut it open! The seeded melons tend to be earlier, so that's what most of you will get this week.

This year we've had to do a lot of irrigating. I remember Richard telling me last winter that it was going to be a dry year and we needed to get ready. Well, it has definitely been dry. We have water meters in some of our fields that have drip irrigation. Every day we check the sensors to see if there is enough water in the soil. Then Richard calls Vicente and tells him where we need to irrigate next. We also set up sprinklers to water newly planted seeds so they'll grow. Sometimes we drive really close to the irrigation and get sprinkled. On hot days like we've been having, it feels really good! It's hard work laying all that irrigation pipe. Actually, it's kind of like playing with sticks—a personal favorite game of mine.

Richard's been dealing with weeds a lot this summer too. We check on the guys doing the cultivating and the hand weeding crew. I think these are pretty fun jobs—license to dig! I try to help, but mostly I catch the weeds they are throwing off the beds. Digging is one of my favorite past times, so anytime we need to check moisture in the soil or look to see if seeds are germinating, I'm right there to help. I also like checking the stages of the vegetables with Richard. Whenever he gets the shovel out of the truck, I am front and center to help with the dig. Lately we've been checking on the fall carrots, and just the other day Richard surprised me when he dug up some really nice sweet potatoes!

Just before noon we head back to the farm so we don't miss lunch. This is one of my favorite times of the day. Lunch must be good because everyone comes...which means plenty of opportunities for me to find someone to play ball with. I play pretty hard at lunch time, but at 1 pm everyone heads inside for the afternoon meeting and I go back to the office so I can settle in for my

Vegetable Feature: Watermelon

Watermelons are the quintessential summer fruit: 100% fun, refreshing and reminiscent. A summer isn't complete until I've eaten almost an entire watermelon in one sitting, spitting the seeds into the lawn and letting the juice run down my hands. It is one of those things I simply can't resist.

Though they look quite tough, watermelons have to be hand harvested. Store your uncut melon at room temperature for several days and keep any extra cut melon covered and in the fridge.

Watermelon is great simply sliced and eaten, but there are many ways to enjoy watermelon. Because they are 92% water, they are a natural for blending and incorporating into margaritas, spritzers, lemonades and frozen into popsicles, granitas and sorbets. One of my favorite summer drinks is watermelon agua fresca: blended watermelon, sugar and citrus juice. Watermelon flesh is easy to cut and can be presented in cubes, balls, triangles, batons, or large, thin slices. Cookie cutters can even be used to cut more elaborate shapes! Not many people know that even the rind and seeds are edible. Once pickled, the rind is a great addition to salads, with pork chops or a crunchy snack on its own. In Asian countries, roasted watermelon seeds are either seasoned and eaten as a snack food or ground up into cereal and used to make bread. If you are in need of a quick side dish to bring to a picnic, cut up watermelon and toss with crumbled feta cheese, thinly sliced red onion and mint! Reserve the hollowed out rind as a presentation bowl! If you are feeling extra creative, watermelons are popular for carving. Visit www.watermelon.org for instructions and ideas.

Watermelon-Rind Pickle Salad

adapted from Gourmet Magazine

1 cup watermelon rind
½ cup rice vinegar
1 Tbsp honey
½ tsp salt
1 tsp whole allspice
1 tsp whole clove
1 cup carrot, julienned
Arugula, or seasonal greens
½ Tbsp olive oil

-In a small saucepan, bring vinegar, honey, allspice, clove and salt to a gentle simmer.

-Meanwhile, remove tough, green layer from rind with a vegetable peeler and discard. Julienne the rind by cutting the rind into thin slices, about 1/8, then stack a few slices and cut into matchsticks.

-Stir watermelon rind into the pickling brine and cook about 30 seconds. Remove from heat and let stand 25 minutes.

-Drain the watermelon rind, remove spices and toss with carrot, arugula and olive oil. Season with salt and pepper. *Jazz it up by tossing the pickled watermelon rind with lime zest, carrots and cilantro. Serve as an accompaniment to fatty fish such as tuna or mahi-mahi or alongside grilled pork chops.*

Grilled Watermelon and Tomato Salsa

Yields 3 cups

2-3 slices watermelon
2 Tbsp jalapeño, fine dice
½ cup onion, small dice
¼ cup green pepper, small dice
1½ cups tomatoes, medium dice
1 Tbsp basil, chopped
1 Tbsp cilantro, chopped
½ Lime, juiced
S&P

-Coat the slices of watermelon with olive oil and grill for 30 seconds on each side; just enough to mark the flesh.

-Remove rind and dice watermelon. Mix all ingredients. Allow to set for 20-30 minutes to allow flavors to combine. Taste and adjust; adding more jalapeño if you desire a hotter salsa.

afternoon nap. I'm not a big fan of hot afternoons, so I prefer to stay inside and keep Terri & Kelly company.

Whew—I'm tired just thinking about all the activity that happens during a day! After the crew heads home, we try to wrap up business in the office....check our email, print off wholesale orders, etc.

Before it's time to go to bed, I help Andrea lock up the buildings, check the greenhouses and coolers, and I usually swing by the animals to bark at Marvin the buck goat and the pigs. Now that everything is taken care of, it's off to bed for me....with sweet dreams of the day to come.