



# Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

May 17, 2012

## Thoughts on My Visit to the Farm by Angela Fuhrken, CSA member

**About Me:** I have been a Harmony Valley Farm CSA member for four years and am in my second year as Site Coordinator. I live in Madison with my husband, Peter and our two boys James (5) and Evan (1). We joined Harmony Valley after I read "Omnivore's Dilemma" and started rethinking my views on where my food comes from. Being CSA members has had a profound impact on our family and every year we become more vocal advocates for CSA's and for our farm, Harmony Valley.

At our house, you will commonly hear the kids ask, "Where did these vegetables come from?" When the answer is "Richard grew them for you," the veggies are way more likely to be eaten.

Recently, I started wondering what does "Richard grew them for you" really mean? We have a garden and grow a fair number of things but it is a tiny garden and doesn't even produce enough for our family of four. Even though I've visited Harmony Valley a number of times I realized I didn't really understand what it took to grow enough variety and quantity for 800+ families. So I made arrangements with Richard and Andrea to spend a few days working at the farm.

As luck would have it, I got to spend the day following my asparagus from field to box. My favorite part was harvesting. The best way to describe harvesting asparagus is an organized hunt. The asparagus grows in fields that have other plants/grasses/straw mulch in them as well. You have to keep watch for the spears as you walk along with knife and bucket at the ready. Sometimes you get lucky and find one growing in a clear area but more often than not, they are hiding among the grasses. There are other treasures hiding in the grasses as well. During the two hours that our five person crew was out harvesting we discovered a baby bird coming out of the shell, a second nest of day old baby birds, and two little garter snakes(those we relocated).

Once the hunt was over, we headed back to wash, sort, bunch and pack out the asparagus. The sheer quantity of asparagus that passed through my, and many other peoples, hands was astounding...in total I think it was around 300lbs.

When I got over marveling at all the

## THIS WEEK'S BOX

**PARSNIPS:** Cut into matchsticks and put in salads, stir-fries or eat as a fresh snack! Difficult to peel if baby size and there really isn't a need. Just give them a good scrub with a veggie brush.

**GREEN GARLIC:** Leaves and all, these young garlic plants sweeten when cooked and are great raw in a salad, too. Store in a plastic bag in the fridge.

**POTATO ONIONS:** Slice thin and toss into pasta, grain or veggie salads.

**ASPARAGUS:** Great to grill, steam, or eat raw in a salad or added to a pasta or risotto. Takes a light touch, so be careful not to overcook or they'll get mushy.

**RHUBARB:** Chop and heat with a little water and your choice/amount of sweetener. Use as a sauce with ice cream or as a foil for a spicy pork chop and lentil dinner.

**PEA VINE:** See veggie feature

**HON TSAI TAI:** Bunched, dark green, Asian green with yellow flowers – only available in the spring! Versatile enough to use raw in a salad, sautéed or in a stir-fry. Even the flowers are delicious!

**FRENCH BREAKFAST RADISH:** Try marinating in equal parts soy sauce and red wine vinegar for a spicy salad topper. Remove the greens and add to your salad or to a stir-fry or soup.

**ARUGULA OR SALAD MIX:** Look for preparation ideas right on our bagged items. Ready to go, but we suggest that you give them a rinse & sort through the leaves if you have a chance. Our triple wash process is extensive but nothing is perfect. It's better to find any little weeds we might have missed before you dig into your salad!

**SAUTÉ MIX OR SPINACH:** Can you identify each leaf in this mix of young cooking greens? The spinach is delicious with a light sauté as well.

**CHOICE- GARDEN HERB PACKS:** We've sent one per VEGGIE SHARE BOX and we'll send more next week for folks who weren't on the list this week. Sharing households need to share as well, unless there are leftovers at your site. Each pack contains rosemary, oregano, basil, sage, thyme, savory, Italian & curly parsley. Plant in your garden or in individual containers on your windowsill or deck. They like sun and should be kept evenly moist. This is your way to enjoy fresh herbs for your culinary adventures this season. Basil is sensitive, so cover or move indoors if the temp drops below 50°F.

asparagus, I started noticing how smoothly everything in the packing shed operates. The crew always knew where they needed to be and what they needed to do. They also took great care in everything they did. We didn't just pack the boxes. Each item was placed in at a certain time and in a certain way so that it would be protected for the ride to someone's table. And oh by the way, those asparagus bunches I carefully put in your box are the same ones that we harvested that morning!

My second day started (as all days at Harmony Valley start) with the crew meeting where Richard and the crews review the morning plan. Then the crews headed out to their respective tasks. As the crews work, Richard goes around to the different areas to see how they are progressing and discuss anything that might be of concern. Since Jack the Dog was kind enough to relinquish his seat in Richard's truck, I got to shadow Richard. As we visited the crews I quickly realized several different

things.

First, planting is much easier than harvesting. There are several different pieces of equipment that the crews have available to use for planting. There are different seeders and one particularly interesting machine that semi-automates transplanting seedlings. By contrast, there is no way to pick radishes than to do just that -- pick them --by hand. The fastest crew members can pick and bunch about 40 bunches an hour -- and on that particular day we were hoping the crew would get ~1000 bunches. The lettuces/greens/spinach fields were the one area I saw where the crews were able to use a machine to help with harvesting. Conceptually, it was amazing. A blade oscillated back and forth while the tractor pulled the machine down the field. As the blade cut the lettuce/greens a conveyor belt took it up into bins which the crew would replace as they were filled. Sounds pretty slick, right. It is. Except this machine is EXTREMELY tempera-

mental. Set the height of the blade too high and you smooch the lettuce instead of cutting it but set it too low and you catch the ground, which ruins the blade. Drive the tractor too fast or set the conveyor belt speed too slow or too fast...you get the idea. Finally, after delicately working their way across the field, the crew had to go back and cut a portion by hand with clippers because even when it was operating optimally the machine never managed to cut the outside row! If I were Richard and the crew, I would have developed a love-hate relationship with that machine pretty quickly.

My second observation was that Richard's knowledge as a grower and his willingness to share his knowledge is astounding. Every time we visited a field or walked down a row of plantings, Richard explained something to me about what was happening in that area. Among the many things I learned were how to identify flea beetles, how to tell when germination was or wasn't successful, how to assess the economics of a given vegetables, how to lay out a bedding plan for a field, how to determine how deep to plant the sweet corn based on the moisture level and temperature of the soil. However, despite all of Richard's knowledge and planning skills he couldn't predict how everything would turn out with any given crop. He may have hoped that the radish crew would harvest 1000 bunches, but they were only able to get 850 because the weather hadn't been warm enough for the radishes to get big enough for picking. It gave me a new appreciation for the concept of "sharing in both the risks and rewards" of farming.

Lastly, I saw the same efficiency and teamwork among the field crew as I saw among the crews in the packing shed. I work in the corporate world and, like many of you, have participated in numerous team-building workshops over the years. What I saw at Harmony Valley was a team-building workshop facilitator's dream come true. The crews were focused, treated each other with mutual respect, and were always adapting to deliver the highest quality product to the packing shed.

So after two amazing days at the farm I realized that the next time my son asks where the veggies came from my answer will be slightly different...."Richard, Andrea, and the amazing Harmony Valley crew grew them for you". I will also look at each box I open with a renewed appreciation for the hard work and caring that went into every single item.

## Vegetable Feature: Pea Vine

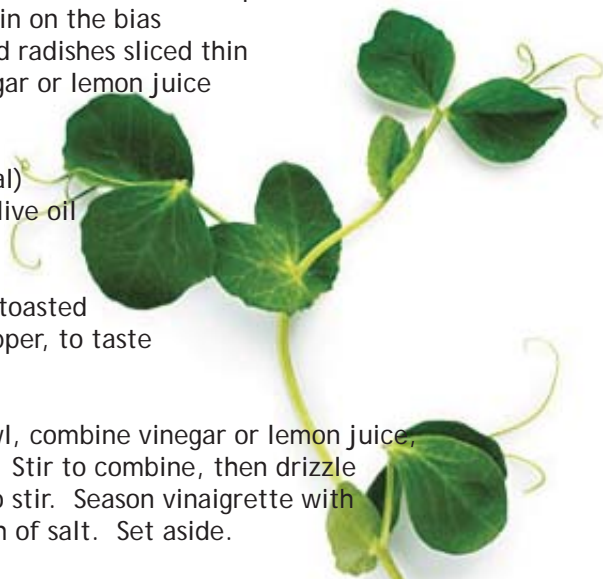
Every year we look forward to enjoying pea vine...the first hints of sweet delicious pea flavor. We harvest the pea vine from immature pea plants before they start to blossom. At this stage, the delicate tendrils are tender and hold the sweet, fresh taste of peas. Their flavor and crispness speak for themselves and they require little preparation. In their raw form, they are a fresh addition to salads and pair well with radishes, chives, lemon, mint, eggs and fresh cheeses such as feta. They are also a nice garnish for roasted meats and fish. Since they require little cooking time, they can be used in stir-fry or simply wilted and seasoned with salt, pepper, and a spritz of lemon juice.

Pea vine may also be referred to as pea shoots or tendrils, so check some of these other names when looking for recipes. To prepare them, simply wash in a sink of water and shake off the excess water. You can usually eat the entire plant except for the bottom 1-2 inches of the stem which might be a little more fibrous. If you find a stem that is more fibrous and tough, simply pluck the leaves off the stem. There is a lot of flavor in the stem, so you could use it to flavor a broth or sauce.

## Pea Vine Salad with Feta & Radishes

Serves 2-4

1 bunch pea vine, cut or torn into bite sized pieces  
2 green onions, sliced thin on the bias  
4 French Breakfast or red radishes sliced thin  
2 Tbsps white wine vinegar or lemon juice  
1 Tbsp honey  
½ tsp Dijon mustard  
½ tsp dried Dill (optional)  
4-5 Tbsps sunflower or olive oil  
1-2 oz feta cheese  
1 hard boiled egg, diced  
1 Tbsp sunflower seeds, toasted  
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste  
Salt, as needed to taste



1. In a small mixing bowl, combine vinegar or lemon juice, honey, mustard and dill. Stir to combine, then drizzle in oil while continuing to stir. Season vinaigrette with black pepper and a pinch of salt. Set aside.
2. In a medium mixing bowl, combine pea vine, green onions, and radishes. Immediately before serving, drizzle the vegetables with just enough vinaigrette to lightly dress the salad. You will likely have extra vinaigrette. Using tongs, toss the vegetables to combine with the vinaigrette. Crumble feta cheese into salad and toss gently. Adjust seasoning with salt and black pepper. Remember the feta cheese will be salty, so taste a bite first before adding more salt.
3. Place salad in individual salad bowls or on plates. Top with egg and sunflower seeds.

## CSA knowledge is cumulative -

### read the newsletters that accompany each share delivery.

We try not to repeat ourselves too much, so you might have to refer back to previous newsletters to remind yourself of a storage tip or preparation idea for an unfamiliar vegetable or family of vegetables.

All of our newsletters are archived and available on our website ([harmonyvalleyfarm.com](http://harmonyvalleyfarm.com))

or you can pick up a print copy at your site on delivery day.

All of our recipes are also archived online & are even searchable by ingredient!

## 2012 CSA Calendars!

Pick one up at your site this week and follow along with the season. Learn more about Farmer Richard's 40 years in organics, and our 20 years of CSA!

**Sunday June 17**

Strawberry Sunday at the farm!