



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

October 11, 2012

Pasture Walk Down Memory Lane with Farmer Richard

Some time ago, as in the year 1971 after I graduated from college, I became more aware of the deplorable conditions and use of antibiotics and hormones that confined animals were being produced with. I suppose this was a bit of a shock for me since I had grown up raising Black Angus cattle and pigs with my father on our South Dakota farm. Once out in the real world, when I no longer had the safe luxury of eating meat raised on our own farm, I chose to turn to a vegetarian diet and even took macrobiotic cooking classes and started growing my own vegetables. I raised chickens for eggs and gave away the roosters.

When I started farming on my own in 1973, I wanted to be self-sufficient. As a vegetarian, I tried growing the rice, beans, and lentils that were common protein staples in a vegetarian diet. Most of my efforts yielded only very limited success. At the same time, I had taken in teenage boys in a special therapeutic foster care program and they unanimously said "We Want Meat!" I said, "Okay. No White Castle Burgers, you grow your own meat and butcher it." They chose a steer and started raising rabbits and chickens. This was the end of my vegetarian days as we had found a practical source of protein that we could produce in a way that we felt good about.

To this day, I maintain a healthy respect for those who choose to eat a vegetarian diet. With animals being accumulators of toxins and drugs from their feed, it is not healthy or advisable to eat meat unless you know it is raised eating only organic feed and without antibiotics or growth hormones. If you choose not to eat meat, we respect your choice. If you do eat even a modest amount of meat, please consider the options we have to offer you.

There are numerous choices of healthy sounding terms used to describe various meat choices available on the market. "Natural," "Grass-Fed," and "Organic" are just a few of the descriptive terms. It's hard to know what you are really getting unless you do your own research and can reliably depend on your source.

We raise meat animals for our own use, to feed our crew, and to sell to our health conscious customers. Our Angus beef are certified organic and 100% grass-fed for

This Week's Box

PORCELAIN GARLIC: Try creamed spinach with roasted garlic.

RED ONIONS: Cook up a batch of French red onion soup with cheesy crostini.

FRENCH FINGERLING POTATOES: Slice in half, toss with oil and roast with garlic and red onion. Serve as a side for fish.

CARROTS: Make a creamy roasted carrot and dill soup

SPAGHETTI SQUASH: Cut in half, remove seeds and bake in oven with a drizzle of olive oil and minced garlic. Fork apart squash and serve with your favorite marinara sauce.

HONEYNUT BUTTERNUT SQUASH: Slice in half and stuff with red onion, crumbled sweet turkey sausage, walnuts and whole cranberries. Bake until tender, then top with cheese.

SALAD: Make a fresh salad with thinly sliced red onion, toasted squash seeds, shaved parmesan and orange vinaigrette.

BROCCOLI: Make a quick soup using one head of broccoli, with two diced potatoes simmered in 3 cups stock, puree then return to stove add salt and pepper and stir in 1 cup ricotta cheese.

ESCAROLE: See this week's feature for ideas!

RED OR FRENCH BREAKFAST RADISHES: Serve radishes as a snack with parsley-anchovy butter and rye crackers.

RED MUSTARD: This is our favorite time of year to enjoy this pungent green. Once it has been frosted, the flavor is awesome! Sauté it with garlic and onion and finish it off with a squeeze of lemon.

PARSNIPS: Sweet and delicious, these parsnips are freshly dug. Try them roasted with apples or pears.

CHOICE: CARDOON - See Informational Sheet at your site or in the "What's in the Box" email to learn more about cardoon and ways to prepare this unique vegetable.

their lifetime after leaving their mother's milk. They graze the steeper hillside pastures on our farm that are not suitable for vegetable production, but provide a variety of improved grasses, legumes and native herbs. Face flies are deterred with a face wipe of citronella (lemongrass oil) as they reach into their mineral feeder daily for a lick of trace mineral salt, kelp meal and diatomaceous earth that naturally controls internal parasites. Even in this drought year, they have enjoyed abundant grass, shade from the hot sun and fresh spring water. You could not find healthier, happier animals anywhere. They are pictures of health with their sleek, shiny black coats.

Our certified organic pigs are a similar story. They roam every day on a 20 acre pasture, eating wild apples as fast as they fall from the trees as well as acorns, roots and grasses. They lay in the muddy wallows in the shade when it is hot and now they sunbathe on the hillside for warmth in the afternoon and nestle into their straw lined huts at night. They are ever present when the bins of culled greens and roots arrive from the packing shed each day and still they rush to the feed trough for their daily grain supplement of organic corn, barley and flax meal. These are healthy, happy pigs, producing the very best tasting pork available anywhere.

With so many choices on the market right now, it has been challenging to find homes for all the meat we are producing. We hope you will consider a Harmony Valley Farm meat purchase this season. We have expanded our offerings to offer you a wide variety of combinations to choose from including all-beef packs, all-pork packs and our very popular beef & pork mixed packs. Most recently we have added a 15# pack size to our offerings. This is the perfect option for smaller households and those with limited freezer space. You also have the opportunity to take advantage of our meat club option. We offer 3 or 5 deliveries of freshly frozen meat which will include a variety of beef & pork cuts. By purchasing the meat club option you can lock in pricing for future deliveries, have a secure supply of fresh meat, and experience a variety of cuts. Despite the rising cost of conventional meats due to rising grain costs, we have not raised our prices and are priced below most other organic options.

We feel confident you will enjoy the meat products we have to offer. 100% Grass-fed, certified organic beef & pasture-raised pork--you will be surprised by the tenderness and taste. You are welcome to visit our pastures anytime and we're happy to answer any other questions you might have. Eat well and be healthy!



Photo by Abbey J. Steffen

Ready to Order Beef and Pork of Your Own?

If Richard's trip down memory lane made you crave some of Harmony Valley Farm's organic beef and pork, visit our webpage (www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com/meat.php) to view a complete list, as well as descriptions, of the various meat packages we have to offer.

We also want to hear about your favorite cuts of meat and how you enjoy preparing them! Join our facebook discussion this week to share this with us and other Harmony Valley Farm fans!

To order your meat, simply print off an order form and send it in the mail with your payment. You may also email csa@harmonyvalleyfarm.com or call 608-483-2143 x2 to place your order.

Vegetable Feature: Escarole

by Chef Chelsea Brannan

Escarole, with its broad, slightly curved, pale green leaves has a mild bittersweet flavor. We wait until the cooler temperatures set in in the fall before we harvest this green. Once it goes through a frost, the flavor changes from just bitter to a more balanced bitter-sweet. Escarole is a cousin to the endive that was in your boxes several weeks ago and pairs with many similar ingredients. Some ingredients often paired with escarole include dried beans, rich meats (roasted poultry, duck, bacon and other pork cuts), apples, pears, persimmons, garlic, olives, olive oil, vinegars, nuts, and dry-aged cheeses.

The leaves, which are long and playfully curled at the tips, can be used in both cold salads and hot dishes. When used in salads, you may want to mix in a few other greens such as salad mix or spinach. For a hot preparation, try it briefly sautéed or wilted with a hot dressing. It is also delicious in pasta dishes or in rich, comforting soups such as an Italian bean soup. Bake escarole into a Sunday morning quiche or add it to a creamy sweet potato gratin. It's also delicious in Minestrone soup. I created two recipes for you to try, one is using escarole raw in a salad and the other is cooked in a thick soup with chick peas.

Escarole should be stored in a loosely closed plastic bag, wrapped in a damp cloth or paper towel. It should keep this way for about 7 days. If it does begin to wilt, refresh it by plunging it in ice water or use it in a cooked preparation such as a soup.

Escarole is an excellent source of folic acid and potassium. It is a good source of vitamin A and does contain panthothenic acid, vitamin C, Zinc, Iron, Calcium and Copper. Such a nutritious green to enjoy!

Escarole Salad with Warm Bacon Vinaigrette, Pears and Almonds

By Chef Chelsea Brannan

Serves 4

4 strips of bacon, cut into ½ inch pieces
¼ cup sunflower or olive oil
1 shallot or small onion, finely diced
2 Tbsp red wine vinegar
½ medium head of Escarole, washed and torn into pieces
½ cup almonds, lightly toasted and chopped
2 pears, cored and cut into ¼ inch thin slices
Salt and pepper to taste

- In a medium pan, cook bacon until crispy and brown. Remove bacon and set aside. Pour out bacon drippings but reserve what is left in pan.

- In same pan, add the oil and shallot/onion. Sauté shallot on med-low heat until soft. Remove pan from heat. Add the vinegar and whisk to combine. Set aside to cool.

- In large bowl, combine the escarole, bacon and almonds. Pour dressing from pan over mixture and toss to combine. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

- To serve, divide this into 4 bowls and arrange pear slices in a fan shape over the top of salad. Enjoy!



Escarole and Chickpea Soup

by Chef Chelsea Brannan

Serves 4

Olive Oil
1 medium shallot or onion, finely diced
1 celery stalk, small dice
1 garlic clove, minced
2 tsp fresh rosemary, finely chopped
2- 14 oz can of Chickpeas (Garbanzo Beans) drained and rinsed
2 cups chicken or veggie stock
½ head (about 8 full leaves) of Escarole, washed and rough chopped into 1 inch pieces
2 Tbsp fresh parsley, rough chopped
Salt and pepper to taste



- Place the shallot/onion, celery, garlic and rosemary in a saucepan with a drizzle of oil and sauté until soft and translucent.

- Add the chickpeas and stock to the same sauce pan. Simmer gently for 30 minutes until chickpeas are tender. Remove half the chick peas and purée in a blender then return to saucepan.

- Add the escarole, simmering until tender. Season with salt and pepper.

- If it gets a little too thick add a bit more stock or water to thin it down. Just remember this is thick like a stew, not soup. Portion this out into four bowls, top with parsley and a splash of olive oil. Serve with a rustic loaf of bread and butter and enjoy!