



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

October 18, 2012

Challenge Accepted!

By Chef Abbey J. Steffen

As I near the end of my culinary season with Harmony Valley Farm, I am finding myself longing for more time. Coming to HVF has been a culinarian's dream come true. I have been a chef for 10 years, in several different culinary properties, and nothing can compare to my time here. My transition from restaurant chef to farm chef, or chef de ferme as my colleagues like to call it, was solely for the purpose of continuing my culinary education and learning in detail where the food I consume comes from. Never in my dreams did I expect to learn as much as I have in these short four months. Richard and Andrea have been the most amazing mentors. They are willing to answer my questions, listen to my ideas, and not a single day has passed without me learning something new and exciting from them. My education about produce is not all I have learned about. My co-workers have also been educational resources for harvesting techniques, planting, explaining all the many tractor implements, as well as improving my second language!

My culinary challenge when cooking meals on the farm has been seasonal cooking and preserving for winter months. When I first arrived, it was early summer and produce was selective. I relied on the produce that was available, as well as preserved ingredients from prior seasons. It wasn't long before the high harvest season erupted with carrots, celery, onions, garlic, tomatoes, melons, etc. I'm sure all of our CSA members recall their overstuffed boxes of luscious produce. During this time, I tried to focus on raw/lighter meals for the crew. Salsas, salads, marinated tomatoes, and bright sautéed vegetable sides were accompanied by our amazing pork and beef cuts.

As summer came to an end and with autumn arriving, Chelsea and I began preservation tasks of freezing corn, peppers, eggplant, and canning tomatoes in various fashions. This is my favorite time of year for produce and cooking! Why, you may ask? Well, for starters, COMFORT FOOD! This is when kitchens are full of mouth-watering aromas, comforting flavors, and memorable scents. It is difficult to walk into any kitchen that smells of braised meat, roasted vegetables with herbs, or spiced sweets and not have a fond childhood memory. Slow cooking is a favorite style of cooking for me. These include stewing, braising, roasting, and preparing soups by juxtaposing flavors. Not to mention the amazing and flavorful stocks that the vegetables of autumn provide. The trimmings from celeriac, carrot, parsnip, parsley root, leek, and fennel along add aromatics other vegetables cannot compete with. It doesn't stop there! Squash, sweet potatoes, sunchokes, beets, turnips, rutabagas, and the wide variety of radishes give way for a fantastic accompaniment to any main entrée. Whether I am mashing, roasting, braising, sautéing, or stewing these root dwellers, it is difficult for me to NOT get excited and find new applications for flavor pairings! Autumn and winter are a great time of year for any home cook, chef, or beginner to start, if not maintain, their palate. As your palate "memory" grows, so do your cooking abilities. I challenge you to "go outside the box" with your CSA produce and I am sure you will find that root and cellar vegetable are more exciting than you could've imagined.

This Week's Box

RED SAVOY OR RED SWEETHEART CABBAGE: Both of these cabbages are some of our fall favorites. Excellent used in a slaw with a warm bacon vinaigrette, apples and almonds.

SPINACH OR SALAD MIX: Serve as a salad base with grilled chicken breast slices, cinnamon toasted walnuts, blue cheese crumbles and raisins.

RED AND YELLOW ONIONS: Core and stuff with the chopped, removed portion of the onion, diced carrots, bread crumbs, parsley, lemon juice and butter.

SPAGHETTI SQUASH: Toss roasted squash with parsley, rosemary, thyme and grated parmesan cheese.

HONEYNUT BUTTERNUT SQUASH: Slice into rounds and bake with a 2 Tbsp apricot preserves mixed with 1 cup OJ and cinnamon to taste.

*Note: It's easier for you to store and check a few squash than it is for us to keep our eyes on thousands of squash! So, if there are too many squash on your table to eat right now, arrange them and use them as a table decoration or store in a cool dry place (45-50°F). Check them periodically and if you notice a small bad spot starting to form, it's time to cook it!

SWEET POTATOES: See this week's feature for ideas!

BROCCOLI ROMANESCO OR CAULIFLOWER: Break into small florets, steam and toss with garlic butter and shredded Provolone cheese. Stir in toasted almonds if you'd like.

BROCCOLI: Serve with curried brown rice and tofu or chicken.

CARROTS: Sauté with fresh ginger, mint and finish with a touch of honey.

PURPLE VIKING POTATOES: We're almost to the end of our potato stores and we've saved one of our favorites to the end. You'll find the flesh of this potato to be a striking contrast to the purple skin as it is pure white and silky smooth. Excellent smashed or in soup.

GREEN CURLY KALE: Bake with diced potatoes, red onion, garlic and olives.

CELERIAC: Make a pureed celeriac and sweet potato soup with milk, nutmeg and white pepper.

Vegetable Feature: Sweet Potatoes

by Chef Abbey J. Steffen

"I yam what I yam, and that's all that I yam," as stated by Popeye, but that is not the case with sweet potatoes. Sweet potatoes come from the Convolvulaceae family, the same family as morning glories, and the yam is a member of the monocot family, Dioscoreaceae. The true yam is native to Africa and Asia, whereas the sweet potato is native to the Americas. So if yams and sweet potatoes have different families, why are the names often used interchangeably? This is the result of there being two types of sweet potatoes – one with white flesh and one with orange. For the sake of distinguishing between the two, the orange fleshed varieties started to be referred to as yams in the colonial times because there appeared to be some similarities between these two foods. This new term for the orange-fleshed sweet potatoes stuck and is often still used when labeling sweet potatoes. Talk about creating a little confusion! (Continued on back)

In North America, North Carolina stakes claim as the top sweet potato producers. Here at Harmony Valley Farm, we get our sweet potato slips from a farm in NC and they provide us with the beautiful Covington variety, which is a recent development from the University of North Carolina. Covington and Beauregard are the best of a very few sweet potatoes that yield reasonably well in the North. These also happen to be the potatoes that we have harvested this fall! We plant them into dark green plastic, trapping heat in the soil around the roots. therefore creating ideal growing conditions.

The distinct difference between these two sweet potatoes is that the Covington is larger and more uniform in shape compared to the Beauregard. The Covington is preferred by restaurant chefs for not only size and shape, but the flavor as well. As for the Beauregard, it is still a superior quality sweet potato that is generally long and tubular with less uniform shape and has a higher sugar level than the latter. Curing sweet potatoes are started within 1 to 2 hours of harvest and continued for 7 days at 80 to 85 degrees and 90 to 95 % relative humidity with ample ventilation. Curing converts starches to sugars, enhancing flavor. Curing, as this process is known, also thickens the tender skin so they can be washed, handled and stored for many months. Because of sweet potatoes high sugar content, they should be stored in a cool, dark place - not refrigerated. Some common flavor pairings for sweet potatoes include maple, ginger, cinnamon, garlic, sage, honey, butter, orange, pecans, bourbon, and rum.

Produce Plus

Delicata Squash, 15 pounds - \$15
Spaghetti Squash, 15 pounds - \$15

Limited Quantities Available

email csa@harmonyvalleyfarm.com or
 call 608-483-2143 x 2

Twin Cities: Please order by 5pm on
 Monday, October 22nd

Sweet Potato & Fresh Ginger Bread w/ Lemon Thyme Butter

by Chef Abbey J. Steffen

Bread

2 cups sweet potato, mashed
 1 cup sunflower oil
 3 each egg, beaten
 1 tsp vanilla extract
 2 Tbsp freshly grated ginger
 ¾ cup apple cider
 1 ⅓ cup brown sugar
 3 cups unbleached flour
 ¼ tsp baking powder
 ½ tsp salt
 2 tsp cinnamon, ground
 1 tsp clove, ground
 ½ cup roasted unsalted almonds, chopped

2 Tbsp honey

- Preheat oven to 400° F.
 - In a large bowl, combine the cooled and mashed sweet potato, oil, eggs, vanilla, ginger, brown sugar, and cider. Mix together thoroughly with a wooden spoon.
 - In a separate bowl, whisk together remaining ingredients. Add gradually to wet mixture until fully incorporated.
 - Grease a loaf pan and pour batter into pan. Place in oven and bake for 30-40 minutes. Place on a cooling rack for 10 minutes before removing from pan and serving.

Honey Thyme Butter

½ stick unsalted butter, room temperature
 ¼ teaspoon salt
 2 tsp dry thyme leaves

- In a bowl, combine the butter, salt, thyme, and honey. Mix together and serve with sweet potato bread.



Photo by
 Chef Abbey

Braised Pork Hocks w/ Rosemary & Sage Roasted Sweet Potatoes & Maple Bourbon Butter

By Chef Abbey J. Steffen

Serves 2

Combining sweet and savory flavors is one of my signature styles of cooking. I have never been much of a sweet tooth (other than my Grandma's Cream Puffs), so mellowing out the sweetness with savory herbs/spices has set a new bar for my palate.

Braised Pork Hocks

2 each Pork Hocks or 1 Shoulder
 Steak (1-1 ½ pounds)
 4 Garlic cloves, sliced
 2 Oranges, juice and zest
 1 Tbsp Fresh Ginger, grated
 4 Whole Cloves
 ½ cup Fresh oregano, chopped
 1 medium yellow onion, small dice
 4 cups water
 Salt & Pepper to taste

Rosemary & Sage Roasted Sweet Potatoes:

1 sweet potato, peeled & small diced
 1 tablespoon rosemary, fresh & finely chopped
 1 tablespoon sage, fresh & finely chopped
 ½ cup sunflower oil
 1 tablespoon garlic clove, minced
 1 tablespoon honey
 salt & pepper

Maple Bourbon Butter:

2 sticks butter, unsalted and cold
 1 shallot, minced
 2 garlic cloves, minced
 ¼ cup bourbon
 1 cup reserved pork braising liquid
 ½ cup maple syrup
 ¼ cup bourbon
 salt & pepper

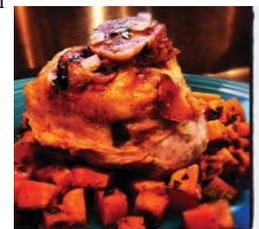


Photo by Chef Abbey

Preheat oven to 400° F

- In a 9x13 baking dish, place the pork hocks or shoulder steak on either side and add remaining ingredients to the dish. Try to sprinkle the orange zest, garlic, and ginger on the hocks as well. Cover the dish with aluminum foil and place in the oven. Roast for 4 hours or until the meat is tender and falling off the bone.
- In an 8x8 baking dish, add the sweet potatoes and toss with remaining ingredients. Season with salt and pepper and place in the oven and roast for 30 minutes or until tender. Stir halfway through the cooking process.
- In a sauce pan, sauté the shallot and garlic with a tbsp of butter for 2 minutes or until the shallot is translucent. Deglaze the pan with the bourbon. The alcohol will catch on fire and burn off. Be careful of the flame once the alcohol ignites. When the flame extinguishes on its own, add the reserved braising liquid from the pork and reduce by half. Add the maple syrup and mix thoroughly. Remove from heat, and gradually add the butter pieces while whisking continuously. Make sure the butter is cold before starting this process. The cold butter acts as the thickening agent. Once finished, pour generously over the pork hocks and roasted sweet potatoes.