



# Harmony Valley Farm

An Update for Our Community Supported Agriculture Members

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May 19, 2001  
Vol. 9, iss.4  
Week No. 20

## THIS WEEK'S BOX

**SPRING RADISHES - THE JUICY, ROUND RED TYPE**  
**SALAD MIX - A UNIQUE BLEND THIS WEEK, MOSTLY LETTUCES WITH BABY CHARD, BEET AND A HINT OF PEAVINE AND CRINKLED CRESS.**  
**SPINACH - THE LAST OF THE WINTER SPINACH. MOST SUITED FOR COOKING. MAY HAVE SHORTER "SHELF LIFE" THAN EARLIER IN THE YEAR.**  
**WINTER ONION (BUNCHED, WITH ROUND LEAVES)**  
**GREEN GARLIC - (NOT BUNCHED, FLAT LEAF) - IF LEFT TO MATURE THESE SLIM STEMS WOULD FORM BULBS AND THEN DIVIDE INTO CLOVES OF RED GARLIC. USE LIKE YOU WOULD GREEN ONION, BUT GIVES A GARLIC FLAVOR.**  
**ASPARAGUS - WE WEEDED THE ASPARAGUS AND IN THE PROCESS SOME STALKS, TOO SMALL TO SEE, WERE BROKEN OFF. WE EXPECT A LARGER HARVEST NEXT WEEK.**  
**RHUBARB - TIRED OF RHUBARB NOW? JUST CHOP, PLACE IN A ZIPLOCK, FREEZE. NO NEED TO BLANCH FIRST. USE LATER, PERHAPS WHEN YOU HAVE STRAWBERRIES.**  
**SALAD SHARE COMING SOON. CHOICE BOX COMING SOON.**

## What a difference a week can make....

Last week's field report had a dismal tone. We'd had more than a week of rain holding us out of the field during a critical planting time, and more rain was predicted for this whole week. We were beginning to wonder how we'd get plants in the ground!

Now, after a week without rain, (and a batting average of .00 for the weather forecasters) we are happy to report we have caught up with our expected schedule and are in good shape. The warm season crops got transplanted into their plastic beds and the covers to protect them from a frosty night, should one come along, are in place! To plant, we use a transplanter that is pulled behind the tractor. The tractor straddles the bed covered with plastic, two people sit on the back, and between them, over the center of the bed, turns a wheel. The wheel has pyramid shaped projections every 12 - 24 inches along its edge. These projections poke holes through the plastic. The projections are hollow and the wheel itself is, too, so a tank of water can leak steadily into the wheel and gush out the hole in the projection each time it points down into the ground. Then the humans place the transplant carefully and QUICKLY into the muddy hole. Quite an ingenious invention! It certainly makes planting through the plastic mulch much quicker and saves on the knees and backs which used to spend more than a day bending and scooting to get the melons into the ground.

Now that we have the transplanter we have expanded the crops we plant into plastic beds, and, as a result, have lengthened the season when you receive those heat loving crops like peppers, tomatoes, watermelon, cantaloupe and zucchini. It has even made it possible for us to grow a reliable, vigorous and productive crop of sweet potatoes, usually a more southern crop. I suppose we could grow okra on plastic, too, but the number of people who would appreciate the okra would hardly justify the added expense and time to do that. (If you are a true, incurable, okra fan, let us know.)

We also finished transplanting the rest of the celeriac, parsley, other herbs (thyme, marjoram and lemon grass), and even moved on to the second crop of cole crops. In fact, we were so intent on taking advantage of the warm, sunny weather while we had it that we fell a bit behind in our harvest and cleaning schedule. Now we will have to spend a bright, dry, Thursday afternoon bagging salad mix and cleaning onions, even if it runs against our instincts to "make hay outdoors while the sun shines."

We went back out to the woods to check on the ramps and found the forest floor overgrown with ferns. Spring in the woods is a succession of plants that all take their turn enjoying the precious sun. First come the ramps carpeting the floor, shooting up through the heavy leaf litter. They have the woods to themselves, dominating the understory completely. You can't walk without trampling them! The trees are still just in bud and the sunlight is as bright as it will ever be under the trees. By the next week, woodland flowers like dutchman's britches and trillium, and mayapple take their share of the space and light. The maple leaves are lacy and have begun filtering the sun before it hits the floor. This week, three - four weeks after the first ramp speared its way through the leaves, the ferns dominate the woods, interspersed with nettle and flowering mayapple. There is a distinct darkness and coolness under the fully leafed-out maples. Pull the lush ferns aside and you find the ramps lying limp and yellow on the ground. A few ramps are sending up a delicate red flower stem with its tip still tightly closed in a slim, arrowhead shape. (I have never seen a fully flowering ramp, and suspect that only the most mature plants flower at all.)

Harry and Ezequiel braved the now increasing insect life and the taller than ever stinging nettles to hunt for still-green ramps. It wasn't easy and they came home with just a few. We'll have to bid adieu to the ramps again until next year. They are slow growing -- not surprising since they only make chlorophyll about one month each year -- but next year we will again look forward to our early spring harvest, taking a few and leaving many behind to replenish the patch. -- Linda

## Green Garlic To the Rescue!

I love garlic! Just a little garlic adds a wonderful flavor to so many dishes. Preparation of garlic is the key. The flavor of the finished product greatly depends on how you use it. If you roast a bulb of garlic in the skin it gets very soft and smooth with a touch of sweetness. If you roast it without the skin it gets sweet with caramelization, and perfectly balanced bitterness. You can slice it, crush it, mince it, or puree it, and there are even more ways to cook it. It's no wonder, I can't live without it.

There is one problem, it is spring and the garlic from last season is almost gone. Some of it is too dry to use; some of it has sprouted. What will I do? Desperation sets in. Do I go to the store and buy garlic? NO! It's green garlic to the rescue. I never knew about green garlic before, and now I know what I had been missing.

Green garlic is the first stage of garlic growth. It pops up in the spring, a single stalk with long flat leaves. As it grows it gets fatter. Then, it begins to divide. The individual cloves form, and when it's ready, (mid July) it is harvested, dried, and sent out as "heads" or "bulbs".

The garlic, as it grows, also undergoes transformations in flavor. To most, the change is subtle, but to some, it is unmistakable. The way I look at it, green garlic, and other spring vegetables, taste of spring. The flavors are light, fresh, and lively, perfectly suited for quick refreshing meals that "pick you up", and keep you going. To really appreciate the flavor of green garlic, lightly sauté in olive oil and toss with pasta, or grill or roast the light part, and serve as an accompaniment to any meat or fish. - Harry

### SPRING PRIMAVERA

3 T. olive oil  
1 bunch green garlic, sliced thin  
1 bunch winter onions, sliced  
1 bunch ramps, sliced  
1 lb. asparagus, sliced on a bias 1/2 inch thick  
1 bunch nettles (optional)  
1 bag spinach  
1 jar or can tomatoes, or 2 medium fresh tomatoes, large dice  
1/2 c. fresh basil, chopped  
S&P to taste

Fresh grated cheese, Parmesan, Romano, or Asiago all work perfectly.

In a pot sauté garlic, onion whites, and ramp whites until translucent. Add asparagus and cook for one or two minutes. Add spinach, and cook until wilted. Add tomatoes and heat through. Do not smash the tomatoes. Add basil, ramp greens, onion greens, and S&P. Serve over hot pasta, with grated cheese.

### Why Not ?! - by Harry Stoehr

Many people ask me, "As a chef, why would you choose to work and live on a farm?". Instantly, my mind floods with pictures, leaving me speechless. Usually, all I can manage is, "Why not?". There are so many reasons, I can't even tell them all. Coming from north central Wisconsin, living with continuous bombardment in New York City, and the constant serenity of the Caribbean island, St. John, this place is a "happy medium" and completely different from any-place I have worked before. Every experience is invaluable. The learning potential is inconceivable. Everyday is an experience. I can do anything I want with what I have around me, something different everyday. Vegetables are a challenge for many, and I think we tend to "stick to what we know" and buy the same items time after time, even though they are way out of season. Cooking seasonally means the ingredients change all the time. There are so many styles of cooking and different preparation techniques, I never have to worry about what to cook, and I don't have to cook the same items, day after day for 50-500 people. Sure, it's quiet, but it's only 20-25 minutes from LaCrosse. It's still attached to civilization, and, it is so beautiful here. Secluded in a lush valley the entire environment radiates life. I never knew there were so many shades of green. If you can't tell, I really love it here. I get to live, work, learn, experiment, explore, and EAT the freshest food on the planet, right here, and, I get paid for it! Who could ask for more? It almost stuns me to think about it. A perfect summer job, and it fits perfectly in sync with the Caribbean season, a good winter job. Now you know, why a chef chooses to work and live on a beautiful, organic farm. It adds a page to the book, and volumes to the mind and spirit. HAPPY COOKING!

## Our Radio Fame

Well, okay, so "fame" is a bit of an exaggeration, it was still an honor to be called on to represent a segment of organic farming in western Wisconsin for the "All About Food" show hosted by Jean Feraca on Wisconsin Public Radio last Friday.

We had a great time talking about our farm and the issue of being financially (and emotionally) successful in farming these days.

Our favorite part was talking about the CSA, of course. Best of all was the thrill of having two former members call in (one from Minnesota, one from Massachusetts!) to support the concept of CSA and talk about their experience with Harmony Valley Farm! I felt a little *too* showered with praise; uncomfortable, I guess. But that's not to say we didn't really appreciate their words! It's one of the things that keeps us doing this, as you know.

I had hoped to get a chance to address some of the controversy that swirls around the edges of organics and actually worried, as we listened to the first hour with Organic Valley, that the show could take a negative twist. It certainly did not turn out that way! Wonderful, informed callers punctuated our points with additional facts and experiences and, all in all, it was a solid, not too fluffy, two hours of info about organic food and farming! After the show a woman from the audience asked me how we got along with our conventional farm neighbors because her conventional neighbors think organic farming is a lot of hocus pocus and just a gimmick to get more money. That would have been a great question to respond to on the air. (We, by the way, are respected by our neighbors, and it is mutual. We have numerous neighbors who take our road on the way to or from La Crosse just to keep up with the changes in the fields. They are the slow cars.)

### RHUBARB "FOOL,"

#### A QUICK "EVERYDAY" DESSERT

Yield: 4 servings

1 1/4 lbs. Rhubarb, cut into 1 inch pieces (you get about 1 1.4 lb. / week in the box)

1 1/2 T orange juice

1/2 cup sugar

pinch of salt

1/2 pint cream

Soak rhubarb in 1/4 c sugar for at least 1 hour. Boil 1 T. sugar with Orange juice. Add the rhubarb and liquid. Simmer just until rhubarb is soft. Do not stir too much or it will turn to mush. pour into a cold bowl and chill. Just before serving, whip cream with 1 1/2 T. sugar until it forms soft peaks. Traditionally the fruit is folded into the cream and served, or put it in a tart shell. Uncommonly, and much better I think, it is served parfait style, with layers of fruit and cream.

To "change it up" substitute 1 pint of strawberries for 1/2 lb. of rhubarb, or add raspberries, blackberries, and or blueberries after the rhubarb is cooled slightly. Ginger can also be added to the cooking liquid for a little zest, or crush gingersnap or shortbread cookies and put between layers for added texture.

*Have a great week!*

*Linda, Richard and the crew at  
Harmony Valley Farm*