



Harmony Valley Farm

Producers of Fine Organic Produce & Beef

An Update for Our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

Twin Cities Edition

Deliberations from the Kitchen Sink....Thoughts of the HVF Chef

Black Beans from China...Time To Retire My Food Passport?

By Andrea Yoder

The challenge to “eat local” is coming more to the forefront across our nation. As I sloshed through the suds and made my way to the bottom of a stack of dirty dinner plates, I began to think about this whole concept of eating local. Of course the vegetables I cook with now are local, you can’t get more local than sourcing ingredients off the property you live on! My eggs come from just around the corner from an organic farm, and the pork and beef in the freezer are from our pastures. But what about everything else on my shelves and in the refrigerator? When I slip into the shoes of a Harmony Valley Farm representative, of course I want everyone to support our farm and participate in our program. It seems to me to be a no-brainer that you would buy asparagus from a Wisconsin grower instead of one from California or Canada. When I reverse my role and put myself in the position of one making the decisions on where I will source the rest of my food supply, am I able to have that same “no-brainer” approach? It’s no hidden fact that our community has expanded significantly since the days of the early settlers and native peoples of our country. Before land, sea, and air travel options were available and efficient enough to move food products, people had no choice except to eat what was available in their area. I doubt the early settlers from Europe longed for soy sauce from China or coconut milk from Thailand. Part of what has helped to define our cultures and their respective cuisines across the world is utilizing and building dishes off of the food that is nearby. Today, we have a completely different experience. We eat from our global neighbor’s



Chef Andrea Yoder

backyards all the time...and sometimes may not even realize we are doing so.

I began to take a look at my own shelves and, while I’d like to say I am a purist in every sense of being a local eater, I will instead be honest and say that I appalled myself by the number of products I had purchased and regularly use that are by no means “local.” I think I became accustomed to seeing many of these ingredients so readily available to me that I never really stopped to consider where they came from or what it took to get them here. As I did my inventory, I found black beans from China, coconut milk from Thailand, balsamic vinegar and olive oil from Italy, sugar from South America, quinoa from Paraguay, and a bottle of wine from Chile. Who knew I could be so well-traveled and still have a blank passport! So now what am I supposed to do—the questions started to come as I tried to develop a new game plan. First of all, what does “local” mean? Does it mean your county, state, or geographical region? Maybe “local” is equivalent to domestic. What about products that have become commonplace in my culinary repertoire but are by no means local by any definition—do I need to consider giving them up? How do I find out where products come from? When I look at labels, sometimes it tells me where it was processed or who distributes it, but I still don’t know where the initial product or ingredients came from. Why do I even care about eating foods that are local? The more I thought, the more I realized that this may not be something that happens

This Week’s Box

Green Week

- ♥ **BROCCOLI AND/OR CAULIFLOWER:** Steam and top with cheese sauce
 - ♥ **GREEN TOP CARROTS:** Adds flavor to vegetable or meat stocks
 - ♥ **CUCUMBER:** Makes a refreshing Tzatziki sauce for Mediterranean dishes
 - ♥ **GREEN BEANS:** Blanch and use in cold vegetable salads
 - ♥ **KOMATSUMA GREENS:** Use as you would any other cooking green in sautes, soups, pasta dishes, etc
 - ♥ **SALAD OR SPINACH:** Toss with some other fresh veggies in your box
 - ♥ **SWEET SPANISH ONIONS:** Slice and add to sandwiches or salads
 - ♥ **ITALIAN GARLIC:** Roast the entire bulb and use to make a garlic salad dressing
 - ♥ **ZUCCHINI, SCALLOP OR SUMMER SQUASH:** Toss it on the grill.
 - ♥ **‘TEMPATION’ SWEET CORN (SE BI-COLOR):** See back
 - ♥ **BLACK GLOBE OR JAPANESE PINK EGGPLANT:** Look to Mediterranean and Thai cookbooks for recipes incorporating eggplant
- CHOICE:**
- ♥ **BASIL:** You can’t go wrong using it to make pesto!

overnight. So I decided to start with a few things at a time with hopes that someday I will become the local food purist that my predecessors were without even having to try.

One of the first foods I decided to look at was black beans...after all most of the people I feed for lunch are

Hispanic and include beans as a regular part of their diet, this was an important staple food. My first goal was to move my local borders from China to at least being able to find a black bean grown anywhere on this continent. Reassured by the large natural foods distribution company that I could always call with questions about foods and their sources, I picked up the phone confident that I could get an answer to my question. Unfortunately, the company representative was not even able to tell me where some of the black beans they sold came from. How am I supposed to make a choice when I don't even know what my choices are? Reaching the point of frustration, I finally settled for the option the rep described as "I think this one may be from the USA." When the delivery came the following week, I was very disappointed when Richard pointed to the black bean box that read "Product of China." So my search for a local black bean continues. Black beans haven't been my only dilemma. I've also tackled products including olive oil, balsamic vinegar, bread, and flour.

I've only just begun my quest to eat local, and my list of foods to source continues to grow the further I go. I'll share my experiences with you in upcoming articles, but in the meantime, I challenge you to take notice of some of the foods on your shelf as well. While the choice to eat local may start at home, the value extends beyond the borders of your own household and has an impact on economics, environment, health, and the future of our society. I am challenging myself to become a more informed buyer and invite you to do the same.

Produce Plus

Available for next week:

3# Garlic—\$20.00
(Italian Red in Net Bag)
3# Basil—\$21.00

Place your order by next
Monday evening.

Call or email the farm at
608-483-2143 or

csa@harmonyvalleyfarm.com.

Please send a check for
payment the day you place
your order. Your produce will
be delivered to your site next
week with your name on it.

VEGETABLE OF THE WEEK: SWEET CORN

by Richard de Wilde

What would make someone say, "that is the best ear of corn I have ever eaten!"?

Genetics: Older varieties are 'normal sugar' (SU). They can be very sweet from the field, but lose their sugar content rapidly, in a few days. Sugar enhanced (SE) hold their sweetness longer, 5-6 days if cooled and kept cold! Shrunken germ varieties called super sweets, (SH₂) are very sweet and hold that sweetness up to one week if they are kept near 32° F. They tend to be sugary sweet, but lacking true corn flavor.

Tenderness: Tenderness is related to the thickness of the husk that covers each individual kernel, called the pericarp. White corn has less pericarp, so are perceived as more tender. Bi-color corn has half white kernels, so is more tender than yellow varieties. Super sweet varieties have a thick pericarp making them crisp, or you could say 'tough'. There are new SH₂ varieties called 'extra tender' that have less pericarp and taste tender.

Soil: Any vegetable will taste 'better' if grown in mineral rich, fertile soil with proper spacing, free of weed competition with adequate moisture and temperature. Too much water just before picking will 'dilute' the flavor.

Handling: Quick cooling after picking and keeping cold until ready to cook slows the conversion of sugar to starch. The best corn can be 'ruined' in the back of a pickup truck or a day in a garage. Keep corn cool! It is o.k. to husk it, so it takes up less room in the refrigerator, but eat as soon as possible for best flavor!

So my vote for the best corn ever would be a (SE) bi-color, well grown in mineral rich soil and handled properly! The variety this week is called 'Temptation' (SE). You be the judge--is this the best corn variety?

Sweet Corn Risotto

Serves 2 -4

4 tsp olive oil, divided	3-4 cups vegetable stock or water, hot
1 medium spanish onion, small diced	3 oz parmesan cheese, grated
1 cup Arborio rice	1 clove garlic, minced
2 oz white wine, optional	3/4 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
1 cup fresh sweet corn kernels (about 2 ears)	2 T fresh basil, chiffonade
	salt and ground black pepper to taste

-In a medium saucepan, heat oil. Add onion and saute until translucent. Add rice and stir, toasting the kernels for about 30 seconds. Add white wine and allow to reduce down until it is nearly gone. Add corn and about 1 cup of hot stock. Simmer, stirring frequently until the rice has absorbed most of the liquid, add another 1 cup of stock and continue stirring. After the rice has absorbed most of the liquid, add parmesan cheese, salt, and pepper--adjust seasoning as desired. The rice should be creamy, not stiff or sticky.

-While you are preparing rice, heat remaining olive oil in a medium saute pan. Add garlic and saute for 20 seconds. Add tomatoes and season with salt and pepper. Cook just until the tomatoes are starting to soften. Remove from heat, add basil. Set aside.

-Serve rice with tomatoes on top. This recipe will serve 4 as a side dish or 2 as a main entree.

Corn Pudding

Serves 4 to 6

1 1/2 T butter	1 cup grated or crumbled cheese, (e.g. cheddar, gouda, or soft goat cheese)
1 cup Spanish onion, small dice	2 T parsley
5-6 ears corn, cooked	1 T chopped marjoram
2 eggs, lightly beaten	
1 cup cream or milk	
salt & pepper to taste	

-Preheat oven to 350° F. Lightly butter a 6-cup casserole dish. Melt the butter in a skillet over low heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring occasionally, just until it's soft and lightly colored, about 10 minutes.

-While the onion is cooking, prepare the corn. Using a sharp knife, slice off the top halves of the kernels, then turn your knife over and using the dull side, press it down the length of the cob, squeezing out the rest of the corn and its juices. Set these aside.

-In a medium mixing bowl, beat the eggs and the cream. Add corn kernels, cooked onion, cheese, herbs and 1tsp salt. Season with pepper and pour into the baking dish. Bake on the center rack of the oven until puffed and golden, about 45 minutes. Serve warm.

Recipe comes from Deborah Madison's book, [Local Flavors](#)