



WEEK OF APRIL 1ST, 2019 #14/52



When A Plant Biologist Comes To Visit

Joyce, our market manager and member of our “family” came up for a visit last week. Of course it was raining, but we lucked out and got a little break, with some blue sky, long enough for us to go walk the farm. Joyce got a degree in Plant Biology and Genetics from UC Berkeley, so it is always interesting to watch her look at the plants. Right now a high percentage of the fields are full of weeds and blossomed out. We have finished harvesting from them and what is left has gone into the next phase of life. It can be challenging trying to figure out what’s what out there, but Joyce looks at the shape of the stems, the leaves, the flowers, how they form. I don’t even know what all she is looking at, but it is always fun to be out there with her. We stopped and tasted some flowers that had a very strong, yet delicious, radish flavor. A little surprised when we pulled one out of the ground and it was grown-out turnips.

Event Season Is Approaching

The first events of the year are our Strawberry Days, however I am reluctant to set dates just yet. You can count on Mother’s Day for sure. With so much rain and not that much consistent sun yet, I want to make sure we have a good amount of strawberries for everyone to get their fill. Looking at the forecast for this coming week we are expecting a few more days of rain. We did check on the strawberries and found lots of beautiful white flowers, even some green berries. But the next day it poured and we had a little hail! Spring is becoming such an unpredictable season. Please be patient with me, and keep an eye out for emails about upcoming dates.

Regarding Lavender Harvest, last year we harvested too early. We got locked in by Nigel’s Memorial, and Jose’s wedding. I have vowed to never do that again, from here on out Lavender Harvest takes priority. Again, I ask for your patience on a date.

Tomato Sauce Parties - Many of you really like making sauce with our San Marzanos and they typically ripen a little later in the season, so I have decided not to schedule any sauce parties for the month of July. We will start in August, probably with 2 weekends, and will do one or two more in September. As many of you are out of town while the kids are home on summer break, I think the later sauce parties might be a better option for most of you too.

Since I am not being very helpful with dates, I would like to say, the farm is always available if you and your family want to come for a visit, maybe pick a few berries if they are ready, or schedule a private sauce party. If that is something you are interested please get in touch.

Spring Chicks

The baby chicks that arrived back in late November have been moved to a new home. During their first few months they are kept inside with heat lamps on. Last week they were brought out to the pasture and released from confinement! Very happy girls out in the sunshine, eating grass and bugs. Agustin was thrilled because he actually found an egg, which is about 2 months early. Hoping it is a sign and they will start to lay early, pullets on the horizon!



Helping Hands

Last month, another member of our field crew left the farm. Our crew is now down to 6 guys, plus 2 men who take care of the chickens. We are running a very tight crew, with little prospect of finding new help. Cameron and I have been discussing ways to make the farm more efficient and save our guys time. One of the issues we run into in the summer months is no time for weeding and hoeing, or time for staking tomatoes. Nigel stopped staking the tomatoes several years back because there is just so much work that needs to happen in June, the lavender, potatoes, still a lot of planting. But now that we have CSA members come and help us with the big lavender harvest we have cut back on a little work. One of the ideas Cameron and I have come up with, is getting help stringing tomatoes. Looking at how overrun with weeds our tomatoes get each year, we think it is time to go back to staking, at least some of the tomatoes. We have varieties that it doesn’t matter if we don’t, but we certainly have others that staking would make an enormous difference. I am considering turning the Solstice Party into a bit of work party and having everyone help us string tomatoes. The stakes would already be in the ground, but stringing takes time and if we pair up, it could go faster. Maybe we will do some hoeing/weeding. Think of it as “farm meditation”. If anyone is interested in coming up to the farm any time to help out with weeding etc, help would be much appreciated. Just some ideas to help us deal with this labor shortage.



RECIPES AND IDEAS FROM LORRAINE

Pickled Fennel with Rosemary

Recipe from Food & Wine by Joshua McFadden

1 1/2 cups Hot Water
1/2 cup unseasoned Rice Vinegar
1/3 cup Sugar
1 tablespoon White Wine Vinegar
1 1/2 tablespoons Kosher Salt
2 small Fennel bulbs, halved, thinly sliced lengthwise through the core on a mandoline
5 Garlic Cloves, crushed OR use your Green Garlic
2 Rosemary Sprigs
2 small dried hot Chiles, such as Arbol
In a 1-quart jar with a tight-fitting lid, shake the water, rice vinegar, sugar, white wine vinegar and salt until the sugar and salt dissolve. Pack the fennel, garlic, rosemary and chiles into the jar, cover and refrigerate for at least 4 hours. Drain the pickles before serving. The pickled fennel in its brine can be refrigerated for up to 3 weeks.

Okonomiyaki (Japanese Pancake)

Recipe found on budgetbytes.com

If you have a cabbage hater in your midst, I am pretty sure you will convert them with this dish. Serve this with a cup of Miso and you have really nice little meal.

2 Large Eggs
1/2 cup Water
1 1/2 TB Soy Sauce
1 TB Toasted Sesame Oil
3/4 to 1 cup All-Purpose Flour
4-5 cups shredded Green Cabbage
1 Carrot
3 Green Onions
2 TB Oil for frying
For The Sauce:
1/4 cup Mayonnaise
2 TB Sriracha
1/2 TB Sesame Seeds
2 Green Onions

Remove any wilted leaves from the outside of the cabbage. Cut the cabbage into quarters and remove the core. Thinly slice or shred until you have 4-5 cups shredded cabbage. Peel the carrot and shred it using a large-holed cheese grater. Slice the green onions. In a large bowl, whisk together the eggs, water, soy sauce, and sesame oil until smooth. Begin whisking in the flour, 1/4 cup at a time, until it forms a thick, smooth batter (about 3/4 to 1 cup total flour). Add the cabbage, carrots, and green onion to the batter and stir until the vegetables are mixed and everything is evenly coated in batter. Heat 1/2 Tbsp oil in a non-stick or cast iron skillet over medium heat. Once hot, add 3/4 cup of the vegetable and batter mixture. Press it down into the hot skillet to form a circle, about 6 inches in diameter and 1/2 inch thick. Place a cover on the skillet to hold in the steam, which will help the cabbage soften as it cooks. Cook the pancake until golden brown on the bottom (3-5 minutes), then flip and cook until golden brown on the second side. Pile the cooked pancakes on a plate and cover with foil to keep warm until ready to eat. Add more oil to the skillet as needed as you cook the pancakes. To prepare the sriracha mayo, mix together 1/4 cup mayonnaise and 2 Tbsp sriracha in a small bowl. Drizzle the sriracha mayo over the pancakes just before serving, followed with a sprinkle of sesame seeds and sliced green onion.

Swiss Chard Malfatti With Sage Brown Butter

Recipe from Bon Appetit December 2012

When I was a young adult, I would go to the Depot Hotel in Napa and eat some of the best ravioli I have ever had. They also served Malfatti, which I also loved. A bit of work, but so worth it! Even if you don't have sage to make the butter you can serve this with a light tomato sauce.

About 1 lb Swiss Chard, center ribs and stems removed
1 tsp Kosher Salt, plus more
1/2 stick Unsalted Butter, divided
3/4c up Whole-Milk Ricotta, drained
2 large Egg Yolks
1 large Egg

2 TB All-Purpose Flour plus more
6 Sage leaves, thinly sliced
Freshly ground black pepper
Finely grated Parmesan
Fill a large bowl with ice water. Cook chard in a large pot of boiling salted water until tender but still bright green, about 4 minutes. Using tongs, transfer to ice water; let sit until cold. Squeeze chard dry. Transfer to a large double layer of cheesecloth; gather ends and squeeze to thoroughly wring out liquid (be sure to use cheesecloth; the chard will stain a kitchen towel). Pulse chard in a food processor until minced, about 30 seconds. Return chard to cheesecloth; wring out again to remove any remaining liquid. Transfer chard to a large bowl. Melt butter in a small saucepan over medium heat. Add melted butter, ricotta, 1 egg yolk, egg, 1 TB flour, and 1

teaspoon salt to chard. Using an electric mixer, beat until a dough forms, 1-2 minutes. Alternatively, knead ingredients by hand in a large bowl until mixture holds together when lightly pressed. Cook 1 golf ball-size sample portion of dough in boiling salted water for about 5 minutes (to check for texture and seasoning). Taste sample; adjust seasoning if needed. If sample falls apart in the water, mix 1 more egg yolk and 1 tablespoon flour into dough until it holds together. Lightly flour a rimmed baking sheet. Scoop out scant 2 tablespoons dough; dust with flour and roll between your palms to form an oval-shaped malfatto; place on sheet. Repeat with remaining dough to form 12 malfatti.

DO AHEAD Malfatti can be formed 2 weeks ahead. Freeze on baking sheet, then transfer to a resealable plastic freezer bag. Keep frozen. Depending on how big your pot is, cook malfatti in batches, boiling salted water until cooked through, 6-8 minutes per batch (8-10 minutes if frozen). Drain and transfer to a plate; tent with foil to keep warm. Meanwhile, heat remaining butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add sage and cook until butter foams and begins to turn brown and sage becomes crispy, about 30 seconds. Season sage brown butter with salt and pepper. Divide malfatti among plates; spoon sage brown butter over. Sprinkle with Parmesan.

This Week's Box List

*Cabbage
*Celery or Celeriac
Chard
Chives
*Fennel
Green Garlic
*Mandarins
*Radishes
Raisins (from Capay Canyon Ranch)
*Red Russian Kale or Mustard Greens
*Rosemary or Sage
Spring Onions

* = Items in Box for 2

Chives, Rosemary & Sage

It is easy to skip over ingredients like the fresh herbs, but they truly elevate your cooking, and the flavor of your dishes. I grew up eating chives, my mom always had a lot growing on our deck. She would chop them and toss them in with scrambled eggs, so delicious. I always love them finely chopped and sprinkled on cottage cheese. The other morning I had a piece of toast with a little cream cheese and a slice or two of prosciutto and topped that with a little chopped chives. Of course, they add a lovely flavor to many soups, from a simple chicken broth with a little veg to all sorts of creamy soups. Add them when you are serving the soup, don't cook them because you will lose much of their delicate flavor. A few other good uses are deviled eggs, poached fish, mixed into butter, with or without other herbs. Here is a link to a recipe for Sole poached in Chicken Broth, seasoned with Capers and Chives - <https://www.lowfatlowcarb.com/recipe/poached-sole-capers-chives/>