



WEEK OF AUGUST 12TH, 2019 #33/52

The Biggest Little Farm

Last week I went to promote our CSA at a viewing of The Biggest Little Farm. I really enjoyed the film, and related to many of their experiences. The movie had me reflecting on all the innovative things Nigel had done with our farm. He always considered our soil the life force from which all other life grows. After we began feeding our chickens whey, we realized a lot more was happening with our soil and Nigel made the decision to stop adding compost and other soil amendments. We now rely solely on our birds for fertility. Soil regeneration is probably one of the most important things we can do to save our planet. And listening to John during the Q & A session after the movie, he certainly made that very clear.

The one down side to the movie, and it is a big one, is the lack of transparency about how much an operation like theirs costs. The movie is gorgeous, the land is gorgeous, the work they do is amazing, but according to the LA Times: Apricot Lane is a small-scale farm, defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as earning at least \$1,000 in gross income, but not more than \$250,000. John speaks openly of their investors, but not who or how much has been invested. I can't begin to imagine the price for 200 acres an hour from LA in Ventura County. The orchard project in the first year, renting all that heavy equipment to pull out the trees, then move soil, create contours, wow. And the cost of new trees, do a quick little google on that and you will find trees cost anywhere from \$75.00 to over \$100. Granted they were buying in quantity but I am sure they must have cost at least \$50 each.

The beautiful building and worm composting operation, how I would love to have something like that here on our farm. But seriously, how much money was all of that? According to that same LA Times article they have 60 people working on the farm, including volunteers. We have 17 and our annual payroll alone, is more than double what the LA Times gives as the high end of the small farm earnings caps out at. So out of all those people helping them run the farm, who is earning a living wage? The idea that you can give up your city job and live the dream on a farm is so far from reality it isn't even remotely funny. Sure if you have VC's investing many, and I do mean many, millions of dollars, then maybe, but don't you think at some point they would want to earn something back from that investment? The sad truth is, this beautiful movie makes farming look very doable, as long as you have enough grit. The reality is you need so much more than that, and you need a lot of customers.

Not showing the real financial struggles this type of farming is facing hurts us all. Right now Eatwell's CSA needs a good 150 new members, but the competition is heavy. There are many CSA options, plus all the home delivery options, not to mention the fact that many people don't cook often. We traverse a very thin line between charging enough to support the farm and keeping food somewhat affordable for many. Maybe we should do a film? Just kidding.

With all of this, I did feel hopeful and very appreciative for what the movie shares, and that is the fact that regenerative farming, turning away from mono-crop farming is extremely important work. Ecologically speaking we can literally change the world. So go see the movie, be proud of your farm, enjoy watching all the wildlife living in and around Apricot Lane, and know that we too are a home for owls, hawks, bees, butterflies and many other happy animals here on your farm in Dixon. If you'd like to

read the full LA Times article here is a link: <https://www.latimes.com/home/la-hm-biggest-little-farm-documentary-apricot-lane-biodynamic-farm-20190510-story.html>.

Saucy #1

Is this weekend! We only have a few people signed up, so if you have nothing else to do, get a ticket and join us. I think it will be a very special sauce party, the smaller ones are always so chill with lots of room to spread out and get to work. Right now they are forecasting 86 degrees for Saturday and Sunday, amazingly mild weather and perfect for hot pots of cooking sauce! I mentioned this in an earlier newsletter, but want to remind everyone, you are welcome to come up Friday and camp out OR come up early Saturday morning to avoid the traffic. The tomatoes won't be available any earlier but you can be all set up and ready to go when they do come in. Saturday night we will be firing up the pizza oven for dinner, so bring your favorite toppings. If you have a dough you really love you can bring that too, but we have dough and cheese here. Dinner is a potluck so please bring sides and or desserts. Breakfast, of course, will be in the farmhouse.



Local Members Come For A Visit

I send an email out to all new members inviting everyone to come visit the farm. Truth is, all of our members are welcome to visit any time, just text me to get it scheduled (530-554-3971). There is a lot to see here, and during these warm months we have strawberries and mulberries to enjoy. This past Sunday some of our new Dixon members Lisa, Zeke, their daughter Sofia and Lisa's parents came out for a quick walk around.

It was great fun showing them around and sharing Sofia's first experience on a farm. She loved the strawberries and quickly picked her basket full! If you are looking for a fun day trip out of the Bay Area, consider coming up to the farm. You can visit the farm and from here head over to Winters for some wine tasting or beer, enjoy the park at Lake Solano, or walk along Putah Creek which is accessible from downtown Winters. For more info about what to do in Winters click this link: discoverwinters.com



RECIPES AND IDEAS FROM LORRAINE

Tomato Cobbler With Ricotta Biscuits

Recipe from NYT Cooking by Tejal Rao

If you have ever been to the farm for an overnight event you probably had biscuits for breakfast in the farmhouse. I LOVE biscuits, and judging by the quantity y'all consume when you are here, you do to. Given we are smack in the middle of tomato season, I had to share this one. You won't have enough cherries so maybe cut up some of the slicers to add to the mix.

FYI for my biscuits often I use greek yogurt which I thin a bit with plain milk.

¾ cup whole-milk ricotta
2 ½ cups, plus 2 tablespoons
Cake Flour, plus more for dusting
1 tablespoon plus ¼ cup granulated Sugar
Kosher salt and freshly ground Black Pepper
1 ½ teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
½ cup/60 grams unsalted butter (1 stick), cut into cubes and chilled
1 cup/240 milliliters buttermilk, plus 2 tablespoons for brushing
2 to 2 ½ pounds cherry tomatoes or Sungold tomatoes
¼ cup/60 milliliters extra-virgin olive oil

1 tablespoon sherry vinegar

2 sprigs fresh thyme

Prepare the ricotta: Strain the ricotta in a cheesecloth or fine-mesh strainer for at least 30 minutes. When it's ready to use, squeeze to get rid of any excess moisture. Prepare the ricotta biscuits: Put 2 ½ cups cake flour, 1 tablespoon sugar, 1 teaspoon salt, baking powder and baking soda into a large bowl and whisk to combine. Transfer to the freezer to chill for about 20 minutes.

Add the butter to the bowl and smear the pieces between your fingers, pinching them to make thin pieces and smushing these into the flour mixture until no big pieces are left. Make a well in the middle of the bowl and gradually pour in 1 cup buttermilk while using a fork to fluff in the flour from the sides of the bowl until you form a shaggy-looking dough. Crumble in the ricotta and loosely incorporate with your fingers. Scrape the dough onto a lightly floured surface and use your hands to shape it into a roughly 4-inch-by-6-inch rectangle. Fold into thirds and flatten back to the same size with your hands; repeat two more times, flattening the dough out until about 1-inch thick. Refrigerate the dough for 20 minutes. Position a rack in the center of the oven, and heat oven to 350 degrees. Cut about half the tomatoes in half. In a 2-quart baking dish, combine all the tomatoes, olive oil, vinegar and thyme sprigs with the remaining ¼ cup sugar and 2 tablespoons cake flour. Season generously with salt and pepper, and let sit while you prepare the biscuit dough. Lay the biscuit dough out onto a lightly floured surface. Cut into 2-inch squares or circles and arrange in a single layer over the tomatoes — you should have around 10 to 12 biscuits. Roll and cut scraps, or just bake the scraps separately to snack on. Brush the remaining 2 tablespoons buttermilk on top of the biscuits, and bake for 45 minutes, until the tomato mixture has bubbled

up and the biscuits are browned on top. Allow to cool, and serve warm or at room temperature, finishing with a sprinkle of salt and pepper.

Summer Squash and Potato Gratin

Recipe from Just A Little Bit of Bacon

Last week I was at a friends house and her teenage daughter made something essentially like this for

dinner. She didn't use a recipe or measure so I quickly did a search and found one for you. We ate this with an altered version of caprese salad which we used cheddar instead of mozzarella, which was super yummy! 2 small Summer Squash, or 1 medium 3 medium Yellow Potatoes, such as Yukon gold, peeled
1 TB Olive Oil
½ tsp Salt
4 oz Goat Cheese
1½ oz Parmesan cheese, shredded
4 TB Heavy Cream
6 TB fresh Basil leaves, thinly sliced
Preheat oven to 400F. Grease a 9x13 (or equivalent) casserole dish. Slice the squash and potatoes to about 2 mm thick, using a knife, a food processor, or a mandolin. Once the squash and potatoes are sliced, put them in a large bowl and toss them

with olive oil and salt. Layer one third

of the squash and potatoes in the prepared casserole dish. Top with 2 oz of goat cheese, ½ oz of parmesan cheese, 2 tbsp of heavy cream, 2 tbsp of basil. Repeat to make the next layer. Top it off with the remaining ⅓ of squash and potatoes. (You will have ½ oz of parmesan cheese and 2 tbsp of basil remaining.). Cover the casserole dish with foil and put in the oven for 45 minutes. Take the foil off and top casserole with remaining ½ oz parmesan cheese and 2 tbsp of basil. Bake for an additional 15 minutes. Remove the casserole from the oven and let it sit for 15-20 minutes to allow the juices from the squash to be absorbed and for the casserole to solidify.

Suggestions for what to do with some of the other items?

These cute little cabbages are perfect to shred to top any kind of taco, or serve along side carnitas. Take advantage of having tomatillos and make up small batches of salsa verde that you can enjoy later this year. See last week's email which included Martha Rose Shulman's Cooked Tomatillo Salsa.

Eggplant-Almond Enchiladas from the old Moosewood Cookbook is a longtime favorite of mine. This recipe uses the bell peppers, onions plus the eggplant! Here is a link: www.molliekatzen.com/recipes/recipe.php?recipe=eggplant_enchiladas

This Week's Box List

- *Basil
- *Bell Peppers
- *Cabbage
- *Cherry Tomatoes
- Eggplant
- *Nectarines or Plum
- Onions
- *Potatoes
- Rainbow Chard
- Red Slicer Tomatoes
- *Summer Squash
- Tomatillos

* = Items in Box for 2