



WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 2ND, 2019 #36/52

When The Grass Is Greener

You know it's time to move the chickens, when you see more than the usual number of girls outside the fence, they are definitely making it clear, get on with it folks and get us on to those greener pastures. And so the girls were moved this week. The great thing is you will see a difference in the color of the yolks in a couple of weeks. As the chickens enjoy the photo-nutrients out on a greener patch of land, those chemicals will alter the color of the yolk. Mostly it is carotenoids effecting the color, but I did read that meat in their diets will do it as well. We don't have meat to feed them, just all the bugs they can find. Chickens are omnivores, not vegetarians, and protein definitely effects their egg production.

Whether eggs are good for us to eat or not seems to go round and round, some years they are on the no-no list and it is recommended that you only eat one or two per week. Then they reverse that belief and tell us the cholesterol issue with eggs is not much to worry about. I



guess we have swung back to the no-no list. For me? I don't worry about it. I find it hard to take most of the studies seriously when what they are researching is factory production food. It is illogical to think that eggs coming from chickens who run around a field, hunting and pecking all day long, fed a healthy diet in addition to what they forage, will have the same nutrients as chickens raised in cages smaller than a piece of paper. How healthy would *we* be if we lived in a small, dark room? Fresh air, exercise and a good fresh diet, I believe, makes all of us healthier. So enjoy your farm eggs, and remember that the girls are really happy this week.

Next Year's Strawberries

We planted these strawberries about a month ago. They were looking pretty rough when they went into the ground. Jose sent me this photo a few days ago, showing me how they have bounced back. Every year we get a few berries off of the new planting before we go into winter. We typically enjoy a few when we are out harvesting for our Thanksgiving feast.

Not knowing much about strawberries I decided to do a little "light" reading and what a rabbit hole I

went down! First I read on Wikipedia that there was some treatment developed to protect strawberries from damage using genes from the arctic char combined with a bacteria. But I couldn't find any information on that, so who knows? Perhaps it never made it past the experimental stage. Then I found a product called Desikote, which is a polymer based foliage spray that is meant to protect strawberries, but I couldn't find too much information on that one either. The link to the company's page about the product no longer exists, perhaps they stopped manufacturing Desikote? So I decided to read up on the crazy notion that strawberries are not actually berries. I found a fun article about all the fruits we would never typically consider a berry, but they actually are, like bananas. Apparently to be a berry the fruit must develop from



one flower with only one ovary. Strawberries and raspberries have more than one. In addition to bananas, tomatoes, eggplant, peppers, blueberries, by this definition are all technically berries. If you would like to read the article here is a link: www.livescience.com/57477-why-are-bananas-considered-berries.html

Blowing Smoke

I was making a delivery to Preserve, a restaurant in Winters, a couple of weeks back. I was talking to the crew about the things they were making for the week, and what their plans were for our produce. What caught my attention was a dish that included smoke olive oil. As a person who loves to smoke food I had to ask how they heck do you smoke oil? And I was treated to a full demonstration. Smoking guns, who knew that was a thing? Well maybe some of you know, you are a pretty savvy foodie bunch. At Preserve they use a Breville Smoking Gun, not too pricey if anyone is interested. To smoke the oil, put a generous amount in a flat dish, cover tightly with plastic wrap, and then insert the smoker tube and inject with smoke. It was pretty amazing. You can use a gun like this to smoke all kinds of things like cheese, salt, fish, tomatoes, even drinks. When I left Preserve, I had to laugh because I never expected a quick tutorial from the kitchen staff while making a delivery. Funny what life brings you, and yeah, it's good to get off the farm every once in a while.

RECIPES AND IDEAS FROM LORRAINE

Roast Chicken With Peppers, Focaccia and Basil

Aioli

Recipe by Clare De Boer from NYT Cooking

4 servings

Sometimes I feel like I hit a recipe jackpot. The recipe calls for Red and Yellow Bells, but I am subbing the full bag of Lunchbox Peppers instead.

1 whole Chicken (4 to 5 pounds)
1 TB dried Oregano
1 TB plus 1 1/2 tsp flaky Sea Salt
Freshly ground Black Pepper
1 cup good-quality Red Wine Vinegar
Full bag of Lunchbox Peppers
1 loaf Focaccia (about 14 ounces), halved horizontally if thicker than 1 inch
2 heads Garlic, sliced in half widthwise through cloves
1/2 cup Extra-Virgin Olive Oil
FOR THE AIOLI:
1 packed cup fresh Basil leaves
1/4 cup Lemon juice (from 2 lemons), plus more to taste
4 cloves Garlic, grated
2 teaspoons flaky Sea Salt, plus more to taste
4 Egg Yolks
2 2/3 cups Extra-Virgin Olive Oil
Cold Water, as needed

Prepare the chicken: Set the chicken on a work surface breast-side down. Remove and discard the backbone, then cut through the wishbone and along one side of the breast plate to separate the chicken into two halves. In a 9X13" baking dish, season the chicken with half the oregano, 1 tablespoon salt and a few grinds of pepper. Drizzle with 3/4 cup vinegar. Cover and refrigerate up to 2 hours in advance. Wash peppers and pop into a preheated oven (400 F) to roast for about 15 minutes, until they are softened. Allow to cool, then slice into strips, discarding stems and seeds. Season with the remaining 1/4 cup vinegar, 1 1/2 teaspoons oregano and 1 1/2 teaspoons salt, and toss to coat. Heat the oven to 450 F. Tear 2 pieces of focaccia (using about half the loaf) into portions that are slightly smaller than the 2 pieces of chicken. Rub both pieces of focaccia with the halved garlic and transfer to the baking dish. Place the marinated chicken on top of each piece of torn focaccia, skin side up. Tuck garlic heads and peppers around the chicken. Tear remaining focaccia into shards and tuck around the chicken and peppers. Pour any juices from the peppers over the whole dish and drizzle with olive oil. Bake until the chicken to 165 degrees, about 1 hour, depending on the size of your bird. If bread or peppers are getting burned before the chicken is fully cooked, cover those areas with aluminum foil and continue cooking. Meanwhile, prepare the aioli: Using a mortar and pestle, working in batches if necessary, mash basil with lemon juice, garlic and sea salt until it forms a paste. Either by hand in a bowl with a whisk or in a food processor, whirl egg yolks then begin adding the oil very slowly, whisking or blending until mixture is emulsified and thickened and all the

oil has been added. (If mixture seems to thicken too much, add a tablespoon of cold water.) Blend in basil paste until combined. Add additional cold water, 1 tablespoon at a time, to achieve a dipable texture; season to taste with salt and lemon. (Makes 3 1/2 cups.) Use immediately or refrigerate until use, up to 3 days. Once chicken is cooked through, remove from oven and let rest for 5 to 10 minutes. Serve directly from the baking dish, family-style, with aioli on the side.

This Week's Box List

*Basil
Cayenne Peppers
*Eggplant
Garlic Chives
*Lunchbox Peppers
*Onions
*Plums or Nectarines
Potatoes
*Summer Squash
Tomatillos
*Cherry Tomatoes
*Red Slicer Tomatoes

* = Items in Box for 2

Israeli Couscous, Eggplant and Tomato Gratin

Recipe by Martha Rose Shulman from NYT Cooking

1 1/2 lb Eggplant, sliced into rounds, about 1/3 inch thick
Salt to taste
3 TB Extra-Virgin Olive Oil (plus additional for oiling the foil and baking dish)
2 cups cooked Israeli Couscous *(see below)
2 cups fresh Tomato Sauce, use those Slicers!
2 oz Parmesan Cheese, grated (1/2 cup, tightly packed)
Torn or slivered Basil leaves for garnish

Preheat oven to 450 F. Line a baking sheet with foil and coat generously with olive oil. Toss eggplant slices with salt to taste and 2 tablespoons of the olive oil. Line baking sheet with the slices in a single layer (you may need 2 baking sheets, or do this in batches). Roast for 15 minutes. Eggplant will look dry on surface but should be soft when pierced with a knife. Remove from oven and, wearing oven mitts, carefully fold the foil up in half over the eggplant and crimp edges to create a sealed packet. Allow eggplant to steam inside the packet for another 15 minutes (you can cook couscous during this time). Turn oven down to 375 degrees. Oil a 2-quart gratin or baking dish with olive oil. Place cooked Israeli couscous in a bowl and stir in 1/2 cup of the tomato sauce. Spoon into baking dish in an even layer. Remove eggplant slices from foil packet (they should be thoroughly tender), and layer on top of couscous, overlapping slices slightly. Cover with remaining tomato sauce and sprinkle on Parmesan cheese. Drizzle on remaining tablespoon of olive oil. Place in oven and bake 30 minutes, until browned and bubbling. Allow to sit for at least 10 minutes before serving. Sprinkle with torn or slivered basil leaves just before serving.

*Couscous: Heat a large saucepan over medium-high heat and add 1 cup Israeli couscous. Toast the couscous, shaking the pan or stirring often, until it colors very lightly and smells aromatic and toasty, a bit like popcorn. Immediately add 2 quarts water and salt to taste (be generous, as if you are cooking pasta) and boil 10 minutes, until the couscous is al dente; it should not be mushy and there should still be plenty of water in the pot. Drain through a strainer and rinse with cold water. Tap the strainer against the sink to drain well, then return the couscous to the pot, cover the pot with a kitchen towel, and return the lid. Let sit for 10 minutes. Measure out 2 cups and proceed with recipe.