



WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 23RD, 2019 #39/52

A Big Week

My son Cameron and his fiancé Lilly are getting married next Saturday. The wedding will be at our friend's farm Sierra Orchards in Winters, not far from us. Because I have so much free time, I offered to cook for the wedding. Oh, and I'm cooking the rehearsal dinner the night before. The truth is, there is just so much amazing produce coming out of our fields at the moment, I just couldn't bear the idea of them spending thousands of dollars on what we all typically eat at weddings. It will be simple fare, highlighting the season. This weekend, with the help of my friend Brenda, we roasted 30 lb of San Marzanos (but I need probably another 20), a crate of Lunch Box Peppers, pickled many pints of cherry tomatoes, and processed a crate of basil with garlic, and olive oil. Two gallons of homemade tomato sauce was cooked and frozen for the pasta at the rehearsal dinner. We will also serve a Pesto Pasta that night and finish off that dinner with Claudia Roden's Orange Almond Cake.

When putting together a meal I always look at how I can fully take advantage of what is growing on the farm at that time. I also like to consider that there will be vegetarians/vegans, dairy-free and perhaps gluten-free eaters. I worked on the menu for a few weeks, mostly in my head, going round and round. But I finally got to a place that felt really good, and my head, heart and stomach all came into alignment. The wedding dinner will include Tri-Tip, Chicken Breast, Smoked Portobellos, Caponata, Roasted Tomatoes, Peppers and Zucchini. Plus a basil dressed Potato Salad. Cooking for 200 is an enormous project, and honestly I wonder why I think I can even do this, but I have, a few times actually. What I've learned from my years here on the farm is you don't have to do anything fancy when the ingredients are really good. Keep it simple and let the produce shine and speak for itself, and that is exactly what we will do.



You Never Know Who You Will Meet

A while back I got to escape for a few days with some girlfriends, up to Graeagle. A lovely mountain town, quite small, but with several fun shops. We walked up and down the street and checked them all out. I spied a botanical skin care shop and decided to pop in. Undercover Botanicals had a beautiful copper still

sitting in the window, which really caught my attention. Since we distill so much lavender each year, I was intrigued to find out what they offered. Working the store was Laura Miller, the owner. She and I chatted for quite a while and found we share a love of essential oils, and hydrosols. So I invited her to come to the farm to harvest some of our Rose Geranium and Lavender the next time she came down the mountain. I was so happy when she called and told me she would. A few days later Laura let me know that she distilled some gorgeous Rose Geranium Hydrosol. I love to meet people when I am out traveling. I love it when we discover we have much in common.

Learning From Past Newsletters

I was reading some of the articles Nigel wrote for the newsletter years ago, and found this bit about our older hens. I was surprised to read that Recology took some of our birds to the landfill. Cameron and I were just taking about what to do with some of our older hens, as it is time for many of them to go. Does anyone want a few backyard hens? You would have to come to the farm to get them, but we have plenty. They still lay, it's just that the production goes way down as they age, and with as many as we have and as many eggs as we need, we can't afford to keep them past their prime. We do send many of them off to get cooked at Roli Roti for our chicken stock, but we have plenty of stock at the moment. The other problem is we need to make room for a new flock of chicks, so the old birds have to go. Perhaps I will give Recology a call and see if they would be interested in helping us out. Here's the bit Nigel wrote back in September 2012.

Our options for chickens that have passed their laying prime are limited. They do make the most delicious chicken stock, which many of you have ordered with your box. They also retire to urban life and become backyard chickens. Our friends from Recology took 50 last week. These hens will live at the landfill in Dixon. The white crates are special for moving. They are just big enough for the birds, but do not allow them to flap their wings during the short journey. If they get stressed they could break their wings so we confine them in these special crates. If you would like an urban flock of your own, please email us.



RECIPES AND IDEAS FROM LORRAINE

Not too often do we see tomatoes and fennel in the box at the same time, but this week we do. One of my favorites is an Ottolenghi recipe for Fennel Cherry Tomato and Crumble Gratin. I had it in the newsletter back in 2016, if you are interested in giving it a try, here is the link:

<https://www.eatwell.com/welcome/2016/10/4/fennel-cherry-tomato-and-crumble-gratin>

The box this week is showing signs that the season is changing. As we transition from Summer to Winter, we get to enjoy the mingling that happens in Autumn as evidenced by the arrival of Sweet Potatoes, Chard and Fennel. Enjoy this marker of time Mother Nature sends letting us know the shorter, colder days are coming. Cherish the next few weeks of tomatoes and peppers and summer squash. Winter squash and all the greens will be here before you know it.

Cherry Chard Wild Rice

Recipe from Jamie Oliver's 5

Ingredients

Serves 2

I love this book because it is just so simple. The recipes typically don't require searching for exotic ingredients, and with about 5 ingredients (he doesn't include items like salt, pepper, oil as one of the 5) the recipes are very approachable. If you struggle a bit with cooking you might check out this book.

6 oz of Wild Rice Blend

7 oz Chard

1 TB Red Wine Vinegar

1 TB Rice Cooking Water

1 TB Olive Oil

2 oz dried Sour Cherries, you could use dried

Cranberries

1 oz Walnut

1 1/2 oz Feta

Cook the rice in a pan of boiling salted water according to the packet instructions. Trim the chard stalks, cut them off and pop into a colander with the leaves on top, cover and steam above the rice for 3 minutes, then remove. Meanwhile, finely chop the cherries and, in a large bowl, mix with vinegar and rice cooking water, then olive oil. Chop the walnuts then the chard stalks, shred the leaves. Drain the rice well, add to the cherry dressing bowl with all the chard and crumble in the feta. Toss well, then taste and season with salt and pepper. Dish up and sprinkle with the walnuts.

Caponata

Recipe by Martha Rose Schulman from NYTimes

Cooking 6-8 Servings

This is one of the items we will be serving at the wedding this weekend. It is meant to be served room temp, on bread/crostini or you can enjoy it as a side and best made in advance.

1 1/2 pounds Eggplant (1 large), roasted

2 TB Olive Oil

1 medium Onion, chopped

2 stalks Celery, from the inner, tender stalks (the heart), diced

3 large Garlic cloves, minced

2 Red Bell peppers, diced - I'm using Lunchbox Peppers

Salt to taste

1 pound ripe Tomatoes

3 heaped TB Capers, rinsed and drained

3 TB coarsely chopped pitted Green Olives

2 TB plus a pinch of Sugar

3 tablespoons Red or White Wine Vinegar or Sherry Vinegar (more to taste)

Freshly ground Pepper to taste

Roast the eggplant, allow to cool and chop coarsely. Heat 1

tablespoon of the oil over medium

heat in a large, heavy nonstick skillet and add the onion and celery.

Cook, stirring, until the onion

softens, about 5 minutes, and add

the garlic. Cook together for a minute, until the garlic begins to

smell fragrant, and add the peppers

and 1/2 teaspoon of salt. Cook, stirring, until just about tender,

about 8 minutes. Add another tablespoon of oil and the eggplant, and

stir together for another 5 minutes, until the vegetables are tender. The eggplant will fall apart, which is fine. Season to taste. Add the tomatoes to the pan with about 1/2 teaspoon salt and a pinch of sugar. Cook, stirring and scraping the bottom of the pan often, for 5 to 10 minutes, until the tomatoes have cooked down somewhat and they smell fragrant. Add the capers, olives, remaining sugar, and vinegar. Turn the heat to medium-low and cook, stirring often, for 20 to 30 minutes, until the vegetables are thoroughly tender and the mixture is quite thick, sweet, and fragrant. Season to taste with salt and pepper and remove from the heat. Allow to cool to room temperature. If possible, cover and chill overnight. Serve at room temperature.

Sweet Potato Fries

Recipe by Mark Bittman from NYTCooking

2 pounds sweet potatoes, peeled

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 teaspoon garlic powder

1 teaspoon paprika

1 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon black pepper

Heat the oven to 400.

Cut the sweet potatoes into sticks 1/4 to 1/2 inch wide and 3 inches long, and toss them with the oil.

Mix the spices, salt and pepper in a small bowl, and toss them with the sweet potatoes. Spread them out on 2 rimmed baking sheets.

Bake until brown and crisp on the bottom, about 15 minutes, then flip and cook until the other side is crisp, about 10 minutes. Serve hot.

This Week's Box List

Chard

*Eggplant

*Fennel

*Onion

Cayenne Peppers

*Lunchbox Peppers

*Plums

*Sweet Potatoes

Shallot

Summer Squash

Cherry Tomatoes

*Heirloom Tomatoes

* = Items in Box for 2