



WEEK OF OCTOBER 28TH, 2019 #44/52

Hard Time For California

It is hard not to feel emotional about these fires. Sonoma County was my home for over 20 years, and it breaks my heart seeing the destruction the fires cause. And this wind, you hear it start up and know how it can exponentially increase the risk of fire, and make the current fires burn unpredictably. When the wind gets as crazy as it did Sunday I worry about our animals. We have a lot of chickens, and Cory has his quail, and then there is my Stella. Stella loves the rain but she isn't so impressed by the wind. When we had our meat birds we lost quite a few in a crazy wind storm like this one. The wind picked up our mobile chicken tractors and threw them across the field. When it gets really stormy they frighten and pile on top of each other, and we have lost close to 100 birds in situations like this in the past. So I took a drive out to check on everyone. All the birds were fine, thankfully. Since I was out there I took a few photos and a video of the poplar trees working. Did you know they actually perform a job on the farm? It is really windy out here in the spring and fall, so Nigel planted rows of poplars every 7 acres or so, to help break the wind. I have to tell you, walking from my car on the farm road, into the rows of cabbage I was amazed at the difference in the ferociousness of the wind. In the rows the wind was noticeably weaker. As I stood there, I watched the trees bend deeply, bowing to the power of Mother Nature, breaking the gusts and protecting our fields. I spent a little time watching them, wondering what Nigel would think of all of this? Would he do something differently? Or would we just hunker down in our cave house and ride out this wind storm with a nice cup of tea?



Let There Be Light

Egg production is very dependent on day length and as the days shorten, production drops dramatically. This hits us quite hard, because the cost of our chickens does not change in the winter months. Even though the girls aren't giving us enough eggs, they still want to eat! We have in the past put lights in the houses that we run on generators, but because of timing and how we had to have it set up, it didn't seem to make much difference for us. It has been a

dream to set up a good systems with timers that ran on solar panels, but it was a project I was told would cost about \$1,000 per house. And of course, it is a project for which I have no time to put effort into. Sometimes the most amazing people pop up in your life from very unexpected places, and our friends at Onsen love our eggs, and while visiting the farm a few weeks back learned about the situation with our chicken/egg production. They want eggs, and Sunny, one of the owners, knows how to set up solar panels and light systems, and has offered to put the program together for us and front us the money! His generosity of capital, time and knowledge is amazingly generous and hopefully a game changer for us. At the Saturday market he offered to help on this project and by Monday packages were arriving. Words to action are pretty fantastic. So Cory will be setting up lights in two of our houses to start. We want to have the opportunity to compare production in the houses and see how it all works. We can extend the light at the end of the day, or start their mornings earlier or do a combination of the two. The head chicken vet at UC Davis told me am or pm doesn't matter as much, but starting early in the season is critical. Clearly we have missed that opportunity, but we believe we can overcome that by adjusting their daylight slowly over a couple of weeks, mimicking the lengthening of the day that naturally occurs in the Spring. Currently our chickens are laying about 42 dozen per day, at peak laying season that can go up to well over 100. With 2,000 chickens imagine what a difference an increase of one egg per week per bird can make for us? We need to keep a large flock just to be able to have enough eggs for the CSA during the winter months. That means in the summer we have too many eggs and quite often we have to put them on sale to make sure we don't end up with inventory that goes past date. This is not a viable way to run a business, but we all know how important the chickens are to this farm and to our members. Who doesn't love Eatwell eggs? And even if you are vegan and don't eat our eggs, I know you appreciate the work our girls do for keeping our soil alive, healthy and fertile. I have set up a donation option in the webstore, if you would like to help us complete this project.

RECIPES AND IDEAS FROM LORRAINE

Note About the Wind

With the high winds on Sunday, some of the greens have a little wind damage on the tips of the leaves. The poplar trees provide some protection to the plants but with the wind gusting to 50 mph it still had some effect on the greens.

Just A Note About Winter Squash

This year we are trying out a new squash, the North Georgia Candy Roaster, which is a large heirloom variety. As they are far too big to put in the CSA boxes, you can order them as extras, but I wanted to let you know a little bit about them. Originally grown by the Cherokee in the Appalachian Mountains, today they are commonly grown in northern Georgia, North Carolina and Tennessee. The shape is oblong, and they typically weigh in between 8 and 15 lbs. I haven't had a chance to try one yet, but Cameron has, and he and Lilly have really enjoyed it. I also heard from Chef Eric Tucker of Millenium, it is one of his all time favorite winter squash. The North Georgia Candy Roaster is reported to be quite sweet with a very smooth texture. You can use it in any recipe you would use pureed pumpkin, butternut or sweet potato. It also cubes and roasts well. Might be a great squash for the holidays, which you can prepare, then freeze and use later. One more suggestion for winter squash, peel and cube and add it to lentil soup instead of carrots, delicious!



Blitva - Croatian Chard and Potato Dish

Serves 4

My friend Sandee is visiting from England. She is working on a cookbook of popular traditional dishes from all the countries of Europe. So lucky her, that means she goes to visit them! This dish is a staple in Croatia, especially along the Dalmatian coast. They call swiss chard *blitva*, or silver beet, and it is eaten almost every day cooked like this with dinner as a side dish. You can also substitute sweet potatoes for

white potatoes. Other versions include bacon, garlic, and lard along with paprika. I am hoping to make this with her while she is here this week visiting, but I am planning on using our Chicken stock instead of the bouillon/water.

1 Vegetable Bouillon cube
2 cups Water
3-1/2 oz Potatoes
7 oz Chard

4 Garlic cloves

3/8 cup good quality Olive Oil
Salt and Pepper, to taste

In a large saucepan, add the bouillon to water and bring to a boil. While the water is coming to a boil, wash the potatoes and roughly cut them in big chunks. Once the water is boiling, add the potatoes to the saucepan. Wash the chard and tear it into pieces. Chop the garlic. After the potatoes have been cooking for 10 minutes, add the chard, garlic and half the olive oil. Cook for another 7 minutes, then drain out most of the water, leaving enough to stay moist. Drizzle the rest of the olive oil over it before serving.

This Week's Box List

Bok Choy
*Broccoli
*Cabbage
*Chard
Fennel
Mustard Greens
*Lettuce, Romaine
*Pomegranates (from Twin Girls Farm)
*Potatoes
Sweet Potatoes
*Winter Squash
Radish or Turnips

* = Items in Box for 2

Fish, Fennel Bulb and Fronds

Recipe from the Eatwell Farmhouse Kitchen

Fennel is a very versatile vegetable. You can thinly shave it and make a carpaccio/salad, particularly yummy with pomegranate seeds! I love to chop it up and roast it alongside other root vegetables, or mixed in with winter squash. Absolutely delicious cut small sautéed with chard, it gives plain sautéed chard a bit of a mysterious twist. But I love to bake fish on a bed of fennel fronds and throw in thin slices of the bulb. Here is a recipe I put together years back for the newsletter.

1 lb. of your favorite fish I am using wild True Cod
1 Fennel bulb, fronds and all, cut off tough stalks
Several cloves of Garlic, smashed
1 Red Onion
Salt
1 Lemon
Good Olive Oil

A well-seasoned cast iron skillet or any pan you can preheat to scorching hot in the oven
Preheat your oven to 475F. Put a small glug of olive oil in the pan and wipe it all around, put the pan into the oven. Slice the garlic, onion and fennel as thinly as you possibly can. Put them all into a mixing bowl and squeeze the juice from lemon over them, then a good healthy glug of olive oil and about 1 1/2 tsp good salt, I used Eatwell Farm Lemon Salt. Mix all the ingredients well in the bowl and let them sit to marinate for about 5 minutes. In the meantime your pan should be heating up quite nicely. After the 5 minutes and the pan is screaming, pull it carefully from the oven and put the onion, garlic, fennel bulb, olive oil and lemon juice in to the pan. It will sizzle and smell really delicious. Gently lay your fish right in there and cover it with the fennel fronds. Top with another good glug of olive oil, yes this dish uses a goodly amount of it, but trust me it is worth it. Bake at 475 for a good 10 minutes. Pull it out and let cool slightly and dig in. Since you have the oven on high for a while with this dish, particularly while you are heating your pan, take advantage of that and roast some potatoes and maybe a few wedges of cabbage. These will make delicious accompaniments to this dish.