



WEEK OF FEBRUARY 10TH, 2020 #7/52

It's Conference Time

Two weeks ago Andrew went to EcoFarm, and this weekend I attended the Sustainable Food and Farming Conference in Grass Valley. Going to conferences is important, not just for what we learn, but for the simple fact that it re-energizes and excites us. I know we both have so many thoughts running through our heads now. At my conference there was one theme that came up throughout the entire weekend, and that was that we need to do as little damage to soil as possible. One of the breakout sessions I attended was with keynote speakers Paul and Elizabeth Kaiser from Singing Frogs Farm in Sebastopol. They showed us how they have become successful as a no-till operation. Although I don't know how we could go to no-till farming, we do practice low-till. At Singing Frogs Farm they apply compost with every planting, and often other inputs like calcium. It has been years since we applied anything on our fields. Our hens eat weeds and some of the bugs, while fertilizing the soil. They have 6 workers on a farm that is growing on 2 1/2 acres, whereas our field crew of 6 is actively farming 40 acres, probably more. We utilize our chickens for so much of the work that happens with man power and inputs on other farms. Singing Frogs Farm is beautiful with an impressive amount of diversity and careful thought going into to how to utilize their land. It is in a valley in Sebastopol, so a bit hilly. They have really learned how to work with the contours on their land. They are producing an impressive amount of food on those 2 1/2 acres, but it takes a lot of labor and that is definitely in short supply these day. So much to think about, but one thing was clear, Eatwell is a very unique farm.

EcoFarm

Every year since 1981, farmers from all over have convened in January for the Ecological Farming Conference. It started out in 1981 at the Firehouse in Winters with 45 people attending and has grown to this year over 1,000 people from all around the world came together at the Asilomar Conference Grounds in Pacific Grove.

The event always draws a great range of people that are involved in different aspects, from farmers to seed companies, produce wholesalers and grocery stores to equipment companies, technology companies and more.

Before the conference there was a farm bus tour that I went on. My favorite stop on the three farm tour was at JSM Organics, run by Javier Zamora. He started in 2012 with two acres of strawberries and has expanded to over 100 acres now. He is always trying new things from new crops or varieties to new ways to grow the crops, one thing he is trying this year on a small scale is to use burlap on the strawberry beds instead of plastic. We also visited on of the field of Lakeside Organic Gardens, a huge operation with around 3,000 acres. It was interesting to see how they did everything at such large scale.

The conference workshops were full of great information, from talks about farm finances, co-ops, no-till growing, marketing and social media, sales

outlets, seedling production, cover crops and more. There is so much going on that you can't go to every workshop you would like to go to. Being the first time I went to the conference, it was a lot of fun but tiring. One of my favorite parts of it was that it brought together all these amazing farmers and everyone got to catch up. I spent time talking to the some of the Full Belly Farm owner that came down for the conference, as well as Paul Underhill one of the owners of Terra Firma Farm, I have known all of the since I was born and don't get to see them that often. It was great to catch up with these friends but also I got to talk to farmers from all around the country. There is such a wealth of knowledge in the workshop but as well as everyone that attended, you can start talking to any one there and you will learn something from them. — Andrew

Strawberries?

After finishing everything up Friday afternoon, I decide to take a walk around the farm. It is so beautiful to be walking around the farm around sunset and be able to pick some produce for dinner. Sometimes when you walk around you come across a surprise. This time I was walking back and decided to take a look at the strawberries we planted in the fall. To my surprise I noticed a few flowers on the plants and even more surprising was a strawberry that was already growing. It might only be green but it won't be too long before it becomes ripe. Thee past couple of weeks the weather has been very dry, especially compared to last year. We have been having some warm days in the 60s and this week it will be in the mid to high 60s and might hit 70. It can definitely be nice as we always are planting at this time but we also need the rain. We have loads of potatoes, onions, broccoli, cabbage, greens, lettuce and more that we already have or are coming this week and we need to get planted. — Andrew



RECIPES AND IDEAS FROM LORRAINE

Mustardy Cauliflower Cheese

Recipe by Yotam Ottolenghi from Simple Serves 4

You could do this dish using both cauliflower and romanesco. It can be made ahead up to the point of baking and kept in the fridge for a day.

7 cups small Cauliflower florets, about 1 1/2"

2 TB Unsalted Butter

1 small Onion, finely diced about 1 cup

1 1/2 tsp Cumin Seeds

1 tsp medium Curry powder

2 Green Chiles, seeded and finely diced

3/4 tsp Black Mustard Seeds

3/4 cup plus 2 TB Heavy Cream

4 1/2 oz aged Cheddar, coarsely grated

Salt

1/3 cup fresh White

Breadcrumbs

1/4 cup fresh Parsley, finely chopped

Preheat oven to 400 F. Steam

the cauliflower over boiling water for 5 minutes, until just softening. Remove and set aside to cool slightly. Put the butter

into a 9" round casserole pan or oven proof dish of a similar size and place over medium heat.

Add the onion and sauté for 8 minutes, until soft and golden.

Add the cumin, curry powder, mustard powder, and chilies and

cook for 4 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the

mustard seeds, cook for 1 minutes, then pour in the cream. Add 1 1/4 cheddar cups and 1/2 tsp salt and

simmer for 2-3 minutes, until the sauce slightly

thickens. Add the cauliflower, stir gently, and simmer for 1 minute before removing from the heat. Place the

remaining 1/4 cup of cheddar in a bowl and add breadcrumbs and parsley. Mix then sprinkle over the cauliflower. Wipe the top inside edge of the pan clean (any cream there will burn) and place in the oven.

Bake for 8 minutes, until the sauce is bubbling and the cauliflower is hot. Turn the broiler to high and keep

the pan underneath for 4 minutes or until the top is golden and crisp. Keep an eye on it so that it does not

burn. Remove from the oven and allow to cool for 5 minutes before serving.

Gingery Fried Rice With Bok Choy Mushrooms and Basil

Recipe By Alexa Weibel from NYT Cooking

4-6 Servings 20 minutes

4 cups cooked, day-old Jasmine rice (or 1 cup uncooked Jasmine rice; see *Tip)

5 TB good Vegetable Oil

3/4 lb mixed fresh Mushrooms, such as Shiitake and Cremini, thinly sliced, or whole Shimeji Mushrooms

Salt and Black Pepper

3/4 lb Bok Choy, trimmed, then sliced crosswise 1/2-inch thick

5 Scallions, trimmed, greens and whites thinly sliced (about 1/2 cup) use your Spring Onions

3 Garlic cloves, roughly chopped

1 Jalapeño, thinly sliced (optional)

3/4 cup frozen Peas

2 to 3 TB finely chopped fresh Ginger (from one 2-inch piece)

2 TB Soy Sauce

2 TB Sesame Oil

1/8 tsp White Pepper (optional)

1/2 cup thinly sliced fresh Basil

Take the cooked rice out of the refrigerator, and set it aside at room temperature. In a large wok or nonstick skillet, heat 2 tablespoons oil over medium-high. Add the mushrooms, season generously with salt and pepper, and cook, stirring occasionally, until browned and tender, 5 or 6 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl. Wipe

out the skillet, if needed, then add 1 tablespoon oil and heat over medium-high. Add the bok choy, scallions, garlic and jalapeño, if using. Season with salt and pepper and stir-fry, stirring frequently, until aromatic and barely crisp-tender, 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer to the bowl with the mushrooms. Add the remaining 2 tablespoons oil to the skillet and heat over medium-high. Add the rice and cook, stirring occasionally, until toasted and toothsome, 4 to 5 minutes. Add the frozen peas, ginger, soy sauce, sesame oil and white pepper (if using), and stir until rice is evenly coated in soy sauce mixture, and no uncoated rice grains remain, 1 to 2 minutes. Stir in the mushroom and bok choy mixture and the basil until basil is wilted, 1 to 2 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper then divide among

bowls; serve hot. *Tip: Leftover rice that has dried out in the refrigerator for a day or two works best for this recipe because it will crisp better than fresh rice. If you don't have time to cook your rice a day in advance, you can cook 1 cup jasmine rice according to package instructions, transfer the cooked rice to a large baking sheet, spread it in an even layer and pop it in the freezer to chill it while you prepare the vegetables, then pull the rice from the freezer to cook it in Step 4.

Butternut Squash Sauce

Recipe by Jamie Oliver from Comfort Food

6-8 Servings

The complete recipe in this cookbook includes making Gnocchi, which I have left off here to save space. This sauce is delicious on gnocchi but could be equally great on tortellini, ravioli or pasta. Although, if you have the time homemade gnocchi is fantastic!

2 3/4 lbs Butternut Squash

4 cloves Garlic

1 fresh Red Chili, I do not have these at home so I would just sprinkle with red pepper flakes

4 sprigs Rosemary

Olive Oil

1 Vegetable Stock cube

2 cups boiling Water OR use vegetable or chicken stock instead of water and stock cube

Parmesan Cheese

Peel the squash and carefully cut in half lengthwise and remove seeds, then slice to about 1/4". Peel the garlic, then finely chop with the chili and rosemary leaves and put into a lidded pan over medium heat with a lug of oil to fry for 1 minute. Add the squash and crumble over the vegetable stock cube and add boiling water. Simmer with the lid on for 25 to 30 minutes, or until the squash breaks up and you have a lovely, thick sauce consistency, stirring occasionally, then season to perfection.

This Week's Box List

*Bok Choy

Cabbage

*Cauliflower

*Fennel

*Lettuce

Radishes

*Romanesco

Spring Onion

*Butternut Squash

*Grapefruit

Lemons

* = Items in Box for 2