



WEEK OF AUGUST 9, 2021 #32/52

**Writer's Block**

Sometimes when I struggle finding inspiration for the newsletter I will either go for a walk on the farm, or I will pull out one of the newsletters from the early days of Eatwell. This past Sunday I sat down and read a couple of newsletters from this time of year back in 1999, the early days of what they then referred to as the "Sievers Ranch," which is the current location of Eatwell.

August 10th, 1999 Nigel and Frances wrote this about hawks on the Sievers Ranch:

**Hawk Patrol**

*A major part of farming organically is looking at problems from the aspect of working with nature rather than fighting her. There are a pair of hawks on the Sievers ranch which have four young. They were busy on the farm last week and we realized they were after field mice which had just moved from the field next door where the wheat had just been harvested. The mice dived for cover in our vegetables. They have been nibbling the melons and most unfortunately on our plastic irrigation pipe. This thin pipe takes water the full length of the farm (3800 feet). We now have lots of little leaks to repair. Hopefully the hawks will bring all back into balance soon.*

*The tail water return pond, which collects all the run off water from our field attracted a few pairs of mallards in the spring. The young are now waddling around the farm eating insects. Our fields are not absolutely clean of weeds which provides habitat for the smallest insects and cover for the field mice. What we aim for is a nice balance. With the good bugs we get some of the bad one's too but over time a balance prevails and we now see much less problems with pests at the home farm which has been organic for 6 years now. Pesticides can dramatically upset that balance.*

Here we are in 2021, when I walk the farm, looking up into our tall poplar trees (all planted by Nigel), I see many hawk nests all over our farm. We also have owls nesting up in those trees, as well as in owl boxes. Having such tall trees provides a constant and consistent home for our birds of prey; and I can tell you all of them are well fed and well fat. Looking at the pests we have today, our biggest problem is the ground squirrel. The drought has brought a squirrel population explosion of epoch proportion, and the

troubles they are causing are, in some cases, catastrophic. They have eaten ALL of the corn we planted and ALL of the melons. They are nibbling away at some of our sweeter peppers, took out a chunk of the sweet potatoes we planted, and have done a number on the drip tape. No amount of hawks could keep these critters in balance, nature itself is now out of balance.

As the climate changes globally, we will see more and more other issues pop up, in addition to hotter, drier, colder, wetter weather. We certainly have experienced that on the farm with the squirrels and here in the West with the tragic fires. Last Friday morning we woke to a smoke filled sky, the first of the year. Today the sky is fairly blue, and I am so grateful and relieved the guys don't have to work out in the fields with unhealthy air. Reading the newsletter from 1999 I wonder if

Nigel and Frances would have ever imagined farming summers when the sunlight couldn't penetrate the smoke cover for weeks on end, watching tomatoes rot in the field because of a lack of sunshine, and other crops just not growing or thriving properly. But the biggest worry for me, when do I finally make the decision to tell the crew to stay home and not pick or pack boxes because the AQI is over 400?



But on the brighter side, an example of the benefits of organic farming, that tail pond Nigel wrote about that caught run off from the fields, today it only catches rain water. As soil health on our farm improved with all the work Nigel and Frances put in back in the early days, its ability to hold water improved tremendously, so we no longer have run off from the fields. Healthy soil holding water in little tiny pockets is a big win for the environment! So, with that bit of positivity, I am going to end on a happier note. I am very appreciative of this land, this place I call home, and for so many amazing folks who support our work and the health of the farm and having the opportunity to help people eat better. There might be a lot of uncertainty in life, but there is also so much beauty, and sometimes we only have to look up to see it.

# RECIPES AND IDEAS FROM ELISE

## Lemon Cucumber Pickles

Recipe adapted from Have You Eaten, SF?

A few of you wrote in last week to tell me that the amount of lemon cucumbers you've been receiving is sometimes more than you can eat. Cucumbers and squash are plants that go through HUGE bursts of production and I know Jose throws in a few extra into the boxes in order to prevent things going to waste in the field, and if you're fresh-crunchy-cucumbered-out, then this suggestion on doing some pickling might be for you!

1 1/2 pounds of **lemon cucumbers**, sliced  
1 bell pepper sliced, or 1 hot **pepper** diced  
1/2 onion (or one spring onion), sliced  
2 cloves **garlic**, thinly sliced  
1 tbsp salt  
1/2 tsp celery seed  
1/2 tsp mustard seed  
1/2 tsp dried dill  
1/2 tsp "pickling spice" (*allspice, coriander, clove, ginger, red pepper flakes, crumbled bay leaf is the usual*)  
1/2 c sugar  
1 c white vinegar

Slice the cucumbers, pepper, and onion thinly. Put the cucumbers, pepper, onion, and garlic in a large glass or other non-reactive bowl. Add salt and other seasoning, toss well, allow to sit at room temp for an hour. Combine the sugar and vinegar over low heat, stirring until the sugar is completely dissolved then remove from heat. Pour over the vegetables and allow to cool. Place the pickles in a lidded container and store in the fridge. Will keep for up to 3 weeks.

## Roasted Tomato Pesto Potato Salad

Recipe adapted from Last Ingredient

1 pint **cherry tomatoes**, halved lengthwise (*our little red Supersweet cherry tomatoes are indeed SUPER sweet; I might do 3/4 of a pint to avoid overdoing it on the sweetness—besides, that leaves you some for snacking*)  
2 tbsp olive oil  
Salt & Pepper to taste  
2 pounds yellow **potatoes**, peeled & cut into 1/4"-1/2" pieces  
1/3 c **basil** or **parsley** pesto  
1 tbsp minced chives

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Line 2 sheet pans with parchment paper. On a prepared sheet pan, toss the cherry tomatoes with 1 tbsp olive oil, salt and pepper. Arrange in a single layer. On the other sheet pan, toss the potatoes with the remaining olive oil, S & P, and place in single layer. Roast for 20-25 minutes until the tomatoes are slightly wrinkled. Continue roasting the potatoes for an additional 20-25 minutes until they are golden brown and tender when pierced. In a large bowl, toss the potatoes with pesto and gently fold in the tomatoes and chives.

## Summer Squash Tacos with Tomatillo Salsa

Recipe adapted from Purple Carrot

1/2 cup rice (*can season with Spanish-profile spices*)  
1 onion  
1/4 lb **tomatillos**  
Handful fresh chopped cilantro or **parsley**  
1 lime  
1-2 **jalapeño peppers**  
1 ear of corn  
1-2 yellow **squash or zucchini**  
2-3 **garlic** cloves

6 taco-sized tortillas (*corn or flour—your preference*)  
2 tbsp sour cream  
2 tbsp vegetable oil  
S&P to taste

Add the rice and 2 c water to a small saucepan and bring to a boil. Cover, reduce heat to low, and cook until water is absorbed and the rice is tender, 13 to 15 minutes. Peel and dice the onion. Remove the husks from the tomatillos, and rinse and dice the tomatillos. Finely chop the cilantro leaves and stems. Halve and juice the lime. Trim, deseed, and mince the jalapeño. Add just 1/4 cup diced onion, diced tomatillos, chopped cilantro, just half the lime juice, and just

2 tbsp minced jalapeño to a medium bowl. Stir the tomatillo salsa to combine. Cut the corn kernels off the cob. Trim the summer squash and slice into half moons. Peel and mince the garlic. Place a large nonstick skillet over medium high heat. Add remaining diced onion, corn kernels, sliced summer squash, minced garlic, and a pinch of salt and pepper. Cook until corn is charred, 8 to 10 minutes. Taste, add salt and pepper as necessary, and transfer vegetables to a bowl. Wipe the skillet clean and return to medium-high heat with 1 tbsp vegetable oil. Add 3 corn tortillas in a single layer. Top each tortilla with charred corn and summer squash, then fold in half. Cook until crispy, about 1 minute per side. Transfer the crispy summer squash tacos to a plate and repeat with the remaining tortillas. Add sour cream, remaining

lime juice, and a pinch of salt to a small bowl. Stir the lime crema, taste, and add salt as necessary. Top the summer squash tacos with tomatillo salsa, and lime crema. Serve the rice on the side, or add to the taco.

## Mini Soda Breads with Basil-Infused Olive Oil

Recipe adapted from Green Thumb White Apron

1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil  
2 tbsp fresh **basil**, chopped  
2 tsp freshly ground black pepper, divided  
2 cups cake or all-purpose flour (plus up to an additional 2 tbsp, if needed)  
1/2 cup oat flour  
1 tbsp kosher salt, divided  
1 1/2 tsp baking soda  
1/3 cup diced roasted **cherry tomatoes** (*original recipe asks for sun-dried tomato, but you could do with a quick roasted cherry, patted dry to avoid excess moisture in the bread*)  
1/4 cup toasted pine nuts  
1 cup shredded Parmesan cheese, divided  
1 1/4 cups buttermilk

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper; set aside. Bring the olive oil to a simmer over low heat and add the basil and 1 teaspoon black pepper. Remove from heat and cover; set aside. In a large bowl, whisk together the flours, 2 teaspoons salt, baking soda, and remaining 1 teaspoon pepper. Add the buttermilk and mix until just combined. (*Note: The mixture will be sticky; add up to 2 tbsp additional flour if needed to help the mixture come together*). Add the diced sun dried tomatoes, pine nuts, and 2/3 cup cheese and mix until combined. Divide the dough into 8 equal portions and place on prepared pan. With a sharp knife, cut an "X" in the top of each and sprinkle with remaining 1 tsp salt and remaining 1/3 cup of cheese. Rotating pan halfway through, bake 12-15 minutes until golden brown. Serve warm with basil infused olive oil.

### This Week's Box List

\*Basil  
\*Nectarines, Peaches, or Plums  
\*Eggplant  
Parsley  
Jalapeno Peppers  
Potatoes  
Tomatillos  
Zucchini/Squash  
\*Lemon Cucumbers  
\*Cherry Tomatoes  
\*Tomatoes  
\*Garlic

\* = Items in Box for 2