



WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 27TH, 2021 #40/52

### Chicks And Babies

A couple of weeks back we got our next flock of chickens. 800 freshly hatched chicks arrived on September 7th from the Vega hatchery in Davis. They hatch sometime in the morning, are loaded into boxes, and driven down to our farm. Agustin and Miguel gently toss them out into the big world of their new home and watch to make sure they all are happy and healthy. Because it is so hot still we only need to turn lights on at night, and that first night I forgot, so we lost 5 of them. What I learned from Agustin is, it isn't so much about the lights heating up the house, but rather they huddle together under

the lights. They get some heat from the lamps directly, but also keep each other warm. I learned it is imperative to have the chicken light alarm turned on, on my



iPhone. Now I make it a habit to turn the lights on the girls when I take Beau out for his evening ball game out in the garden.

I should have brought in a flock back in May, but I am still learning about egg production, how much they will produce in their peak season, and quickly it will drop as the days shorten. We are now in the drop season. If I had brought this flock in back in May we would now be getting pullets from them and that would help supplement the shortage we are experiencing now. Instead we had to stop wholesaling eggs for the time being, and get started back up once the new flock starts laying. It's a tricky thing working it out to have enough eggs, because in the summer when we have well over 300 boxes on hold, the CSA needs fewer eggs, and all the other egg producers have loads, and our hens are in their highest producing time of year. It is easy to find the egg cooler overrun with dozens and it can be hard to get rid of them. This year we donated eggs every week to the Dixon Senior Food Pantry program, that helped tremendously and it felt good too. While we wait, the chicks are growing quickly, already starting to form those first little feathers, and climbing up on their perches. At this point it will only be about 3 months more before we get our first few eggs.

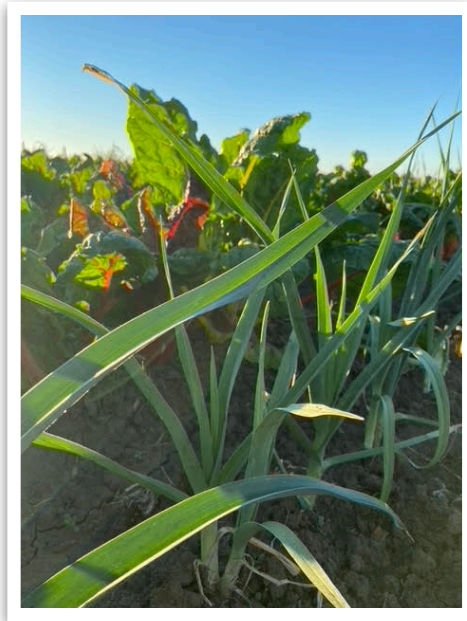
Time flies when you are watching babies grow; my grandson David is



now 6 months old. Last week I got to share his first "meal" with him, an Eatwell Sweet Potato. It's crazy to think 6 months has gone by already, and now he is sitting in his high chair playing with and attempting to eat food, from his family's farm. Watching him was hilarious, but it made me think of all the parents who have told me over the years about their baby's first Eatwell meal. This farm has been the starting point for many a culinary journey. How many of you have kids whose first taste of solid food was one of our Sweet Potatoes? I would imagine quite a few. What an awesome feeling it is knowing we get to play a part in that experience.

### Chard and Leeks and Other Things

When I was growing up finding leeks in the store was kind of a special and somewhat rare thing. My memory of leeks, as a young cook, was they were really expensive. Now they are far more commonplace, but I still think of them as something special, and so it is always a thrill to see rows and rows of them growing out in the field. On a morning walk I was struck by the beauty of this row of leeks planted next to the colorful chard. The sun shining through and the sky was actually clear, making it all look even more delicious.



Further on down the farm I did come across my favorite planting pairing - leeks and fennel. Both are growing fast and looking great. We have bed after bed of broccoli, cabbages, cauliflower etc planted, all showing promise for meals to come. Working my way back to the house I stopped to check on Fred's tomatoes we planted this year., and they are still producing. All of his tomatoes have done really well for us and I plan to do a lot more with him next year. Plus he has a few varieties we didn't get to try this year, that he promises will be even better. With farming there is always so much to look forward to.

# RECIPES AND IDEAS FROM ELISE

The temperatures are finally dropping at night and maybe I'm getting ahead of myself, but I can't wait for soups and stews in the coming months. Here's a few recipes to get us started...

## Caramelized Onion and Potato Soup

*Recipe adapted from [Cali Girl Cooking](#)*

2 tbsp butter  
2 onions, thinly sliced  
2 large or 4 small potatoes, peeled and cut into large chunks  
4 c chicken stock  
4 cloves peeled garlic  
S & P to taste  
1/4 c heavy cream  
3 slices prosciutto, to top (optional)

First, caramelize your onions. Melt butter in a sauce pan over med-low heat. Add sliced onions and cook, low and slow, stirring occasionally until onions take on a caramel color. This may take up to 30 mins. Cooked too fast and they will take on a burnt flavor. Once onions are sufficiently caramelized, add them to a large stockpot along with potatoes, stock, and whole garlic cloves. Bring to a boil, then reduce to medium heat and simmer until potatoes are tender. Reduce heat to low. Use either an immersion blender or transfer the soup to a stand-up blender and puree until there are no chunks. Transfer back to stockpot on low heat. Stir in heavy cream and season with salt and pepper to taste. Keep soup simmering on low while you crisp up some prosciutto for the topping. Heat a small nonstick sauce pan over med-high heat. Once the pan is hot, add the prosciutto and cook until crisp, flip when needed. Chop it into little pieces and place it on soup once it has been ladled into individual serving bowls.

## Tomato and Fennel Fish Stew

*Recipe adapted from [Chatelaine](#)*

2 fennel bulbs  
2 tbsp olive oil  
1 onion, finely diced  
2 carrots, finely diced  
1 potato, grated  
8oz bottle clam juice  
1.5-2 lbs tomatoes (San Marzanos are great for stewing!), diced  
1 bay leaf  
About 3/4 lb white fish (I'd maybe use cod, but this would probably be good with a lot of different seafood—shrimp, mussels, go wild—the original recipe also suggests using frozen but we all know fresh is better)  
1/2 tsp salt  
1/8 tsp chili flakes, optional

Heat a large pot over medium-high. Finely dice fennel and reserve the fronds. Add oil, then onion, carrots, fennel, and potato. Cook, stirring frequently until veggies begin to soften (5-10min). Stir in 1 1/2 c of water (use your judgment and add a little more if needed), tomatoes, clam juice, and bay leaf. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to medium. Cover and

gently boil. Stirring occasionally until veggies are tender, about 10 min. Cut fish into 1" pieces. Stir fish, salt, and chili flakes into soup. Cook, uncovered, until fish is opaque, 5-10 min. Remove bay leaf. Ladle soup into bowls and top with fennel fronds.

## Eggs in a Nest (Baked Eggs in a Chard, Leek, & Carrot Gratin)

*Recipe adapted from [High Ground Organics](#)*

1 bu chard, stems diced and washed, leaves chopped and washed  
2 leeks, whites and pale green parts cut into 2" sections, then 1/4" ribbons  
2 onions, peeled and diced  
2 carrots, peeled and coarsely grated, 1 inch long if possible  
3 cloves garlic, peeled and minced  
1/2 cup white wine-optional  
1/2 tsp fresh chopped herbs like parsley, sage, rosemary  
S & P to taste  
Olive oil as needed  
2 c cooked grains such as farro, or white or brown rice  
2 c bread crumbs  
6 eggs

Heat oven to 400 degrees. Blanch the carrots in a bowl of water with a pinch of salt until they are pliable. Drain and rinse with cool water, reserve. Heat a large skillet over medium heat, coat the bottom with oil. When hot, add the chard stems, leeks, and onions. Toss to coat with oil. Season with S & P. Cook until veggies are tender and coloring a little. Make a well in the center of the

pan and add carrots. Add a little oil if the pan is dry. Cook until softened and sweet, but be mindful not to scorch the leeks. Make a space in the center again and add garlic. Cook until fragrant. Toss to distribute. Scatter half the herbs over the dish and toss and heat through. Add grains now if you are using them and toss to combine. Season veggies with S & P. If you are using wine, drizzle it into the pan and toss. Cook until evaporated. Oil a gratin or casserole dish 11x9. Add veggies to the bottom of the dish, and gently level out, but do not pack down. Lower the heat to medium low and film the skillet with oil, add

the chard leaves, tossing to coat and season with S & P, cooking until gently wilted. Drizzle a tbsp of oil onto bread crumbs in separate dish and toss. Crumbs should just be moistened, not wet. Add the remaining herbs to crumbs, and reserve. Use tongs to pull chard from pan, leaving liquid behind. Layer chard onto the

vegetables evenly. Using a utensil, make 6 wells in the veggies around 2 1/2" wide, but do not go all the way to the bottom. Break each egg one at a time into a separate small vessel like a ramekin, and then neatly place one egg into each well. Scatter breadcrumbs over the gratin, leaving eggs exposed or only lightly sprinkled. Bake in the middle of the oven for 10mins until crumbs are golden and egg whites are set. Serve hot, using a large spoon or spatula to scoop out each egg with surrounding veggies intact. Could make these in individual ramekins for a more formal presentation. Could also top with cheese.

## This Week's Box List

\*Chard  
\*Sweet Potatoes  
\*Tomatoes  
Cucumber or Melon  
Fennel  
Leeks  
Potatoes  
\*Garlic  
\*Sage  
Garlic Chives  
\*Onions from Terra Firma  
\*Valencia Oranges from Guru Ram Dass

\* = Items in Box for 2

## More Ideas...

Brown Butter Sage Potato  
Prosciutto Melon Salad  
Cumin Potatoes with Tomatoes (Ghurma Aloo)  
Allium Confit