



WEEK OF OCTOBER 11TH, 2021 #42/52

Time For Old Hens To Move Along

Over the past year or two we have re-housed hundreds of our old hens. Working with an organization that finds loving homes, our old layers get to spend the rest of their days enjoying their lives in someone's backyard. They keep our name anonymous, and we do the same for them. But the folks I have worked with are wonderfully caring people. They make sure the hens are handled correctly in transport, and they check each one to make sure they are healthy.

You might wonder why we have to get rid of our older girls, well because hens will only lay a certain number of eggs in their lifetime, about 530 actually. The first two years are the most productive and then egg laying slows way down. As they age and their production drops we just can't reasonably afford to keep feeding and taking care of them. So we find new homes or process them for stock.

The first eggs a young hen (referred to as a pullet) lays are the smallest. The definition of pullet is a young hen up to a year old and we refer to their eggs as pullets as well. I think those eggs are the most delicious. The yolk is about the same size as in a large egg, so your ratio of yolk to white is higher, making for a richer egg. Pullets weigh about 1.5 oz and a large egg, which is what most recipes are based on, weighs about 2 oz. So if you are baking and the recipe calls for 2 eggs, but all you have are pullets you would probably want to add an extra egg. An extra large egg is about 2.25 oz.

Recently we saved some of our old hens for our neighbors down the road, Ruhstaller brewery and hop farm. They got a house built for the girls, which took some figuring because they needed a design that would work in their walnut orchard. Houses like what we used for our meat birds wouldn't fit because of the lower branches of the walnut trees. Funny how something can seem so simple turns out to be rather complicated, but they got it figured out and built. A couple of weeks back Xo, the farmer out there, picked up 45 ladies and brought them to their new home. They are very happy on the hop farm/walnut orchard. They get lots of visitors from the brewery and get to eat spent grains from the beer processing. If this works well, who knows, maybe more of Eatwell's ladies will retire out there. It's not such a bad place to spend the rest of your days!



Prepping and Planting

A few weeks back I saw the guys had taken out the strawberries we planted two years ago. That patch is where you all came to pick your berries on our smaller COVID version of Strawberry Days. It is the field many of you came out to help me weed and clean up. In some ways it became our patch, those berries never went into the boxes. We always saved them for the members to pick and enjoy. That field looked so barren, but so much on a farm like ours is seasonal and its time will quickly come to an end. Tomatoes are just about completely done, as are the summer squash, cucumbers and eggplants. But the beauty of the changing season are all the new items growing that will take their places. We are already enjoying sweet potatoes, leeks and fennel and chard. And the beds of lettuce are looking gorgeous!

I can't sit here, listening to the howling wind, without mentioning this weather. It is fierce out there today, and

I know we are feeling it all over the Bay Area, I saw the alerts for our entire region. I pray for the safety of our little part of the world, that no sparks fly, nothing ignites, and no limbs fall causing damage or loss. But watching our poplars bending to the power of mother



nature's force it is hard to keep faith. I ask that you all give an extra thought of thanks for our crew who is literally out there right now harvesting the food you will enjoy this week. It is brutal working in this wind and they amaze me. I am thankful for them every day, as I am for you.

Quick note regarding olives. They are getting close to a good size for picking. Would anyone be interested in an early supper/late lunch olive harvesting Sunday October 24th? Please let me know ASAP because if this is something you would like to come out for, I have to get on to organizing.

RECIPES AND IDEAS FROM ELISE

Braised Fennel and Leeks

Recipe from *New England Today*

8 leeks, trimmed and rinsed
3 fennel bulbs
2 c chicken stock
1 c white wine
3 tbsp butter, cut into small pieces
Salt and pepper to taste
1/2 c grated parmesan cheese
1/2 c panko breadcrumbs

Heat to 400 degrees. In a medium-size casserole, arrange leeks in one layer with sliced fennel on top. Pour in stock and wine. Scatter pats of butter over the top and season with salt and pepper. Seal with foil and cook in oven 40 minutes. Remove foil, return to oven for 10 mins. In a small bowl, combine parmesan and breadcrumbs. Scatter over the top of the leeks and bake 5-8 mins or until well-browned.

Easy Creamed Chard with Garlic Breadcrumbs

Recipe adapted from *Foodie Crush*

2 large bunches chard
2 tbsp butter
1 garlic clove
1 small onion (can use handful of garlic chives instead)
1/2 c cream cheese
1 c chicken stock
1/2 tsp ground nutmeg
S & P to taste

For the breadcrumbs:
2 tbsp butter
2/3 c panko bread crumbs
1 tsp minced garlic
1/3 c grated parmesan cheese
1 tbsp minced parsley
3/4 tsp salt

First, prepare the garlic breadcrumbs. Melt the butter in a small skillet over medium high heat. Add the bread crumbs and season with garlic and kosher salt. Stir often to be sure the panics tests to a golden brown but doesn't burn. Remove from heat and cool. Stir in the parsley and parmesan cheese. To prepare the chard, trim the tough inner ribs from stalks of the chard leaves and discard. Roughly chop the chard and set aside. Melt the butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add garlic and onion and cook for 3 to 5 min until the onions soften, stirring often. Add the cream cheese and stock and whisk until cream cheese melt into the broth and the mixture is smooth. Season with the nutmeg and the kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper and bring to a boil. Then reduce to a simmer, stirring continuously until thickened. Add half of chard and gently fold into the mix until it softens and reduces as well. Sprinkle the creamed chard with the bread crumbs and transfer to a serving dish.

Potato and Sweet Potato Gratin with Fennel

Recipe adapted from *Brooklyn Homemaker*

1 c grated gruyere or other semi-firm cheese
1/2 c grated parmesan
2 c heavy cream

1 tbsp coarse kosher salt
1 1/2 tsp ground black pepper
4 cloves garlic, minced or crushed
1 1/2 tbsp finely chopped fresh sage
2 tsp finely chopped fresh thyme
2 lb potatoes

1 1/2 lbs sweet potatoes
1 large to 2 small fennel bulbs (about 1/2 to 3/4 lb)
2 small to medium onions (about 1/2 lb)
2 tbsp butter, softened

Preheat oven to 400F and adjust rack to the middle of the oven. Toss cheeses together in a medium bowl to combine. Transfer about 1/3 of the mixture to another bowl and set aside for later use. Back in the first bowl, add cream, salt, pepper, garlic, sage, & thyme; and stir or toss to combine. Set aside. Using a mandolin or a knife slice all the potatoes, unpeeled, into 1/8 inch thick disks and place into a very large bowl. The larger the bowl, the easier it will be to toss the potatoes with the cream without making a mess. Slice the onion(s) and fennel bulb(s) to the same thickness and add

to the potatoes. Pour cream and cheese mixture over the potatoes and toss toss toss to completely coat each slice of potato with cream. Use your fingers to separate any potatoes that may have become stuck together, so that every single slice is coated in the cream mixture.

Butter the inside of a large casserole, or 12" cast iron skillet *see note. Organize handfuls of potatoes into neat stacks, along with some slices of onions and fennel, and line them up in the casserole with their edges aligned vertically. Continue placing stacks of potatoes into the dish, working around the perimeter and into the center until all potatoes have been added. Potatoes should be tightly packed. If necessary, slice an additional potato, coat with the remaining cream mixture, and add to the casserole. Pour the remaining cream mixture evenly over the potatoes until the mixture comes about half way up the

sides of the potato slices. You may not need all the liquid. Cover dish tightly with a lid or aluminum foil and transfer to oven. Bake for 30 minutes. Remove lid/foil and bake for 30 minutes longer. Carefully remove from oven, sprinkle with remaining cheese, and return to oven to bake until deep golden brown and crisp on top, about 30 minutes longer. Remove from oven, let rest for at least 15 minutes, and serve.

This Week's Box List

*Tomatillos
*Chard
*Fennel
*Sweet Potatoes
*Sage
*Lettuce
Leeks
Parsley
Garlic Chives
Basil
Jalapeños
*Raisins from Capay Canyon Ranch

* = Items in Box for 2

Herbs a'plenty!

We've got lots of herbs flourishing right now because the temperatures are cooling down. I rarely feel that I have too many herbs in the house, however, if you feel like you're swimming in them, keep in mind that you can use them in so many homemade dressings and sauces, or even simpler—herb-infused olive oil for bread dipping. You can also infuse compotes, honeys, vinegars, just about anything. And don't forget cocktails ;) Parsley, sage, basil, and fennel are great additions to mixed drinks or simple syrups to use later. It's a great way to put 'em to use.

Additional Recipes & Ideas

Parsley Gin Julep
Creamy Tomatillo Dressing
Roasted Sweet Potatoes with Goat Cheese & Sage
Blue Cheese & Raisin Stuffed Leeks
Stir-Fried Chard and Red Peppers