



WEEK OF FEBRUARY 13TH 2017 #7/52



## Ok, no more rain please

Last year was the El Niño year. The farm is thoroughly soaked and the nursery just texted me wanting me to take delivery of the first spring planting. There is nothing we can do in the fields until the ground dries out enough to start cultivating. So if you have been praying for rain, thank you, time to turn down the volume.



There is no normal California weather, so the old California farmers around here tell me. Just lots of variation. Our Lake Berryessa is ready to safely go over the spillway. There are other kinds of reservoirs and ours is optimal with three years supply in it. Most reservoirs are primarily flood control with only enough catchment and storage for one or two years only. We do have a well and it's aquifer is filled with regulated releases from our dam for salmon flows. So in many ways we are sitting pretty. We have had no restrictions during the drought.

That brown water, full of erodible soil you see in the Bay is not something to be happy about. What we need is for California to soak up and rehydrate itself that is called permaculture.



## Executive Orders And The Farm

You might wonder what an Executive Order has to do with our farm, but there is a very direct connection. A few times a year we host farmers or food industry folks from other countries who are interested in how we farm and the unique practices we have in place here at Eatwell. We have had visitors from South Korea, Japan, Switzerland, Brazil, Canada, France. Last year, Connie and I hosted a group of food innovators from Switzerland for a lunch in the farmhouse and a quick tour of the farm. The lively discussion we had around the table was exciting and memorable. For me, it was a wonderful experience and one I will never forget. Recently a group of farmers from Germany reached out asking if they could come for a visit early in the summer. Since my Mom is from Germany, I was really excited to host this group. I was hoping they would take us up on the offer of lunch, giving us the best opportunity to really show off what we do here at the farm. Their visit was set and scheduled. Sadly we heard back from them last week letting us know that they have reconsidered visiting the US. The reason was the Executive Order banning certain people from certain countries entering into the US. I am not sure specifically why they made this decision, whether they might have people in the group who are originally from one of the banned countries, or perhaps they are taking a stand against the ban on moral grounds. No matter the reason, it is very disappointing. There are unexpected consequences for all actions in life, sometimes good, sometimes bad. No matter your personal belief about the ban, right or wrong, there are consequences and in this case a lost opportunity. As much as Nigel and I love to share what and how we do things, we also always learn from others. Germany in particular is a great country to learn from as their farms are not typically the size/scale of the American farms. This is one of the reasons we typically import Nigel's new "farm toys" from Germany, because our farm is more in-line with the size and production of German farms. The opportunity for information exchange has been lost, and this doesn't make me feel safer, it makes me feel isolated.

## My Favorite Valentine

Just before Nigel and I started dating, he came up to me at the farmers market and said "I have a little Valentine's present for you". I've never been a fan of this particular holiday, way too many have been nothing but disappointment. So feeling very uncomfortable and nervous about this



English Farmer, I followed him to his stand. But what he gave me was such a surprise, and definitely not your ordinary Valentine, a big, gorgeous Romanesco! Nigel knew I loved to cook and he thought I would really enjoy this edible piece of fractal art! I did, and I was relieved, and overjoyed. This morning when I brought Nigel his ginger tea, there on the bed waiting for me was - no, not a Romanesco - a beautiful card and my favorite Recchiuti Chocolates. We have sneaky helper elves working for us at the market these days, since Nigel can't get down there to buy things himself, he has them magically sent back to the farm to surprise me! We have come a long way since that first Valentine Romanesco, and you know I will be cooking some tonight!



## Choose Your Own Adventure

Spring is almost here! After weeks of much needed rain, we're seeing the sun again (at least I think that is what that burning orb is up in the sky), and we're starting to see the effects in the box! Take a poke through and you'll see some decidedly unwintery vegetables. Pea shoots! Spinach! It's almost as if the earth is as ready to get past the citrus and cruciferous as we are.

This time of year, it can be a challenge to get a seasonal dish on the table. Things start to cross over in a way that doesn't feel quite as abundant as fall, it starts to feel a bit repetitive, and we're all anxious for the strawberries, tomatoes, and other delights that we know are headed our way. That said, this is part of why I really love eating seasonally from the box. Not only am I getting the highest quality produce that I know is healthy for me, the earth, and the people who grow it, but it lets me truly appreciate on a bone deep level the way shopping at a grocery store doesn't.

Cooking at this time of year requires a little "what the hell" attitude in the kitchen. Don't have this? Use that! Something isn't ready yet? I bet this would work as well. Recipes like Ribollita (a traditional tuscan vegetable, bread, and bean soup) are perfect for this. This one comes from Serious Eats, and it's a great jumping off point! Again, this is a peasant recipe designed to use what you have on hand. It's also incredibly substantial and perfect for that spring night when the cold surprises you and you find you need that extra sweater.

For even more adventure, I'm going to encourage you to try something different with your stir fry mix as well. In South India, they frequently "stir fry" whatever vegetables they have on hand with a heady mix of spices and it's absolutely delicious. It's called a poriyal and it works with any vegetable with some structure really (stay away from delicate spinach or vegetables that are better raw such as radish). The base I'm giving you is from the great Madhur Jaffrey, and you can try this alongside your favorite curry, wrapped up in a naan, or on top of some fragrant rice (which I've also given you the recipe for). Don't forget the chutney! Happy adventuring!

## Indian Style Fragrant Rice (Rice Pilau)

by Amie

Don't have cardamom? No worries. You can sub in a wide range of spices, the point is that your rice should not be plain. Indian cuisine is a riot of flavor and scent, and there's no reason your rice cannot be either! Other spices you can use in this are: cumin, coriander, curry leaf, mustard seed, and fenugreek. The idea is to play around and get to the spice mix you like the best!

2 cups basmati or jasmine rice  
1 onion, diced  
1 tbsp butter  
4 cardamom pods  
8 whole cloves  
1 cinnamon stick  
3 cups chicken stock, vegetable stock, or water

To make sure you get lovely fluffy rice, wash it in several changes of cold water, then leave to soak for about 30 minutes in fresh cold water. If you don't have time for this, place in a sieve and wash under the cold tap for a minute or so.

Cook the onion in the butter for around 5 minutes until softened. Add the spices, saffron and bay leaves and cook for a couple more minutes. The spices will give a wonderful fragrant flavor to the rice. Add the rice and stir until the grains are coated in the butter before stirring in the stock or water and salt. Bring to a simmer and then cover with lid. Cook for 10 minutes before turning off the heat. Don't remove the lid; just leave the rice to continue cooking in the pan for about 5 minutes until you're ready to serve.

The rice should have absorbed all the water and will just need fluffing up with a fork. Serve alongside your curry, poriyal, and don't forget the chutney! And while it's traditionally naan/roti OR rice, I'm not looking and neither is anyone else so do what pleases YOU.

## Ribollita

from Serious Eats

Feel free to add or sub in from the box: spinach for kale, romanesco, sliced bok choy, shredded cabbage (not too fine), or even broccoli florets. A squeeze of lemon on top always goes a long way too.

3 tablespoons olive oil  
3 cloves garlic, smashed  
1 onion, diced  
1 leek, white and light green parts only, diced  
4 large carrots, peeled and diced  
2 1/2 cups peeled, seeded, and diced butternut squash  
1 turnip, peeled and diced  
3 large celery stalks, diced  
Water  
1 bunch kale (stalks removed, and roughly chopped)  
1 bouquet garni (herb bundle made from a few sprigs each of mixed herbs, such as parsley, oregano, thyme, rosemary, and bay leaf)  
2 cups cooked beans, such as cannellini, navy, or cranberry, plus 1 cup bean-cooking liquid or water  
1/2 loaf fresh or stale rustic crusty bread, cut into 1-inch cubes  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
Grated Parmigiano Reggiano, for serving (optional)  
Extra virgin olive oil for drizzling on top

In a large Dutch oven or soup pot, heat olive oil over medium heat with garlic. Cook, stirring, until garlic is fragrant and very lightly golden. Add onion, leek, carrots, squash, turnip, and celery and cook, stirring, until slightly softened but not browned, about 5 minutes.

Add enough water to slightly cover vegetables (about 6 cups; 1.5L) along with kale and bouquet garni and bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Lower heat to maintain simmer and cook until vegetables are very tender, about 25 minutes.

Stir in beans and their cooking liquid (or 1 cup water if using canned beans). Add bread, stir well, and simmer until bread is very soft and breaking down, about 15 minutes. Add water, 1/2 cup at a time, if soup becomes too thick and dry.

Season with salt and pepper. The soup can be served at varying consistencies: more wet and broth-y, like a thick, chunky soup, or cooked down until thickened like a porridge. Top with grated cheese and a healthy bloop of good quality olive oil on top.

Optional Adventure Bonus: Once reduced to a thick porridge, you can ladle some of it into a small (8-inch) nonstick skillet with 1 tablespoon oil and cook over medium-high heat, stirring frequently, until it coalesces into a dense mass; it will eventually take the shape of a pancake. (If your flipping skills are good, you can flip it to serve it browned side up.) Slide it onto a plate. To serve at any consistency, drizzle with fresh olive oil and top with freshly ground black pepper and grated cheese (optional).

### This Week's Box List

Pea Shoots  
Romanesco  
Broccoli  
Bok Choy  
Cabbage  
Spinach  
Stir Fry Mix  
Spring Onions  
Pomelo  
Navel Oranges  
Lemons

**Amie's Recipe Madhur Jaffrey's Cabbage Poriyal and All other recipes can be found at: [www.eatwell.com](http://www.eatwell.com) under the "CSA Farm Box" tab. Just click "Recipes."**