



Last week was our CCOF organic inspection. I don't know any farmer who looks forward to this annual event. Our inspection is particularly painful because our operation is rather complicated. Simply sorting through all the sales to come up with an accurate figure for organic items sold, bends my head.

Besides reporting our organic sales, there are several other reports and records I need to show. What plants did we order, how many, when did they arrive? When were they planted? What seeds did we buy, if they aren't organic, can I show that there was not an organic source. You are supposed to check three sources. Believe it or not, buying organic seeds isn't always that easy, primarily because they aren't always available.

During the inspection you need to show where what and when you planted. And you should have ways of tracing how much you have harvested. They always pick a random crop which you have to be able to track from seed/plant purchase to harvest completion. This too can be challenging because we mostly plant for CSA boxes, smaller plantings several times throughout the year; very different from my neighbor farmers who plant tomatoes once a year. They do one planting on a large piece of land, then harvest in a day, then spray the heck out of their field to kill everything, until they start the process over the next year. How easy that would be.....

We are supposed to have records showing what amendments and sprays we use. (Yes, spraying is allowed in organic growing, but the list of approved products is very limited.) On our farm we don't use anything, no sprays, no fertilizers, no compost, no pesticides, herbicides or fungicides; we let the chickens do their thing. If I get a new inspector they always struggle with the idea that we don't put anything on the soil, so they are rather skeptical, until we walk the fields.

Organic farmers are also expected to improve the land and habitats for creatures that live here. I always kind of laugh at this one, because the very nature of our farm is a living ecosystem of all kinds of life. Having the poplar trees means we have a year round home for an amazing amount of hawks and owls.



Because we don't heavily disk or till the land, leaving our fields lifeless, we have habitat for creatures that live in the soil. There are many species of native bees, and other pollinators. Obviously, the squirrels are really fat and happy! I always tell the inspectors to look up, watch the birds flying overhead. Last Sunday, I was out with Beau, we just sat and listened to the loud bird song coming from the tops of the poplars behind the house.

Unfortunately, my inspector is never here at the right time of year when the bees and other pollinators are really active and abundant, but I was able to show her pictures of native bees and ladybugs that I found in the fields in the last week or so,

even after all the storms we had. That made her quite happy. My inspector was lucky to miss the rain during our farm walk. After that we headed down to the warehouse. Since we store the dried lavender there, that facility has to be inspected too.

There really is a lot that goes into the certification process each and every year. I love it when people tell me the organic standards don't really mean anything, and the farmers can do whatever you want. I especially love hearing that after a 7 hour inspection. The standards are far from perfect, but they are better than nothing, and I can assure you, they are more than just filling out a couple of forms. The truth is coming up with a set standard for everyone is really difficult and often there are a lot of silly things that just shouldn't apply to us, but it is still better than conventional farming. I am proud of the work we do with this land that feeds us and is home to so many creatures. I hope you make a point of visiting us during the warmer months so you can see it for yourself.

### Let's Talk Boxes And Bags

The past few weeks we have experimented with putting the Box for 2 in re-usable cloth grocery bags, for a few of our more local sites. The feedback has been really positive, so I would like to move forward with this over the next couple of weeks. One of the logistical issues we needed to figure out was how to pack them in the van or cooler. Today we got large wax boxes which can hold 4 bags each, sometimes it could be 5. This box is not quite double the height of our regular box, and has the same foot print. This would save us a lot of room in the van, and I believe, hope, it will make the delivery process easier for our drivers. Traffic as it is these days, I am always looking for ways to expedite deliveries and make it easier on the drivers. I think you will also like the bags. Keep in mind, these bags are ONLY for THE BOX FOR 2. Family Box people, you are still going to pick up a box, and for the time being we will continue to label it as such. One of the biggest issues I am hoping to eliminate is folks grabbing the wrong size box. Even though we label all of the boxes, people continue to grab the wrong one. This adds more work on our end, and leaves people disappointed when they don't get what they ordered. The bags are RE-USABLE, so I am asking that you do the best you can to keep them clean and return them to your pick up site. I am not positive when or exactly how we will begin this process, but I am hoping to add a few more sites next week. I will certainly keep you all posted, but know, if you see a pale yellow bag, that is the "box for 2".



## EGGS EGGS EGGS!

Just so you know, egg production has doubled! The youngest flock is beginning to lay so we are getting a small amount of pullets too. Over the next few weeks, I hope we will have loads and loads of eggs, because I have restaurant and wholesale accounts waiting. The CSA always gets first priority, so if you want eggs, go ahead and order them, there are no limitations. Quick word about pullets, if you are not familiar with them, that is the term we use for the first eggs a hen lays. They are quite small, but incredibly delicious!

I am guessing you all have quite a few Butternuts sitting on your counter! That season is coming to a close, I know many of you will be happy about this, but several months from now you may feel differently, so consider par baking, cubing and freezing some. I have been loving it for breakfast. You can pre-roast it until it is almost soft. Peel, take the seeds out and cut into little cubes, then save it in a container and use throughout the week. In the morning I melt butter in a small skillet, then add a couple of tablespoons of butternut that is cut into little cubes. While it is cooking I sprinkle on some cinnamon, nutmeg, cardamom and a splash of maple syrup. I have had a craving for Farro, so I made a pot, and I add farro to the butternut, along with a small handful of raisins and chopped nuts, and a bit of cream. Heat through and enjoy. I literally just finished a bowl while I was working on the newsletter. A second suggestion for using up squash, cube, roast and add to enchiladas. Last week we made chicken & squash enchiladas with a tomatillo sauce I had frozen last summer. It was delicious! Smack in the middle of winter it is really great to open a jar of summer produce to make a fabulous meal. So if you find yourself with items left over from your box consider how you can save it for a later season.

## GRITS AND GREENS

Recipe adapted from Vallery Lomas NY Times Cooking  
I love eating greens with grits. You can add some ham or some beans to make it a little heartier.

### FOR THE GRITS

2 cups Water OR Vegetable Stock  
1 cup Quick-Cooking Grits  
¼ tsp ground Black Pepper  
½ cup Milk  
½ cup shredded sharp Cheddar (3 ounces)  
Salt

### FOR THE GREENS

2 TB Olive Oil  
1 small Onion, minced  
2 Garlic Cloves, sliced  
Pinch of Red-Pepper flakes  
1 bunch Swiss Chard or Kale leaves and stems cut into 1" pieces, if using kale, discard stems  
Salt and Black Pepper  
1 cup Water or Stock

Hot sauce, to serve

Make the grits: In a medium saucepan, heat the vegetable stock and 2 cups water over medium-high until boiling. Once boiling, slowly pour in the grits while whisking to reduce lumps. Once the grits come to a boil, reduce the heat to maintain a simmer and cook, whisking frequently, until thickened, 5 to 8 minutes. Remove the pan from the stove. Season the grits with the pepper, then stir in the milk and cheese until the cheese melts. Season to taste with salt. Set aside and cover to keep warm. Meanwhile, make the greens: Heat the oil in a large Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pot over medium-high. Add the shallot and garlic, and cook, stirring often, until softened, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the red-pepper flakes, collards and chard. Toss to combine until wilted, 3 to 5 minutes. Season with salt, add the vegetable stock and bring to a simmer. Reduce the heat to maintain a simmer, and cook, stirring occasionally, until the greens are very tender, 10 to 15 minutes. Stir in the vinegar, and season again to taste with salt and pepper. Divide the grits among plates and top with the greens and a dash of hot sauce.

## This Week's Bag

\*Red Cabbage  
\*Pomelos  
\*Oranges  
\*Chard  
\*Romanesco  
\*Parsley  
\*Fennel  
\*Radishes  
Red Kale  
Green Garlic  
Lettuce

\*Box for 2 Items

## Baked Romanesco With Mozzarella & Olives

Recipe from NTT Cooking by David Tanis  
You will probably have to halve this recipe because we won't have that much romanesco in the box.

Salt and Pepper

About 3 lb Romanesco

3 TB Extra-Virgin Olive Oil, plus more for

baking dish

1 lb fresh Mozzarella, sliced

1 cup grated Pecorino or Parmesan (about 2 ounces)

1 dozen soft Black Oil-cured Olives, or another type of black olive, pitted

1 tsp roughly chopped Capers

4 roughly chopped Anchovy fillets

4 Garlic cloves, minced

½ tsp crushed Red Pepper, or to taste

Pinch of dried Oregano

Put a large pot of well-salted water over high heat and bring to a boil. Heat oven to 375 degrees. Cut broccoli into quarters and trim away the core and any tough bits. Chop quarters into rough 2-inch cubes. Transfer to boiling water and cook for 2 minutes. Drain and rinse with cool water. Lightly oil an earthenware baking dish. Arrange blanched broccoli in one layer. Season lightly with salt and pepper. Tear mozzarella slices and scatter over the top, then sprinkle with pecorino. Arrange olives here and there. In a small bowl, stir together capers, anchovy, garlic, red pepper and 3 tablespoons olive oil. Drizzle mixture evenly over the top. Bake for about 30 minutes, until cheese has browned a bit and broccoli is tender when pierced with a fork. Let rest 10 to 15 minutes before serving. Sprinkle with a good pinch of dried oregano.