



Lavender Dinner

They told us it would be 108, it wasn't. Threats of heat didn't stop us anyway! We found a beautiful spot in the garden and put up a couple of fans and a mister and some umbrellas. The folks who came to our first special dinner on the farm had a wonderful time. I have to say it was kind of a dream come true for me, because for years I have had visions of a long table filled with CSA members, eating, talking, meeting new people and everyone having a great time. So for those of you who came up last weekend, thank you for making one of my dreams come true!



I am thrilled with how comfortable we were able to make it; and really excited to schedule my next dinner!

I hope to talk to Jose tomorrow about the status of tomatoes so I can figure out how soon we can start scheduling saucing parties. Thank you for sending me your emails, it is really helpful to gauge interest in events like these. And that is important because in order for me to be here for a sauce party I need to make sure we have enough coverage at the market. Knowing that so many of you want to come out to sauce is great and I hope to offer several dates, so keep your eye out for news flash "Saucey".

What The Heck Is Goin On In The Neighborhood?

Last weekend the members who came up for our Lavender Dinner, who had been here before, were all astounded by how different things look in the area around our farm. Everyone asked why there were trees knocked down everywhere, and I mean 100's of acres all around us. Walnut orchards are being demolished at a frightening rate. One orchard, just down the street from us, was ripped out in maybe 2 days. I never even saw it happen, until I went flying past my turn and realized I missed Schroeder road. What the heck? Where did the orchard go?? Felt like I was in a weird futuristic dystopian film where the landscape looks destroyed by something really bad like an alien attack or asteroids! I recently heard that in Solano county over 5000 acres of walnuts have been taken out. Those beautiful trees are bulldozed, then either ground up into massive piles of wood pulp or burned. Earlier today, my friend Xo, who is the farmer at Ruhstaller called me asking if there was a fire near our place, cause from her view down the road, it looked like there was a massive fire, loads of smoke and tall flames shooting high. I went out to investigate and found down Pitt School Road the latest orchard tragedy was up in sacrificial flames. Seems crazy in this heat, when air quality is already poor, farmers think it is a smart idea to set those massive piles of felled trees on fire.

Why is this happening, you might ask? Many of these orchards are relatively young. It takes a good 5 to 7 years before you get a really good crop and trees can produce well for a good 20 years, not to mention, trees are not cheap. So why are all these farmers ripping them out? The sad truth is they losing money, and for some, it costs more to harvest and process than they will make on their crop. I remember telling Nigel years ago that it was crazy to plant walnuts because clearly every Tom, Dick and Harry was, and at some point the price is going to tank and it did. I know my friends at Ruhstaller get all of their nuts back to sell themselves, otherwise they wouldn't make any money at all on walnuts, and they get a premium for their nuts because they are certified organic. Looking at the price of conventional walnuts, I see it is somewhere in the \$6.00 lb range, about half what it was a few years back. But the

crazy thing is, those farmers are getting about .60¢ lb, I have heard as low as .15¢. There is something wrong when the farmer who has to pay for trees, land, fertilizer, harvesting and processing, only get .60¢ lb and we are paying \$6.00 for them in the store. I did a little investigating and read a very interesting article in the Davis Enterprise that explained how Trump's trade war with China and other countries, ended in high tariffs on our nuts to the tune of 40 to 50%. "When Trump became president in 2017, the price was still a profitable \$1.25 per pound. A year later — having lost most of the Chinese market — prices fell to 68 cents a pound. In 2020, the price was just 61 cents." [Rich Rifkin - Davis Enterprise April 2023](#). Rifkin also pointed out that COVID bunged things up even more.

Commodity crops are a cruel business. I remember back in 2007, when Nigel and I went to the big Med Fly meeting and the State Ag Commissioner broke the bad news to everyone regarding the quarantine. I was shocked to learn that, at that time, Campbells paid about .05-.07¢ lb for tomatoes for their soup. How do farmers survive? That red and white can company isn't paying much more today, but today minimum wage is \$15.50 an hour, fuel is probably 3 times as expensive if not 4 times, and the cost of everything else has skyrocketed. It is really kind of crazy. So, as sad as it is seeing the orchard ripped out, I understand why.



Celebrating 30 Years of Ferry Plaza Farmers Market

This past Sunday, my friend Brenda and I poured Drinkwell Softers at the big FoodWise Summer Birthday Bash. It was such a perfect evening, the weather was amazing and the people were too! It was a sold out event as it should be, celebrating 30 years of market is a pretty awesome thing, and Eatwell Farm has been there for every single Saturday market. I was proud to represent the farm and even prouder to pour so many bottles of Softers to an exuberant crowd



who was thrilled to have a delicious non-alcoholic option at the party. Here's to the next 30 years!

RECIPES AND IDEAS FROM LORRAINE

We are certainly seeing some changes in the box this week, thank goodness! It has been a little challenging the past few weeks putting a box together, but summer is finally showing itself, yay! Now come on cukes, eggplants and peppers!

Beet Salad with Honey-Lavender Dressing

Recipe from Martha Stewart Test Kitchen

This past weekend for the Lavender Dinner I made a delicious Beet and Chard Salad, which I of course altered, but I am including the original recipe for you. I cooked my chard in simmering water, until soft. Then I let it cool in and drain, then squeezed as much water out of as I could, chopped it and used it in the salad. Also, I had taken some feta the day before and covered it in olive oil and added a few sprigs of lavender too it and used that instead of the goat cheese. I buy Bulgarian Feta which is mild and made from cow's milk, but you can use whatever feta or goat's cheese you like! And it was hot so I cooked my beets in the IP, no oven!). And I made a very simple dressing, the olive oil from the feta, some champagne vinegar and a little salt and pepper.

6 medium Beets (2 ¼ pounds total), preferably a mix of yellow and red

Extra-virgin olive oil, for drizzling

Coarse salt

For the Dressing;

1 TB Extra-Virgin Olive Oil

2 medium Shallots, thinly sliced (1 cup)

½ cup Honey

½ tsp fresh Lavender leaves

1 large Egg yolk

2 TB Champagne Vinegar

1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

1 cup Safflower oil

1 bunch Swiss chard (about 1 pound), stems removed, leaves torn into 1-inch pieces

½ cup Pecans (2 ounces), toasted and salted I used Ruh-staller Walnuts

8 ounces fresh Goat cheese, crumbled

2 baby Chioggia beets, scrubbed and thinly sliced

Beets: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Drizzle medium beets with olive oil in a baking pan; season with salt. Place in a single layer and add 1 cup water. Cover with parchment, then foil, and roast until knife-tender, about 1 1/2 hours.

When cool enough to handle, rub off peels with paper towels (use a paring knife for tough spots); discard. Cut beets into bite-size pieces. Dressing: Meanwhile, heat olive oil in a medium saute pan over low. Add shallots and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, about 3 minutes. Add honey and lavender; simmer until lavender is fragrant, about 5 minutes. Let cool 5 minutes. Puree with yolk, vinegar, and mustard in a blender or food processor until smooth. With machine running, slowly add safflower oil until combined. (If dressing is too thick, add water, 1 teaspoon at a time.) Salad: Combine roasted beets, chard, and pecans in a bowl. Lightly toss with 1/4 cup dressing. Place 1 tablespoon dressing on bottom of each plate, then add salad mixture and goat cheese, dividing evenly. Top with baby beets and serve, with remaining dressing on the side.

Ottolenghi's Fennel & Cherry Tomato Crumble Gratin

Recipe found in the OG *Ottolenghi*

Seldom do we have fennel and cherry tomatoes together for me to include this recipe, but here we are!

1-3 Fennel bulbs

3 TB Olive Oil

1 TB Thyme leaves, plus a few whole sprigs

3 Garlic cloves, crushed

1 TB coarse Sea Salt & 1 tsp Black Pepper to season

¾ to 1 cup whipping cream

Basket of Cherry Tomatoes

1 tsp chopped Flat-Leaf Parsley

For the Crumble:

4 oz Parmesan cheese, freshly grated

4 oz plain Flour

1 to 2 TB Caster Sugar

1/2 stick cold unsalted Butter cut into small cubes

Preheat the oven to 400. Trim off the fennel stalks and cut each bulb lengthwise in half. Cut each half into slices about 1/2" thick. Place in a large bowl with the olive oil, thyme leaves, garlic, salt and pepper and toss together. Transfer to an ovenproof dish and pour the cream over the fennel. Mix the crumble with the grated Parmesan and scatter evenly on top. Cover the dish with foil and bake for 45 minutes. Remove the foil and arrange the tomatoes on top. Scatter a few thyme sprigs on top. Return to the oven and bake for another 15 minutes. By now the fennel should feel soft when poked with a knife and the grain should have a nice golden color. Remove from the oven and allow to rest for a few minutes. Sprinkle chopped parsley over and serve hot or warm.

This Week's Box

*Raisins

*Onions

*Cherry Tomatoes

*Fennel

*Chard

*Basil

*Potatoes

*Summer Squash

Slicer Tomatoes

Black Radishes

Garlic

Chives

* = Items in Box for 2

Boiled Potatoes With Basil & Mint

Recipe found on [CookinCanuck](#)

1 lb small Yellow Potatoes

1 tsp Extra Virgin Olive Oil

4 tsp Sea Salt

4 Mint leaves thinly sliced

4 Basil leaves, thinly sliced

Place the potatoes in a large saucepan and cover with cold water by an inch. Bring to a boil. Cook until the potatoes are tender, but not falling apart, 15 to 20 minutes. Drain. Transfer the potatoes to a bowl and toss with the olive oil, sea salt, mint and basil. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Raisin Energy Balls

Recipe found on [wellplated.com](#)

The original recipe calls for golden raisins, but Capay's are so good, I bet this will be delicious!

1 cup Raisins, lightly packed

1/2 cup Walnuts or nut of choice

1/4 cup + 2 TB Rolled or Quick-Cooking Oats

2 TB ground Flaxseeds

1 TB Honey

1/4 tsp Vanilla Extract

1/8 tsp Salt

Place the raisins in a small bowl and pour very hot water over the top to cover. Let soak 5 minutes, then drain and lightly pat dry. Place the nuts, oats, and flaxseed in the bowl of a food processor fitted with a steel blade, then blend until finely ground. Add the drained raisins, honey, vanilla extract, and salt. Pulse until a thick, sticky ball forms. Remove the ball from the food processor, then roll into individual small balls, about 1 inch across. Sprinkle any desired toppings on individual plates, then roll the balls in the toppings to coat. Place balls on a parchment-lined baking sheet and freeze until no longer sticky. Transfer to an airtight container and store in the refrigerator or freezer.

For topping: chopped nuts, toasted coconut flakes, cocoa powder, chocolate sprinkles