



CHICKENS

Chickens have been domesticated for somewhere around 8,000 years. Researchers agree that the original birds came from South East Asia, mostly the Red Junglefowl. Because of certain traits, such as yellow skin, it is believed that today's birds developed from cross-breeding with the Grey Junglefowl of India, plus SriLankan and Green Junglefowl. The one breed that has researchers perplexed is the Auracana, which was originally found in Chile. Some believe they are Pre-Columbian from Polynesia, but DNA does not prove this to be the case. Bit of a mystery there!



I do have some very exciting news, this past Sunday our youngest flock started laying their first eggs! This means we will have pullets available for you very soon, maybe as early as next week. If you are not familiar with pullets, that is the term used for young hens under the age of 1. We also call the first eggs they lay pullets, which are typically very small, especially in the first few weeks. But they are supremely delicious and my absolute favorite eggs! If you have never had the opportunity to try one, I hope you will consider ordering a dozen over the next few weeks. Convincing people

to try them is always one of the biggest struggles I face with the ebb and flow of egg production. Usually, right about the time the eggs size up to normal "large" eggs, people start to ask me for pullets. Happened literally a month ago at the market. We had pullets for weeks, and they sat there, not selling. About 3 weeks after we were done, of course someone came looking for them - timing is key:).

Over the millennia, some chickens developed into better layers, but had smaller bodies. Others grew larger, better for meat, but they produce fewer eggs. In today's world we have accelerated breeding to the point where the common meat birds found in the supermarkets are only about 7 weeks old. Meat birds need less daylight, more in the range of 12 hours per day, because they actually need more time to digest their food, rest and build muscle. However, layers prefer a 15 hour day, makes sense, they do originate from a place much closer to the equator. In commercial laying operations, they run lights in the houses to keep a longer average daylight range year round. Those hens produce eggs at a higher level than what we get, but they also burn out faster. On our farm we do not use lights in our houses. Two of our houses have lights powered by solar panels, but the time to begin using them is actually mid to late August as the days begin to really shorten. But it is always so hot here and the days seem so long to us, we don't jump on that as soon as we should. And once they go into "shorter day power down", you can't reverse that.

In the bit of dry spell we had over the past several days, the guys were able to get the young ones moved. It was way past time, but we get caught not having a good spot ready for them *and* ground dry enough to move the houses. Jose sent me this photo last weekend, young hens, green grass and major relief.

Mid Winter Dinner

I can't finish this week's newsletter without mentioning the dinner and music show we had here this past Saturday, it was phenomenal! To have the caliber of talent of Joe and Hattie playing in the farm house, was truly a dream come true for me. I think all of the attendees were blown away. Being able to feed folks a farm-centric meal (more about that on the other side) always brings me great joy, so all in all, a pretty perfect evening. And the best thing, Joe and Hattie had such a great time we are working on plans for more dinner shows in the future. I am thinking of doing simpler meals for these future dates, maybe stews, chili or soup, and some kind of salad and fresh baked



There is a part of me that believes it should be ok for the hens to get a break over the winter months, I mean I certainly want to slow down during these shorter daylight days. But the fact is, we need eggs year round, so I struggle to find the right balance between having way too many eggs in the summer and running short in the winter. Right now we have about 800 old hens we need to find new homes for, and unfortunately, the organization we worked with up until the beginning of COVID is not around anymore, so..... I am hoping Ruhstaller will take a lot, but they need time to build houses for all of them.

bread, plus dessert. This would allow us to start music earlier, making it easier for everyone to stay for the entire show. So keep an eye out for some fun in the future. For now, we do have our Kids/Family cooking class and meal scheduled for February 10th. We do have 4 tickets left so if you are interested you can get those [here](#).

AND NOW FOR THE FOOD....

So much to say, it is a challenge to get focused! Spending a day and half cooking a 5 course meal, is really inspiring. And always trying to figure out how to use as many vegetables from the farm as I possibly can is really so much fun. I did try roasting citrus for the first time, once on top of the fennel, but I let the citrus roast too long. At least the fennel was delicious, kissed with a hint of citrus. I did roast another full sheet pan of tangerines, oranges, blood orange, and lemons. And I chopped them up and added them to a medley of roasted broccoli, cauliflower, & Romanesco. To which I also added two types of kale which I cooked in simmering water. My hack for greens is to keep them bunched, wash them, then holding the stem end, I swirl them in simmering water until they are as done as I want them. For this particular dish, I wanted them fairly cooked. I let them drain in the sink, then wrung them out a bit, chopped and tossed them in the pan with the roasted vegetables. I also roasted peeled purple top turnips and the roasted fennel. All the veggies had been roasted with a decent amount of olive oil and salt, so I didn't need to season much. I chopped the roasted citrus fairly fine and tossed that into the mix, and wowza! That was a surprisingly delicious dish. We have been enjoying the leftovers for days now, I heat some in a pan, add a bit of cheese and scrambled eggs. Shocking how good that little burst of citrus is in scrambled eggs! This is such a great way to use a lot of what is in your box, essentially everything in your box could be cooked up like this. You would have a large container of food prepped to add to eggs, maybe a frittata or quiche, or to add to broth and miso, or throw into rice for a fried rice, or a risotto, or just heated as a delicious side dish. I would recommend roasting broccoli on its own if that is what you have in your box this week, as it takes less time than cauliflower or fennel or turnips. If you chop things on the smaller side, you cause it in more types of dishes, like soup or risotto. I hate huge chunks of things in my soups, you eat it with a spoon, not fork and knife:!) If you have pomelo, zest those big boys and use the zest, always at the end of your cooking, if fresh flavor is what you are looking for. Because I had several folks ask for recipes, the Beet Caviar I made came from 101Cookbooks.com by Heidi Swanson, whom I remember well as one of our regular shoppers at the market! In the past I made another version, but mine uses a bit of tahini and only a tiny bit of garlic, and instead of dates I use orange juice and zest. But both are crazy delicious! Even if you hate beets, I can't imagine anyone not loving this dip/spread. I made an herb cheese which was a blend of cream cheese and homemade Creme Fraiche. If you have never made Creme Fraiche, well let me tell you, it is the simplest thing! 1 1/2 cups of heavy cream, 1/2 cup Butter-milk, mix, put into a mason jar, cover and let sit out for at least 24 hours. I seriously wonder why I EVER buy sour cream, when this is far superior and so easy!

To make my herb cheese spread, which by the way tastes amazing next to the Beet Caviar, I finely chopped 1 bunch

each parsley, chives, green garlic and spring onions. All of these are available to order as extras and many will show up in your boxes at some point soon. I also added some olive oil and salt. I did two packs of cream cheese and probably at least 1 cup of Creme Fraiche and probably about 1/2 cup olive oil until I got to the consistency I wanted. Adding enough salt really helped bring out the flavors. Another big hit of the night was the Butternut Squash Bisque, I put that recipe in the newsletter not long ago, here is the [link](#) if you want to check it out. The version I made this past weekend used chicken stock rather than vegetable, but both work.

Winter Vegetable Risotto

Recipe found on [Forks Over Knives](#)

Since I mentioned risotto, I thought I would include this delicious vegetarian version that not only uses butternut squash, but switch out the parsnip and use turnips. And I know many of you have rosemary leftover from last week!

1 medium Carrot, peeled and diced
1 medium Parsnip, peeled and diced use Turnips
2 cups peeled, seeded, and diced Butternut Squash (about 1 pound)
1 TB chopped fresh Rosemary or Thyme
5 1/2 cups vegan Vegetable Stock
1/2 cup dry White Wine
2 Garlic cloves, minced
1 cup chopped Onion or Shallot
1 cup uncooked Arborio Rice
1/2 cup unsweetened, unflavored Plant Milk
2 TB Tahini

1/4 cup Nutritional Yeast

1 TB fresh Lemon Juice

1 TB Mirin (see note)

Sea salt and freshly ground Black Pepper

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Place the carrot, parsnip, and squash in a large bowl with the rosemary. Toss to coat. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Arrange on a baking sheet in a single layer and roast for 20 to 25 minutes, until soft but not mushy. Combine the stock and wine in a small saucepan over medium heat. Once simmering, reduce the temperature to medium-low. Sauté the garlic, onion, and rice in a large nonstick pot for 3 to 5 minutes, or until the rice starts to toast. Add 1 cup of the simmering broth-wine mixture to the rice and cook, stirring constantly, until the liquid is mostly absorbed. Continue adding the broth 1 cup at a time, stirring as it is absorbed, until the rice is tender and creamy, about 20 minutes. Add the milk, tahini, nutritional yeast, lemon juice, and mirin, and cook for 5 minutes more. Stir in the roasted veggies. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Note: Mirin is a sweet rice wine. If you can't find it, you can use dry sherry or white wine with a pinch of sugar.

This past weekend I bought a cooking magazine from Simple Eats, all about soups, broths, stews, chilis and ramen. I will share what I learn with you next week!

Hope you have a delicious week.

This Week's Box

*Turnips

*Fennel

*Red Cabbage

*Butternut

*Lemons

*Spring Raab

*Pomelo/Grapefruit

*Napa

Broccoli/Cauliflower

Chard

Mizuna/Arugula

* = Items in Box for 2