

Earth Dance Farm



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Quote for the Week

It is a wholesome and necessary thing for us to turn again to the earth and in the contemplation of her beauties to know of wonder and humility.

Juan Formosa (1890-1921, Brazil)

This week:

Honey
Spinach
Lettuce
Dill
Chives
Baby kale
Radishes

NOTES:

Wash your produce before eating.

Please set out boxes and ice packs each week, before the delivery.

Pass on any clean paper grocery bags or clean egg cartons. You can leave them with your boxes.

Welcome to the 2009 Season!

This is that one box of the season when you receive a little bit 'o honey. I am always happy when the bees give us enough honey to share some with you all.

People often ask, "what kind of honey is it", meaning, from whence did the nectar come. In our neck of the woods the nectar flow begins with the basswood blossoms, then the dandelions, fruit trees, clover, all of the vegetable blossoms, and then to the goldenrod in the fall. I usually collect the honey in Sept. so the honey is a combination of all the flows. We wanted to have bees on the farm right from the beginning because they seem to be such a natural and important aspect to growing crops in general. Their main purpose is to pollinate the fruit trees, berries and veggies. They can be heard and seen in almost all areas on the farm if

Farmer's Notes:

Lots has happened here on the farm since our last newsletter in Oct. of 2008. We cut and burned tons of firewood, planted and mulched the garlic, and readied the fields and animals for winter. In Dec. we increased the size of our greenhouse by a third. This spring we built on to our chicken coop, added a shower to our basement bathroom, and purchased a 16'x16' bunkhouse for our interns to crash.

The planting season began in late March inside our germination chamber and greenhouse. I heat only as much of the greenhouse as I need to as my plantings increase. Some crops like onions, broccoli, beets and

the weather is dry, above 50 degrees, and not terribly windy. Their social structure and community life is very fascinating and one can be mesmerized by their constant movement to and fro. Most of their work of cleaning, feeding brood, and making comb and honey is done out of sight inside of the hive.

I usually buy 4 new 2lb packs of bees each April and install them into cleaned hive bodies and feed them some sugar water and pollen to get started. I continue to monitor their growth and add body frames as they need more room. Two summers ago I found out I had acquired an allergy to bee stings, so now I am more careful to wear my gear and take necessary precautions. I keep their yard mowed and bottom boards cleaned, but they basically

kale do need lots of heat to grow so they do fine outside of the heated area. Riley, a junior at Kingsland in Spring Valley began to help me in April after school and on Saturdays. It was quite warm and dry early in April and much of the field preparation was done before any starts were ready for transplanting. Rain has been pretty decent here, thankfully better than in the Twin Cities. Two college interns began in mid May and another on June 1st. It is so nice to be mostly caught up on the planting and the weeding for a change. You will hear more about, and from Tom, Katelyn and Ellie as the season unfolds. June so far has been very cool and many of the crops have been growing very slowly. Most look great, but really need some good old heat to take off.

take care of themselves for most of the summer. More years than not one colony will swarm when the weather gets hot - the last two years I have found the swarm and started another hive with it. In Sept I collect the honey in the upper supers and either spin it or put it away until spring. I again feed the bees honey water in the fall and in early Dec. provide some shelter from the wind and wrap some tar paper around the hives. Then it is just waiting for warmer weather and hope that they survive the winter. It is typical to lose 1/2 of your bees in the winter or early spring.

This winter 4 of my 5 hives made it through until spring so now I have 8 hives. I believe that they should produce plenty of honey for another delivery in the 1st box of 2010. Sweet eating to you!

In the box..... The first few deliveries are heavy on the greens for salads, braising and stir fries. Once the peppers, cukes, summer squash etc. begin, then the boxes really start to fill up. Some of the radishes may be on the hot side, kale is small and tasty, spinach has larger leaves than usual, and lettuce is a straight green leaf, but very sweet.

Just a reminder to please be careful as you flatten the box after removing the produce. Slide the tabs out from their slots and fold flat. Any tears whatsoever seriously diminishes the strength of the box. I need to collect boxes/ice packs each week as I deliver the next box. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

MEMBER WORK DAYS:

**Saturday, June 27th
Friday, August 14th**

Sign up by sending an email. There will be organized activities for children. Bon fire at the end of the day.

Member "Camp on the Farm" weekend: July 10 - 12

New this year, we will be trying out a hosted camping weekend. Bring your tent, and spend a weekend on the farm. Hiking in the woods, swimming in the creek, learn about the veggies growing on the farm, and enjoy an evening bon fire. Limited number of spots, so if you want to sign up, send us an email.

Fall Harvest Gathering: Saturday, October 3rd in the afternoon and evening.

Cooking tips...

The first box of the season is perfect for making some fresh salads. Everything, except the honey, could be used to make a fresh salad. You may want to remove the stems from the spinach, if using it this way. If you aren't use to eating kale, it may be a bit strong for a fresh salad. We rinse all the veggies, but please wash them before eating them.

Another simple way to use the spinach is to cut it up and sauté it in some oil, if you like onion or garlic you could sauté that first and then add the spinach. I like to add a little vinegar as well. The baby kale can be prepared this way, too. You can always add a bit of

spinach or kale to scrambled eggs. I usually cook it first in a bit of oil and then add the eggs.

The radishes can be eaten raw, they can also be graded and added to the salad. Recently, I added them to a stir fry and everyone enjoyed them. I grew up with radishes from our garden and never saw anyone cook them. Last year I saw some recipes for cooked radishes so decided to try it, and I actually like them better cooked. I'm including a recipe below for braised radishes.

The dill can be added to a salad or sprinkled over some cut up

cucumbers with a little vinegar. You can also hang it up and dry it. Then you could strip it from the plant and store it in a small jar.

Chives can be added to any type potato dish as well as added to some scrambled eggs. They provide a subtle onion flavor.

We packed the honey in the boxes and put them in the cooler for the night, so if the honey gets thick from being cooled, you can heat it up a bit. Just put the bottle of honey in some warm water and gently heat it.

Recipes

Braised radishes

2 tbsp butter or extra virgin olive oil

1 lb radishes, trimmed, peeled and cut into chunks

½ cup or more vegetable stock, white wine, or water

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Freshly squeezed lemon juice

Chopped parsley leaves for garnish

Combine the butter, radishes and stock in a saucepan, sprinkle with salt and pepper, and bring to a boil. Cover and adjust the heat so the mixture simmers; cook until the radishes are tender, 15 to 20 minutes, checking once or twice and adding additional liquid as needed.

Uncover and raise the heat to boil off almost all the liquid, so that the vegetable becomes glazed in the combination of butter and pan juices; this will

take 5 to 10 minutes. Taste and adjust the seasoning, add a little lemon juice if you like, garnish, and serve.

Chickpea soup with spinach

½ lb dried chickpeas, washed and picked over, or about 2 cups cooked

1 lb fresh spinach

¼ cup raisins

¼ cup pine nuts

¼ cup virgin olive oil

1 large onion, chopped

1 tsp minced garlic

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

6 cups vegetable stock

Soak the chickpeas for several hours or overnight in water to cover. Put in a pot with fresh water to cover by at least 2 inches. Bring to a boil, turn down the heat, and simmer, covered, for at least 1 hour, or until tender.

Put half the oil in a deep skillet or a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. When hot, add the onion, garlic, a large pinch of salt, and some pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, until the onion softens and begins to brown, about 10 minutes.

Stir in 1 lb fresh spinach, washed, trimmed, and coarsely chopped. You might also stir in ¼ cup each of raisins and toasted pine nuts. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the spinach wilts, then turn off the heat.

When the chickpeas are tender, remove them from the heat and drain them, reserving their cooking water. Add the chickpeas, along with about 1 cup of their cooking water and the stock, to the spinach mixture. Mash with a potato masher or spoon until some or most of the peas are crushed. Cook over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally, until hot. Taste, adjust the seasoning, garnish, and serve

(How to Cook Everything Vegetarian by Mark Bittmann)