



Community Cultivator



Newsletter of the Foggy River Farm CSA, Week 11

The Horse before the Cart

Back some years ago, it was commonplace for horses, mules, and oxen to serve as the living, breathing engines for farms. They plowed fields, mounded potatoes, and hauled produce to market. Over time, tractors moved in and the horses were put out to pasture. But now, some farmers are bringing horses back into their field as a gasoline-free power source.

This Saturday after market we were treated by a fellow farm to a beginner's lesson in horse-driving. Invited to visit one of the few animal-powered farms in the county, we jumped at the opportunity. New Family Farm—located between Sebastopol, Occidental and Graton—is driving a team of draft horses for most of their field work. They've been at it for over a year now, and from the looks of their tidy rows of beets, carrot and onions it's going pretty well. They sell their produce to Andy's market, restaurants, and at the Santa Rosa farmer's market.

Adam, one of the farmers at New Family Farm, generously offered us a mini horse lesson this past Saturday after market. First, he walked to the outer edge of the farm to coax his two "tractors" in from pasture with grain treats. Quinna and Misty came trotting, and he quickly had them on a lead and tied to a rail near the barn. These horses are huge beasts! They towered over us—legs like tree trunks, haunches that shaded out the sun as they walked by. We thought to ourselves, here are two animals that command respect!

After he harnessed Quinna, the "smaller" of the two, Adam walked us through his basic commands for starting, stopping and turning. We then took turns guiding her slowly around the arena. Powerful, but gentle, she responded to Adam's voice and touch with relative deference.

As the sun grew lower in the sky, we left the farm grateful to Adam for sharing several hours of his time with us and for giving us a little taste of what it might be like if we brought draft horses to Foggy River Farm—something we are seriously considering. We hope to return and continue learning.

New this week we have our first potatoes! We're also offering up some green tomatoes for frying. If you haven't tried green tomatoes before they're surprisingly tasty—despite all our moaning and groaning as we wait for the green to turn to red. And finally, one more round of broccoli this week. We'll have some extra broccoli heads available at the CSA barn for broccoli lovers.

Your Foggy Farmers,
Emmett & Lynda
Craig & Emma

What's In Your Box:

- **Broccoli (Arcadia)** *This week we great one more round of summer broccoli. (We are forecasting that the next broccoli you'll see will probably be in October.)*
- **Carrots (Yellowstone, Hercules)** *We know that carrots are a staple in many kitchens, so we will try to keep you well stocked for the next couple months.*
- **Potatoes (Assorted: Red Norland, Yukon Gold, and/or All Blue)** *The first potatoes of the season are usually tender, with thin skins. Try cutting these up in chunks and roasting them in the oven—maybe with some carrots.*
- **Cabbage (Tendersweet)** *Good for a summer cole-slaw or sautéed into a stir-fry. Try using it as an addition to the broccoli-slaw recipe included last week, or pickled using the previous week/s pickling recipe. We also have a sauerkraut recipe to try this week. (Recipe included.)*
- **Cherry Tomatoes (Sungold)** *The cherry tomatoes are multiplying, and we are all the lucky beneficiaries. Great as snacks, or lightly browned and then tossed into a pasta dish.*
- **Heirloom Tomatoes (Black Plum or Cherokee Purple or Orange Oxheart)** *The first few larger tomatoes are beginning to roll off the vines. Once all the varieties come into play, over the next couple week, we'll give an overview of each type. A quick review of a few tomato tips: 1) if the tomato is hard and yellow on the top, this is sunburn and you'll want to just cut that part off and the rest will be fine; 2) if the tomato is still firm and seems not quite ripe, you can let it sit for a day or two on the counter to let it ripen further; 3) tomatoes keep best just on the counter at room temperature.*
- **Green Tomatoes** *Green tomatoes can be surprisingly tasty. I actually ate one like an apple just the other day! They have a nice tang to them, but it doesn't have to be overpowering. They're good for chutneys, relishes, and of course the classic fried green tomatoes (Recipes included.)*
- **Summer Squash (various)** *More summer squash to...throw on the grill, add to pasta sauce, make zucchini bread with...the possibilities are endless.*

Foggy River Recipes

Fried Green Tomatoes

The classic, no frills recipe for fried green tomatoes. A fun one to try whether you've never had them before or they're an old favorite.

Ingredients:

- * 4 to 6 **green tomatoes**
- * salt and pepper
- * cornmeal
- * bacon grease or vegetable oil

Preparation:

Slice the tomatoes into 1/4 - 1/2-inch slices. Salt and pepper them to taste. Dip in meal and fry in hot grease or oil about 3 minutes or until golden on bottom. Gently turn and fry the other side. Serve as a side dish - delicious with breakfast!

Green Tomato Chutney

If you like a sweet and savory condiment to go with a rice and curry meal, you may want to try this recipe. You will likely need to scale it down to fit the quantity of green tomatoes in this week's share.

Ingredients:

- * 2 1/2 pounds firm **green tomatoes**, about 6 cups diced
- * 1 cup golden raisins
- * 1 cup chopped onion
- * 1 1/2 cups light brown sugar, firmly packed
- * 1 teaspoon salt
- * 1 1/4 cups cider vinegar
- * 1 tablespoon mixed pickling spices
- * 1 teaspoon chili powder
- * 1 tablespoon chopped crystallized ginger

Preparation:

Trim the stem and blossom ends from tomatoes and cut into 3/4-inch dice (you should have about 6 cups). Combine all ingredients in a heavy kettle; bring to a boil. Reduce the heat and cook for about 1 hour, until thickened.

If you will be using all your chutney during the next week or two, you can keep it in the refrigerator. Alternatively, you can put some away in jars, following standard canning directions for proper safety precautions.

Makes about 3 pints of green tomato chutney.

Chocolate Chip (+Zucchini) Cookies

Shhhh...don't tell anyone there's squash in them. They may never know.

Ingredients

1 cup butter, softened
2 cups granulated sugar
2 eggs, beaten
4 cups all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking soda
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon salt
2 small **zucchini or any summer squash**, grated (you want it to measure approximately 2 cups of grated zucchini)
2 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips
1 1/2-2 cups walnuts, chopped (optional)

First you will want to preheat your oven to 350 degrees F. Spray cookie sheets with cooking spray or line with Parchment paper.

Next you want to cream your butter and sugar together in a large mixing bowl until light and fluffy. Then you want to add the egg, flour, baking soda, cinnamon, and salt into the butter mixture, gradually; mix well.

Stir in the zucchini. Fold in your walnuts (optional), and chocolate chips.

Drop by teaspoonfuls with two (2) inches between each cookie-- onto the cookie sheets.

Bake for 15 to 20 minutes, or until golden. Do not over-bake, or you will not enjoy your cookies.

Let stand to cool for 2 to 3 minutes, then remove and place on wire racks to allow to cook completely. This recipe makes a lot but is easily halved to make 4 dozen instead of 8!

Sauerkraut

This recipe has a bit more text than most of our recipes—explaining the whole fermentation process. It comes from Sandor Katz, the fermented foods guru, creator of wildfermentation.com and the author of Wild Fermentation: The Flavor, Nutrition, and Craft of Live-Culture Foods. This is Sandor's easy sauerkraut recipe, one of more than 90 ferments included in his book. We actually haven't ever made sauerkraut, so this one is on our list to try as well...

Timeframe: 1-4 weeks (or more)

Special Equipment:

- * Ceramic crock or food-grade plastic bucket, one-gallon capacity or greater
- * Plate that fits inside crock or bucket
- * One-gallon jug filled with water (or a scrubbed and boiled rock)
- * Cloth cover (like a pillowcase or towel)

Ingredients (for 1 gallon):

- * 5 pounds **cabbage**
- * 3 tablespoons sea salt

Process:

1. Chop or grate cabbage, finely or coarsely, with or without hearts, however you like it. I love to mix green and red cabbage to end up with bright pink kraut. Place cabbage in a large bowl as you chop it.

2. Sprinkle salt on the cabbage as you go. The salt pulls water out of the cabbage (through osmosis), and this creates the brine in which the cabbage can ferment and sour without rotting. The salt also has the effect of keeping the cabbage crunchy, by inhibiting organisms and enzymes that soften it. 3 tablespoons of salt is a rough guideline for 5 pounds of cabbage. I never measure the salt; I just shake some on after I chop up each cabbage. I use more salt in summer, less in winter.

3. Add other vegetables. Grate carrots for a coleslaw-like kraut. Other vegetables I've added include onions, garlic, seaweed, greens, Brussels sprouts, small whole heads of cabbage, turnips, beets, and burdock roots. You can also add fruits (apples, whole or sliced, are classic), and herbs and spices (caraway seeds, dill seeds, celery seeds, and juniper berries are classic, but anything you like will work). Experiment.

4. Mix ingredients together and pack into crock. Pack just a bit into the crock at a time and tamp it down hard using your fists or any (other) sturdy kitchen implement. The tamping packs the kraut tight in the crock and helps force water out of the cabbage.

5. Cover kraut with a plate or some other lid that fits snugly inside the crock. Place a clean weight (a glass jug filled with water) on the cover. This weight is to force water out of the cabbage and then keep the cabbage submerged under the brine. Cover the whole thing with a cloth to keep dust and flies out.

6. Press down on the weight to add pressure to the cabbage and help force water out of it. Continue doing this periodically (as often as you think of it, every few hours), until the brine rises above the cover. This can take up to about 24 hours, as the salt draws water out of the cabbage slowly. Some cabbage, particularly if it is old, simply contains less water. If the brine does not rise above the plate level by the next day, add enough salt water to bring the brine level above the plate. Add about a teaspoon of salt to a cup of water and stir until it's completely dissolved.

7. Leave the crock to ferment. I generally store the crock in an unobtrusive corner of the kitchen where I won't forget about it, but where it won't be in anybody's way. You

could also store it in a cool basement if you want a slower fermentation that will preserve for longer.

8. Check the kraut every day or two. The volume reduces as the fermentation proceeds. Sometimes mold appears on the surface. Many books refer to this mold as “scum,” but I prefer to think of it as a bloom. Skim what you can off of the surface; it will break up and you will probably not be able to remove all of it. Don’t worry about this. It’s just a surface phenomenon, a result of contact with the air. The kraut itself is under the anaerobic protection of the brine. Rinse off the plate and the weight. Taste the kraut. Generally it starts to be tangy after a few days, and the taste gets stronger as time passes. In the cool temperatures of a cellar in winter, kraut can keep improving for months and months. In the summer or in a heated room, its life cycle is more rapid. Eventually it becomes soft and the flavor turns less pleasant.

9. Enjoy. I generally scoop out a bowl- or jarful at a time and keep it in the fridge. I start when the kraut is young and enjoy its evolving flavor over the course of a few weeks. Try the sauerkraut juice that will be left in the bowl after the kraut is eaten. Sauerkraut juice is a rare delicacy and unparalleled digestive tonic. Each time you scoop some kraut out of the crock, you have to repack it carefully. Make sure the kraut is packed tight in the crock, the surface is level, and the cover and weight are clean. Sometimes brine evaporates, so if the kraut is not submerged below brine just add salted water as necessary. Some people preserve kraut by canning and heat-processing it. This can be done; but so much of the power of sauerkraut is its aliveness that I wonder: Why kill it?

10. Develop a rhythm. I try to start a new batch before the previous batch runs out. I remove the remaining kraut from the crock, repack it with fresh salted cabbage, then pour the old kraut and its juices over the new kraut. This gives the new batch a boost with an active culture starter.