

Meanwhile Back at the Farm...March 15, 2001

Howdy Folks,

Well the sun came out this week and we have been cranking out the work. We prepared tons of beds this week at the main farm in which to plant our final crops here. "Make hay while the sun shines" is another one of our sayings that comes from agriculture. We sure saw the meaning of this once the endless rain stopped.

Michael and Ryan have been really doing a great job. They really cleaned up a lot of little projects and dressed up the place for last weekend's farm tour, which went well. I suppose knowing that Michael's parents were coming to this tour might have had something to do with our motivation, but having a farm tour is always a good excuse to straighten the place up.

There was quite a memorable moment during the farm tour when I was describing how pesticides damage nerve insulation imitating multiple sclerosis. Michael's parents live at the bottom of a valley in an agricultural area. Spraying happens on both slopes above the valley. It turns out that on the little road that they live on, there are a large number of people with "MS." Of course this was statistically impossible and Michael's mom suddenly realized that all these people were pesticide poisoning victims. All the statistics I put out there suddenly are driven home when it becomes someone's personal experience.

Michael and Ryan finished building a nice pond in the lower greenhouse this week. We will be planting water spinach (kang kong) and watercress to take advantage of the pool. Kang Kong or the foot-a-minute plant grows in the water and sends out huge runners. Its in the morning glory family and is a favorite vegetable in Asia. You barely cook it before eating it. You can literally dip the greens in boiling water for a FEW SECONDS and then serve them. They have a nice flavor. When growing outdoors they float on the water since they have enough air in the stems. We are going to train them up the interior trellis in the greenhouse to provide shade for the little seedlings on the benches. We'll harvest the overhead vines when there becomes too much shade! The watercress will be grown on the banks of the pond. We plan to add it to your salads and occasionally harvest it for you separately.

This week we have a new treat for you. I learned this week from a visitor at the farm tour that the leaves of Fava beans are edible. I tasted some and WOW did they ever taste good. I think they would be great in salads but it was reported they are good cooked too. Favas are the sort of square stemmed plants with white flowers which often smell good. Have fun experimenting with this new vegetable.

The other treat is Rocquette. These beautiful four petaled gems are none other than flowering Arugula. They have some of the same flavor as the Arugula leaves but also have a flavor of their own.

Early this week we were also visited by the local newspaper the Country Almanac. They heard through the grapevine that we were being evicted and came out to do a story on us. I just heard

this morning that the story was so good they are holding it until next week so they can put it on the cover!! They are sending a photographer to capture some pictures of the Hope House ladies helping out on the farm. I really hope this article brings us the leads and help to find the land we want to have.

Bert Mazzocco has been plugging away at our accounting getting all the checks and data into the computer. Another couple of days and we'll have the first big chunk done. We're plodding along on this but when its done we'll be able to get audited and then be able to start applying for grants.

A new program has come along which appears to grant seniors funding to purchase CSA shares. I have my legislator, Anna Eshoo, looking for the actual program information so we can apply and start serving local seniors with our CSA. I've included the article I read about it in the Capital Press so you can see where this program has been used before.

Jean Pierre Weingarten is moving to the Phoenix area. He decided it was time for a change and is going to work for a cutting edge nutrition research place. He will continue to do recipes for us however since he enjoys writing them for us. But we should start looking for another chef who could eventually take his place. Anyone have any ideas for a chef who would like to trade a share for doing our recipes?? No recipe this week since he is in the process of moving.

Last night I gave a rousing presentation to people in Santa Cruz about pesticides and the potential for the state to force the spraying of people's homes to combat the Glassy Winged Sharpshooter. People there are being organized to stop the Ag Commissioner from being able to spray toxic nerve gas (Carbaryl) in the event the bug is found in the county. I can get pretty worked up when I think our government is acting in a fascist manner. I had people pretty upset by the time the night was through and a lot of people were sufficiently motivated to offer to help the organizing effort. I wouldn't be able to afford to do this kind of work if it wasn't for the subscriptions to the farm and the donations many of you give the IIEA. So thanks once again for your support.

The Food

Lettuce: Heads of green leaf.

Escarole: Heads of this chicory family green are really best lightly cooked. Those who like bitters will often mix escarole into salad.

Rocquette (flowers): Cut the bottom of the stems and put the bunch in a vase. Each day some more flowers will open for you to use with salads etc.

Radishes: One of the joys of the start of spring is a nice sweet radish.

Red Onions: From another farm

Arugula: A smaller bundle than we've typically been giving you.

Potatoes: More Yukon Gold potatoes-

Radishes: After all this cold weather they should be extra tasty.

Fava Bean Greens: Something new for you to try.