

- 3 fresh thyme sprigs
- Special equipment: a Japanese Benriner or other adjustable-blade slicer*; parchment paper; a 2 1/2-inch round cookie cutter (optional)

Directions

1. Put oven rack in lower third of oven and preheat oven to 350°F. Generously butter a 13- by 9-inch glass baking dish (3-quart capacity).
2. Stir together salt and pepper in a small bowl. Cut off necks of squash, reserving bottoms for another use (you will have about 3 pounds necks). Peel squash and very thinly slice crosswise with slicer.
3. Layer one third of squash slices, overlapping, in baking dish and sprinkle with some of salt and pepper mixture. Sprinkle with half of cheese, then layer half of remaining squash slices on top and sprinkle with some of salt and pepper mixture. Top with remaining cheese and remaining squash slices, then sprinkle with remaining salt and pepper.
4. Bring cream and thyme sprigs to a simmer in a small saucepan over moderate heat. Discard thyme and pour cream evenly over squash. Put a sheet of parchment paper on surface of squash and poke a few holes in parchment with a knife. Bake squash until tender, about 45 minutes.
5. Discard parchment and let squash stand 10 minutes before serving. If desired, cut rounds from squash with cookie cutter and transfer to plates with a spatula.

*Available at Asian markets, cookware shops, and Uwajimaya (800-889-1928).

******From Epicurious.com******

Mashed Potatoes with Rutabagas and Buttermilk – Serves 8-10

Ingredients

- 1 1/2 pounds rutabagas, peeled, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 3 pounds russet potatoes, peeled, cut into 2-inch pieces
- 6 tablespoons (3/4 stick) butter
- 3/4 cup (or more) buttermilk
- Chopped green onion tops or chives

Directions

1. Cook rutabagas in large pot of boiling salted water until very tender, about 20 minutes. Using slotted spoon, transfer rutabagas to strainer. Press gently to release any excess liquid.
2. Add potatoes to same pot of boiling water; cook until tender, about 20 minutes. Drain well. Return potatoes and rutabagas to same pot. Add butter; mash well. Add 3/4 cup buttermilk; mash until smooth. Season with salt and pepper. (Can be made 6 hours ahead. Cover and chill. Stir over low heat to rewarm, adding more buttermilk by tablespoonfuls, if desired.)
3. Transfer potatoes to bowl. Sprinkle with green onions and serve.



Sisters Hill Farm

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<https://sistershillfarm.org>
845-868-7048

Edited by: Bob & Joan Cohen
cohenrd98@comcast.net
845-724-3518

From Director Sister Mary Ann

I enjoy my conversations with shareholders. Pope Francis has recently become a “hot topic.” His memorable visit to New York has given us a glimpse of this humble man who has touched the hearts of so many people. Many shareholders have asked me about his recent encyclical *Laudato Si’ - On Care For Our Common Home*. What is it? What does it say? Does it have anything to say about farming?

I can only attempt to “scratch the surface.” This is a very long document but I hope you will be inspired to read some if not all of it some time.

An encyclical is a teaching “letter” issued by a Pope. *Laudato Si’* is the first encyclical on the topic of Ecology. It is addressed not only to Catholics, but Pope Francis makes it very clear that he is speaking to every person on the Planet. In this encyclical, I would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home.” (3) It has something to say to all of us.

I urgently appeal for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all. #14

In Chapter one of the encyclical, Pope Francis highlights the many crises we are facing on earth. These include climate change, pollution, water contamination, loss of biodiversity and the general breakdown in society. He describes the effects of each of these issues on society—especially the poor, and emphasizes that ecological issues can no longer be seen as only an issue for scientists and environmental groups but for all of us.

In chapter 5. Pope Francis outlines some areas of dialogue and some possible solutions. More needs to be done in conserving energy and natural resources, in curbing fossil fuel use, and working toward cleaner and more sustainable energy options. The profit motive cannot rule over our ability to care for creation.

Throughout the document, Pope Francis speaks about integral ecology.

We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with a complex crisis which is both social and environmental.” Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combatting poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded and at the same time protecting nature. (139)

A true ecological approach always becomes a social approach. It must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. (49) People in poverty have contributed least to climate change for example, but they are disproportionately affected by it. As a result of the excessive use of natural resources by wealthy nations, those who are poor are the

most vulnerable and threatened by the effects of pollution, lack of access to clean water, hunger etc., though they are not the major cause of the problem.

We have not been good stewards. “Never have we so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the last two hundred years, (53).” The earth, our home is beginning to look like an immense pile of filth (59) Pope Francis reiterates over and over again what we at Sisters Hill Farm believe and try to teach by how we care for the land and each other, how we farm, and how we model sustainability. We believe that we are all connected, we are part of nature- not over and above, we share a common bond, we reach out to people in need especially those who have no access to wholesome pesticide-free food.

How does this encyclical relate to farming? Farm leaders say that *Laudato Si’* has clear implications for the way we grow our food and that it challenges predominant farming approaches.

According to Catholic Rural Life, farming is a factor throughout the document. There is no specific section devoted to farming but related terminology used more than thirty times throughout the document. The Pope explores everything from pesticides to water pollution, to the threat that widespread use of Genetically Modified Organisms poses to the economic growth of small-scale farmers.

The environmental degradation he explores has a direct impact on agriculture through droughts and floods caused by climate change, depletion of fresh water resources and the loss of biodiversity. Francis supports small-scale farm production which becomes more vulnerable as agriculture becomes more industrialized. Fewer and fewer people are able to live on the land and support the family as agriculture becomes more and more concentrated in the hands of a few. Less than five giant agribusiness corporations have gained control over the agricultural system in the United States from seeds to processing to distribution. These corporations tend to bring greater threats to the environment through their large scale operations which tend to decrease the importance of careful stewardship and sustainability.

Laudato Si’ affirms the values of the Sisters of Charity in regard to ecology and the environment, and also affirms what we have seen exemplified by Farmer Dave and our apprentices at Sisters Hill Farm. We are fortunate to have a farmer who takes the care of creation and responsibility for the common good seriously, and who cares for the land in a sustainable way. We are grateful to all of you for supporting the farm and in joining us in our endeavors to care for the earth. In closing, Pope Francis issues a challenge. “ the ecological crisis is a summons to profound interior conversion. Many things have to change course, but it is human beings above all who need to change. A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal.(202)

What will you do?

—Sister Mary Ann Garisto

*****From Epicurious.com*****

Quick Winter Squash Soup with Spicy Toasted Pumpkin Seeds -

Makes 4 servings

Ingredients

For soup

- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 3 shallots, finely chopped
- 2 (12-ounce) packages frozen winter squash purée, thawed. (pureed fresh squash can be used)
- 3 cups chicken stock

For pumpkin seeds

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 3/4 cup raw green (hulled) pumpkin seeds
- 3/4 teaspoon ground cumin
- Pinch of cayenne pepper

To finish

- 1 teaspoon finely grated fresh lime zest
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice

Directions

Make soup:

1. In large saucepan over moderately high heat, melt butter. Add shallots and sauté until translucent, about 3 minutes. Stir in squash and stock and bring to boil. Reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, until soup thickens, about 30 minutes.

While soup simmers, make pumpkin seeds:

1. In small skillet over moderately high heat, heat oil. Add pumpkin seeds and cook, stirring constantly, until seeds begin to pop, 1 to 2 minutes. Stir in cumin and cayenne pepper and continue to cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Transfer to bowl and season with generous pinch of kosher or coarse sea salt.

Finish and serve:

1. When soup has thickened, remove from heat and stir in lime zest and juice. Season with kosher or fine sea salt and freshly ground black pepper. Ladle into bowls, garnish with pumpkin seeds, and serve.

Tip: 1 medium lime should provide about 1 teaspoon zest and 2 tablespoons juice. Be sure to zest the lime before halving and juicing it.

*****From Epicurious.com*****

Scalloped Butternut Squash - Makes 8 servings

Ingredients

- 1 teaspoon salt
- Rounded 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 5 1/2 to 6 pound butternut squash
- 5 ounces Oka cheese or mild Cheddar, rind discarded and cheese coarsely grated on large holes of a box grater (1 1/3 cups)
- 1 1/2 cups heavy cream