



Sisters Hill Farm

127 Sisters Hill Road, PO Box 22, Stanfordsville, NY

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Notes from Farmer Dave



As some of you know my wife Margaret and I took our two sons John and Ben on vacation last week to Cape May. We had a fantastic time; we swam, fished, crabbed, rode bikes, ran, relaxed, mini-golfed and generally soaked up the sun. One of the best things about this vacation was my lack of stress about leaving the farm. Usually we take a 3 night August vacation, this year we stayed 6 nights. That probably tells you something about the level of trust and confidence I have in this years crop of apprentices. I just knew they would be on top of everything and harvest some great shares for you all. It's a very fulfilling part of my job to be mentoring new farmers, but it is particularly pleasant this year because all 3 are focused and intent on making the best of this learning opportunity--while still having fun. I must say, it has been a very low stress season this year. Anna, especially I think, is enjoying the lack of drama, having come from apprenticeships where personal conflict and crop struggles were a daily fact of life. She was pleasantly surprised to learn that farming didn't have to include that level of stress.

This is the time of year when the apprenticeship moves into full throttle—I start giving the apprentices a chance to be “in charge” of the farm for a week at a time. To prepare they scour the farm fields over the weekend and come up with a plan; we review it together, and I step back a bit and give them space to lead. It is one thing to simply enjoy farm work, it is quite another to create the plan for an entire week and execute that plan in such a way that is productive, efficient, fulfilling and fun. Our weekly “to do lists” are regularly 30-50 items long. Every week, every day, every hour, the person in charge has to be assessing if the most important thing is getting accomplished, and if they are accomplishing it efficiently. If we have volunteers helping they must consider individual talents, preferences, and abilities, as well as the overall moral of the crew. They must have tools and equipment ready to make smooth and efficient transitions from one task to the next. The list goes on and on. To guide them in this process I created an evaluation sheet that they fill out each week to rate their progress. I go over it with them and we talk about strengths and areas in need of improvement. It's a fun process as they refine their leadership and decision making skills.

Another great pleasure this year is our amazing yields! As of this writing we are 200 pounds ahead of our best year through the same date. So far this year we have harvested and distributed to more than 39,000 pounds of delicious produce! We are hoping to beat 2010 when we harvested over 87,000 pounds for the season. In contrast, last years total (despite atrocious weather) was 66,000 pounds for the year. Which brings up another important point... I heard someone talking at a recent pickup about how the shares were too large and they couldn't eat it all. I don't want our amazing bumper crop year to become a negative point for anyone. You can always leave any item from your share; we will make sure it gets to someone in

- About 1/3 cup water
- 1 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley (optional)

Directions

1. Holding your knife at a sharp angle, cut each carrot into 1/4-inch-thick oval slices. Melt the butter over med. heat in a 10-12-inch sauté pan.
2. Add the carrots (they should be almost in a single layer), sugar, and salt, and swirl the pan over medium heat until the sugar and salt dissolve and the carrots are evenly coated with butter.
3. Add the Marsala, simmer for 3 min., and then add enough water to come halfway up the sides of the carrots. Increase the heat to medium high, bring to a boil, and cover the pan with the lid slightly askew.
4. Cook at a steady boil, shaking the pan occasionally, until the carrots are tender but not soft (a paring knife should enter a carrot with just a little resistance), 6 to 8 min. Uncover and continue to boil until the liquid evaporates and forms a syrup. Shake the pan and roll the pieces around to evenly glaze the carrots. Toss the carrots with the parsley, if you like, and serve.

*****From *EatingWell.com******

Carrot-Cumin Salad - 4 servings

Ingredients

- 6 carrots, coarsely grated
- 1/2 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- Salt & freshly ground pepper, to taste

Directions

1. Combine carrots, parsley, lemon juice, oil, garlic and cumin in a medium bowl. Season to taste with salt and freshly ground pepper.

*****From your Editor Joan*****

Some ways to use Lemon Basil

- Use as any of the basils
- Chop: sprinkle on fruit salad
- Mix: with a little lemon yogurt to top fruit salad
- Add: course chopped lemon basil to sautéed vegetables just before serving

need. That's why I always write on the share board, "take up to..." before listing the share. You can always take less; we'll just give more to our charities. With the cost of food rising every day one thing is for sure, you're certainly getting an incredible value for your money! Enjoy the bounty and have a great week!

******From Williams-Sonoma Pasta Cookbook******

PASTA CAPRESE

MAKES 4 MAIN-COURSE OR 6 FIRST-COURSE SERVINGS

Ingredients

- 5 large tomatoes
- ½ cup (4 fl oz/125 ml) extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar
- 2 cloves garlic, very thinly sliced (see Note)
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- Pinch of cayenne pepper
- 1 lb (500 g) penne or ziti
- ½ lb (250 g) fresh mozzarella cheese, cut into small cubes
- About 15 fresh basil leaves, finely shredded, plus several sprigs

Directions

1. Peel and seed the tomatoes (page 93), then cut them into small dice. Drain the diced tomatoes in a colander for about 15 minutes to remove excess liquid.
2. In a bowl, combine the drained tomatoes, olive oil, vinegar, and garlic. Season to taste with salt and black pepper and the cayenne. Toss and let sit at room temperature for about 20 minutes to develop the flavor.
3. Meanwhile, bring a large pot of water to a boil over high heat. Generously salt the boiling water, add the pasta, and cook until al dente, 10-12 minutes.
4. Drain the pasta and put it in a warmed large, shallow bowl. Add the tomato mixture and toss. Add the mozzarella and basil shreds and toss gently. The heat from the pasta will start to melt the cheese. Taste and adjust the seasoning. Garnish with basil sprigs and serve at once.

******From Fine Cooking Italian Cookbook******

Spaghetti with arugula, tomato & ricotta salata -Serves 4 to 6

Ingredients

- 1 lb. dried spaghetti
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tsp. dried oregano
- 3 beefsteak tomatoes, cut into 8 to 10 wedges each
- 6 oz. arugula (about 7 cups, loosely packed), washed, and tough stems removed
- 5 oz. grated ricotta salata

Directions

1. The sharp sheep's milk flavor of ricotta salata is unbeatable with arugula. Grate it slowly on a grater with large holes to get long strands of cheese.
2. Cook the spaghetti in plenty of salted boiling water until al dente. Drain well, but don't rinse. While it's still hot, put the pasta in a large bowl and toss it with the oil, salt and pepper to taste, the oregano, and tomatoes. Gently toss in the arugula.
3. Divide among bowls, top with the grated ricotta salata, and serve immediately.

******From Williams-Sonoma Vegetables Cookbook******

Baked Beets with Orange – Serves 4

Ingredients

- 12 small, young beets (beetroots) with greens attached
- 1/2 cup (4 fl oz/125 ml) water
- 1/2 cup (4 fl oz/125 ml) olive oil
- 1/4 cup (2 fl oz/60 ml) red wine vinegar 1/4 cup (2 fl oz/60 ml) fresh orange juice 3 tablespoons chopped fresh tarragon salt and freshly ground pepper

Directions

1. A simple dish that requires little time in the kitchen. It is marvelous served at room temperature with grilled fish. The smaller the beets, the better the dish will be. If fresh tarragon isn't available, substitute fresh parsley or chives.
2. Preheat an oven to 350°F (180°C).
3. Cut off the greens from the beets, leaving about 1/2 inch (12 mm) of the stems. Discard the tough, damaged outer leaves. Thoroughly wash the beets and greens. Chop the greens coarsely. Place the whole beets and the greens in a baking dish with a lid. Add the water, cover the dish and place in the oven. Bake until the beets are tender, 40-50 minutes (the amount of time will depend upon the size of the beets).
4. Remove from the oven and set aside to cool. Trim off the stem and root ends. Peel the beets; the skins will slip off easily. Slice the beets thinly and place on a serving plate. Using a slotted spoon, transfer the greens to the plate and arrange around the beets.
5. In a small bowl stir together the oil, vinegar, orange juice and 2 tablespoons of the tarragon. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
6. Pour the dressing evenly over the beets and greens. Garnish with the remaining 1 tablespoon tarragon.

******From FineCooking.com******

Glazed Carrots with Marsala

Ingredients

- 1-1/2 lb. carrots (about 8), peeled and-trimmed
- 2 Tbs. unsalted butter
- 1 tsp. granulated sugar
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/3 cup sweet Marsala