

FRESH PROSPECTS

Week 12 – September 4, 2008

This Week:

- * Visiting the Farm
- * This Week's Veggies
- * War and Carrots

Visiting the Farm

Ten of us drove up to Windflower Farm last month, setting a new turnout record, but we were no competition for the Stanton Street CSA, who showed up with twenty-one members. Unprecedented popularity. Ted had never seen anything like it.

It's a long drive up to Washington County, but the land gets prettier and hillier the closer you get, until you arrive at a place that feels like some farm archetype you keep in your head. The farmhouse and outbuildings are plain and practical, but the way the small fields are tucked into the green hills feels just right.

Unkinking our legs, we needed a few turns around the tractor-rutted paths to get used to walking on unpaved earth. Then we took our time choosing the best spots for pitching our tents. Most of us wound up on the grassy terraces overlooking the new airy shed that served as our banquet pavilion. There was also an uncommonly appealing outhouse, kept fresh smelling with a scoop of your choice of compost: cedar sawdust, lime, or kitty litter.

Before dinner, Ted gave us a detailed tour of the fields, teaching us about the fragility of organic arugula, the desirability of leguminous cover crops, and the flammability of dried garlic stalks. Ted is just like he sounds in his letters: soft spoken and eloquent, charismatic and enthusiastic. When he describes a particular salad green as "fun to grow," you believe him.

Our potluck dinner was extravagant and remarkably good, not surprising I suppose for a self-selective group of foodies. Then we stayed up late roasting marshmallows around a big bonfire under a crowd of stars, shooting stars, and Milky Way, before finally stumbling back to our tents and sleeping bags. If it all sounds picture perfect, I should point out that people who say it's quiet in the country must be deaf to crickets and roosters and whatever else was kicking up that racket.

The next morning Ted and Jan served us a great breakfast, which we dragged

out for hours in our reluctance to pack up and go. Looking back, everyone seems to have come away with a different favorite moment.

For Jennifer, it was “the tractor ride up the mountain to see the sunset.” But for Cristen, it was “meeting Ted and Jan and being in their calming, peaceful presence.”

Meret appreciated “the connection between the actual amount of land to the variety of bounty [and] Ted’s effort and apparent joy in treating the farm more like a smorgasbord than a machine.”

And for Alison, it was knowing that “everybody there cares about, and has an active commitment to, sustainability That political bond heightens the pleasure of sharing bonfires, meteors, coyotes, homemade sticky buns, and the smell of arugula when the floating cover gets lifted.”

To see photos of the trip by T. Vincent Trotter, follow this link:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/29922578@N07/>
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This Week’s Veggies

Expect more corn, white carrots, assorted tomatoes, basil, garlic, Romaine lettuce, sweet bell peppers, green beans, Swiss chard or arugula, and possibly our first potatoes.

Carrots

Perhaps you’ve heard the urban legend that eating lots of carrots will help you see in the dark. This isn’t just a bum extrapolation of the fact that Vitamin A deficiency can cause night blindness; it’s actually the vestige of a World War II disinformation campaign concocted by the British air force. The RAF needed an excuse for the exceptional nighttime accuracy of their anti-aircraft gunners in the Battle of Britain. And rumors of a carrot diet played right into German pro-carrot folklore. The true secret of RAF success –*radar*–remained so and is often credited for the defeat of the Luftwaffe during the ‘Blitz’.

(kudos to *Great Moments in Science*,

www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2005/10/26/1392430.htm?site=science/greatmomentsinscience

<<http://www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2005/10/26/%201392430.htm?site=science/greatmomentsinscience>>)

Carrot recipes are a problem. First of all, our carrots are awfully good just eaten raw or maybe cut up in a salad. And this weeks batch of white carrots are clearly too special to dematerialize into cakes or soups. Traditional recipes that actually showcase carrots can be cloying, but here's one that's simple and sophisticated.

Carrots and Brussels Sprouts

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Serves 6

2 tablespoons chopped shallots (from 1 medium)
3 tablespoons unsalted butter, divided
1 lb carrots, cut diagonally into ½-inch-thick pieces
1 lb Brussels sprouts, halved lengthwise
1/3 cup water
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

Cook shallots in 2 tablespoons butter in a 12-inch heavy skillet over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally, until softened, 1 to 2 minutes. Add carrots, Brussels sprouts, ¾ teaspoon salt, and ½ teaspoon pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, until vegetables begin to brown, 3 to 4 minutes.

Add water and cover skillet, then cook over medium-high heat until vegetables are tender, 5 to 8 minutes. Stir in vinegar, remaining tablespoon butter, and salt and pepper to taste.

UNTIL NEXT WEEK, we wish you all happy veggie eating