



High Ground Organics Community Supported Agriculture

Week 22: August 8th and 9th 2012

Research Trials, by Steve

Our primary goal in farming is to grow our produce in a way that is as healthy as possible for both the people who eat it and our environment. We try to make our little corner of the farming world a sustainable and beautiful place. But just one look around us shows that our farm is but a sliver among the vast farming acreage around us. This is one of the reasons that we participate in research studies – it's a way to possibly have a greater impact on how farming is done in this area. Because conventionally grown strawberries are one of the most heavily sprayed and chemically treated crops there is, we particularly have an interest in helping to get good research out there that provides scientific evidence of the effectiveness of organic growing methods.

Last fall we set aside a half acre of our field for a research project that will go through 2015. We are one of seven farms that are growing out on-farm trials that are part of a larger project called the Cal CORE Network. Based out of the University of California at Santa Cruz, it was funded by the USDA—Organic Research and Extension Initiative, and involves dozens of collaborators from many different institutions. Our half acre field was divided into five different plots which were each planted to a different cover crop treatment last fall. After we mowed and incorporated the cover crops in spring, each plot was given a different pre-plant treatment—either feather meal, mustard meal, or nothing at all. We then planted broccoli over the entire field. For the next two seasons we will repeat the same cover crop treatments over fall and winter, and plant vegetable crops in summer. The year after that, the entire field will be planted to strawberries. Ours will be a four year strawberry rotation, other grower/collaborators are doing two year rotations.

According to the handbook I received as a participant at the beginning of the project, the goals of this project are to “compare the effects of 4 versus 2 year vegetable/strawberry rotations with varying fertility, disease management, and cropping patterns on crop yield, weed and disease suppression, soil N, nitrate leaching, denitrification, C sequestration, methane and carbon dioxide emissions and economics of production”—ambitious to say the least.

Even though we are about a month away from harvest time, there are already some striking visible differences between the plots. Where rye was planted as an over-winter cover crop, the

Strawberry Flats and Flower Bouquets Available

Need more strawberries for desserts, potlucks, jam or to freeze for the winter? Order extra strawberries or flowers from our Web Store (csa.farmigo.com/store/highgroundorganics) and we will deliver them to your pick-up site with the boxes on your delivery day. Orders can be made up until noon the day before your delivery.

broccoli plants are much smaller and lighter in color—even after having received a heavy preplant application of mustard seed meal which contains about 6% Nitrogen. This is because so much of the Nitrogen becomes “tied-up” by the micro-organisms that are trying to break down the huge amount of carboniferous matter that the cover crop provided (it was taller than me when it was incorporated). I am really looking forward to seeing what the differences in yield will be at harvest time.

We already have a system that we're pretty happy with for growing our organic strawberries, using long (4-5 year) rotations and specific pre-plant cover crops, so in some ways it doesn't seem to make a lot of sense to participate in trials like these. It takes a lot of my time to set the trials up and there are usually record keeping requirements as well. But these projects stimulate our innate curiosity and usually teach us something we can use in our own growing. And if they can help convince a larger grower to grow organically because they can use a shorter rotation between strawberry crops, or improve the results for organic growers to make the organic options more attractive, then we've been part of a greater accomplishment.

This Week

Strawberries

Red or Green Oak Leaf Lettuce

Broccoli

Romanesco

Bunched Spinach

Purplette Onions or Scallions

Fennel

Bunched Chantenay Carrots

Summer Squash or Desiree Potatoes

Flowers: Sunflowers, Green Tower Amaranth,
and Statice

All vegetables and fruit were grown by High Ground Organics. Organic flowers are from the Thomas Farm.

Notes and Recipes from Chef Andrew Cohen

The **Purplette** onions could be turned into my favorite quickles (see website) for use on just about anything. They also are great to cook with, and if the tops are on you just have that much more to work with. Use the tops as you would any green onion tops as garnish, or puree with oil for a finishing touch, or use for Scallion Sauce for Pork Chops. The **Purplettes** go great with the **spinach** combined with pistachios and diced dried apricots as a stuffing for pork tenderloin or chicken. The use of the word “Florentine” in a

recipe title typically means the dish contains **spinach**. Use with the **onions** and mushrooms for an omelette, or sauté the **spinach** and use with poached eggs and hollandaise for Eggs Florentine. Dice **summer squash** and **onion** and sauté until crisp, then add the **spinach**, and toss with pasta for a vegetable laden main course. **Romanesco** is similar to **broccoli** and cauliflower, but has a sturdier texture and mild flavor. Use it roasted or sauté in thin slices for pasta. Try the Gratin of Romanesco straight, or try adding some broccoli (don't blanch it more than a minute!) for a twist of texture, color, and flavor. Use the two, blanched, then sauté with garlic and mince it for use as a "sauce" for pasta with a sprinkle of chili flakes. The **Desiree potatoes** make some of the best mashed potatoes. They are also good braised in a little stock with sautéed **fennel** and **onions** as a base.

Gratin of Romanesco, from Chef Andrew E Cohen

Romanesco is often described as a cross between cauliflower and broccoli, but I think it has its own personality. It is denser than either of the others, and is more resistant to developing the brassica "funk" that the other two get when cooked too long in water. I like the denser texture which allows Romanesco to caramelize well, and I really enjoy the fractal look of the florets.

4 cups Romanesco florets, trimmed to around 1½ inches each	3 Purplette onions or 1 medium red, yellow, or white onion, skinned and halved through the root and then sliced ¼ inch top to bottom following the curve of the onion (This is called a Lyonnaise cut)
3 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped	Oil as needed
1 cup bread crumbs	1 TBS fresh Italian parsley, chopped
Salt and pepper to taste	1 tsp. fresh herbs such as thyme, oregano, rosemary, or mint, chopped (Use whatever herbs you wish, solo or in combination)
½ cup (or more) cheese such as Mozzarella, Gruyere, Romano, or Parmesan (If using mozzarella, use more. A gooey cheese should be used in enough quantity to add some chew to the dish, and Mozzarella is so mild)	

Heat the oven to 425°F. Lightly oil an oven-proof gratin or casserole dish. Bring a pot of water large enough to hold all the Romanesco to a boil. Salt the water liberally. When the water is boiling, add the Romanesco and cook for 2-5 minutes. Cook just long enough for the Romanesco to turn a brighter shade of green and to just lose its raw quality. Bite into one-it should be crisp tender. Immediately drain and rinse in cold water to arrest the cooking.

Drain the vegetable and toss into a bowl with the onion and garlic. Drizzle with olive oil and toss to coat the vegetables well with the oil. They should be shiny, but not dripping. Season with salt and pepper.

Share this Newsletter!

We Welcome New CSA Members! This is a time of true abundance on the farm--please pass this newsletter on to your friends who might be interested in joining our CSA for the summer. **New members**, go to www.highgroundorganics.com for information or to sign up!

Put the vegetables into the prepared dish and cook in the center of the oven for 20 minutes. They should be golden brown and caramelized in some places, and should be tender.

When the Romanesco reaches this point, toss the bread crumbs with just enough oil to moisten them, around 1-2 tablespoons. Add the herbs and season with salt and pepper and toss well to combine thoroughly. Sprinkle the vegetables with the cheese if using Mozzarella or Gruyere, then add the breadcrumbs. If using Romano or Parmesan, add the cheese to the bread crumbs and sprinkle over the gratin. Cook another 10 minutes or until the breadcrumbs are golden and the cheese melted. Allow to cool 5 minutes and serve.

Real Simple Fennel and Onion Salad

1 bulb fennel, trimmed of stalks (reserve for fennel stock or oil)	3 Purplette onions, tops removed if present, and peeled
1 head oakleaf lettuce cleaned and dried	Real Simple Red Wine Vinaigrette-see recipe

Using a fixed blade slicer or razor sharp knife, slice the onions into paper thin rings. (If the onions are young-came with the tops on-they may be "wet" and strong. Taste a slice. If they seem really strong to eat raw, place in a colander and rinse really well, using your fingers to break up the rings and rinse each ring. Place the colander in a bowl with enough water to cover the onions and soak 10 minutes. Drain really well and roll up in a paper towel to dry.)

Split the fennel through the root, cut out most of the core, then slice the fennel very thinly-around 1/8th inch or thinner.

Once the onions are dry, toss them together and then drizzle with just enough dressing to moisten them. Marinate for one hour somewhere cool. Before serving, drain the fennel and onion and refrigerate 15 minutes.

To serve: Very lightly dress the lettuce leaves and place on 4 plates. Taste the fennel and onions, then season as needed with salt and pepper. Drizzle with a little dressing, then divide among the plates, and serve. -OR- tear the lettuce into bite-sized bits and toss with the fennel and onions, then distribute among the plates.

Real Simple Red Wine Vinaigrette

¼ cup good quality red wine vinegar	¾ cup mild olive oil
A pinch each salt and pepper	½ teaspoon sugar
1 teaspoon minced shallot	

Add the salt, pepper, sugar to the vinegar and whisk until the salt and sugar dissolve. Add the shallots and allow to macerate 5 minutes. Slowly whisk in the oil in a thin steady stream to form an emulsion. You may or may not need all the oil. Taste for balance and adjust as needed. Yield: 1 cup

Cooking Classes with Chef Joni Sare

Cupertino: Wednesday, Aug 8th, 5:30 - 7:30pm ("Paleo style") and Wednesday, Aug 22nd, 11:30am - 1:30pm (focus on fresh herbs and spices). at Joni's home in Cupertino.

Soquel: Thursday, August 23rd, 4 - 6pm

Santa Cruz: Thursday, September 20th, 6 - 8pm

Contact Joni to reserve your place: jonisare@gmail.com

Have kitchen? Have a group that wants to learn healthy ways to cook? Contact Joni if you would like to host a cooking class at your home.