



## Down on the Farm Notes: June 19, 2008

Hi everyone!

I will go right into what we have in the box today. I am chatty so I don't want to lose those of you who just want the scoop. Today you have a special treat of sugar snap peas. You may have to snap the top and pull off the string, though. These are great eaten raw or cooked in a stir fry. You eat the whole thing--don't shell. Now for those of you from the Bay area, this is as good as Nevada peas get. We have freezing temps one week and then 95 the next week, and peas hate that kind of weather. They like cool and moderate temps, so they aren't big and beautiful but still good to eat. You have more lettuce and spinach. This may be the last of both because everything wants to bolt with the heat. So wash everything up and it should last awhile. I know it is a lot...but there is some waste because of our lovely friends, the worms! You also have a couple of baby daikon in your peas. I can't believe we couldn't get radishes to grow this year. They froze and then it got too hot. They want to bolt too. Radishes are also good in a stir fry or sautéed in butter. A customer told me about cooking them in butter. It mellows the hot flavor. You also have a little chard, some green garlic, sage or calendula, your last treat of rhubarb, and

some of you strawberries. You can combine your greens to make a great stir fry. Rhubarb is great chopped up and cooked like applesauce. It makes a great breakfast treat or pour it over ice cream, but you do have to cook it. I don't know too many people who care for it raw.

It is hustle and bustle time on the farm-- massive planting and irrigating with this hot weather. In fact, when it gets hot like this, everything needs water all at once and it creates a little panic time. You can't irrigate everything as quick as it needs to be, and at 94 degrees things wilt fast. But the melons are setting. Rick says it makes his day when he sees the first melons setting on the vine. He is stumped, though. The zucchini are growing but no flowers. I told him a watching pot never boils. Isn't it funny how we are so hungry and ready for that first zucchini, and then...well we have all been there. You know what happens.

The hot weather is hard on the lettuce and spinach. At a certain temp they bolt which means they go to seed. This can happen in the time of 2 days and there is nothing you can do about it. It can go from beautiful

lettuce to 3' lettuce immediately. However, a blooming lettuce bed is actually pretty.

I have a little bit of info on the cheese ingredients. I will include the recipes for the cheese, so check them out. A great company that offers cheese making supplies is the New England Cheese Making Supply Co. You will find them on the internet. Also, 2 other great sites are Cheesemaking 101 and click on Russlenod.com blog archive. This site is also great.

[Farmersmarketonline.com/howto3.htm](http://Farmersmarketonline.com/howto3.htm)

This site offers a great explanation of the different cultures. It even has recipes on how to make your own cultures without having to purchase them. A great book to check out at the library is *Home Cheese Making* by Ricki Carroll. Remember, the trick to making these simple cheeses is to NOT use ultra pasteurized milk. Unfortunately, most organic milk is ultra pasteurized. Isn't that crazy! The Co-Op carries fresh raw milk, with cream on top!! Good luck!

Ok...for my chatty time. It is the season for farmers to "make hay." I am sure some of you have experienced this, driving by a freshly cut field of hay. You know how fresh cut lawn smells; well, fresh cut alfalfa smells so good, especially in the heat of the afternoon. It seems to make the fragrance concentrated. If you were standing in the field after the hay has been cut, out in the quiet, you would be amazed how "not quiet" it is. The ground actually moves. Mice dart,

snakes slither, and lady bugs, aphids, and 1000 of other bugs are crawling everywhere making the ground look like it is moving. All this bug and wildlife activity is because they have to resituate their homes. Anyway, the smell is heavenly. EXCEPT...when you are the one cutting the hay. If the swather plugs, you have to unplug it by hand and freshly cut 2' tall alfalfa is extremely heavy. You instantly work up a sweat which then mixes with bugs, dust, and pollen. Suddenly you lose sight of the heavenly scent of fresh cut hay!

Speaking of bugs...this week I have spent some time on the ground weeding tiny things like carrots and green onions. (We definitely fit the description for Slow Food. Slow weeding, slow picking, we are slow!!) I have given some thought to the bugs that were "bugging me." When growing organically, you are concerned about creating a living environment. This means growing plants and letting some things go to seed and allowing weeds to grow in "certain" areas to lure and create a habitat for these creatures. When this is done, your little plot becomes a living, buzzing, crawling, flying, happening hangout. Things begin to take their natural course and it is at this time that you discover that you are the intruder. At this critical time you decide if you want to become in control and kick the native out the door with pesticides and herbicides or whether you are going to work with the same beat as nature does. Do you allow the worms and

bugs to stick around or do you make everything" grocery store perfect"?

When picking the lettuce yesterday, it was very cold. In fact, from 5:30 to 6:00 am it froze, leaving the tips of the lettuce with ice, so the bugs weren't moving. We found yellow jackets, honey bees, flies, wasps, beetles, lady bugs, and spiders all tucked in the lettuce; oh, and of course we can't forget those hateful exasperating worms. But how often do you find these in store bought lettuce? I know some of the bugs take flight in all the transporting. Instead, you get an acre of efficiently grown lettuce, all perfectly grown, all the same size heads of lettuce, all fed the perfectly premeasured nutrients with every irrigation, herbicides have been applied so there isn't any tedious weeding and so much "other stuff" has been applied that there isn't any life left in the soil. This sounds more like man-made science than growing. To borrow a phrase, commercial fields are like a bare, sterile moonscape. All life is gone. Why am I going on about this? It is because I need you to partly understand why things are not perfect and why you will find "living creatures" in our products. Our fields are living environments full of activity. A living precious dance with nature is going on beneath our feet and out in the fields, all working together, and we have chosen to try to stay out of the way as much as possible and let it happen.

I told you I was chatty...but I think it would

be good for you to know the good side and some of the difficult sides of farming. Farmers work with so many obstacles that are totally out of their hands and control. Everyone is short of water this year. When you are complaining of the bad weather in the winter, farmers are appreciating it. Every inch of snow that falls, we look at it as water going into the watershed.

**WATER IS PRECIOUS!** Our politicians want it, developers want it, far away cities want it, special interest groups want it, and the farmers NEED it. Because we are short of water, Fallon's water will be cut off the middle of August. This means no 4th and 5th crop of hay, and to bring it to a level you can understand, no sweet corn to eat. Rick will be able to plant and harvest corn up to that date. But after that there will be NO water to finish growing it out. His melons will be okay. Some farmers may lose their field corn and the Teff growers may get a short crop. I just want you to understand the importance of water (snow) if we are going to produce local food. We live in a desert, and this is a big disadvantage. We need to use our precious water wisely. Farmers over the years have become more and more efficient with their irrigation systems to not waste water. So please be thankful next winter if we receive any snow. We depend on it!

All of this weeding this week left me too much time to think. Thanks for hearing me out. Have a good week!

## Recipes

### Radish Sautéed with Green Garlic

Radishes, 1 1/2tbl. butter  
1 1/2 tbl. chopped green garlic

Sauté coarsely sliced radishes in butter over medium heat for about 2 minutes. Then add chopped green garlic. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Makes a great side dish.

### Horseradish Mustard Oil and Vinegar Dressing

1c. red wine vinegar, 1c. olive oil  
1 tbl. horseradish mustard, 5 tbl. tahini  
1 tbl. honey, 1 pinch salt and pepper

Mix all ingredients together and add to salad at the last minute.

### Spanish Greens

2 tbl. olive oil, salt and pepper to taste  
3 cloves of garlic, smashed  
1/4c. golden raisins (optional)  
1 lb. greens (chard, spinach)  
3 tbl. toasted pine nuts

Heat oil in large skillet. Add garlic and stir fry until golden, about 30 seconds. Discard garlic. Toss in greens. Season with salt and pepper. Cover and let greens wilt for 2-3 minutes. Add raisins and pine nuts. Season and serve.

### Simple Cream Cheese

2 quarts cream or half-and-half at room temp.

1 packet direct-set-mesophilic starter or 4 ounces prepared mesophilic starter  
cheese salt

Add the starter to the cream, and mix thoroughly. Cover and let sit for 12 hours; a solid curd will form.

Pour the curd into a colander line with cheesecloth. Tie the cheesecloth into a bag, and hang from a hook until the bag stops dripping, about 12 hours. Changing the bag once or twice can speed up the process.

Place cheese in a bowl and mix in the desired amount of salt. You can leave the cheese in this container, or pack it into molds of any size. You can also add any desired herbs and spices at this stage. Your cream cheese will store in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks. Yields about 1 pound.

Note: Salt enhances flavor. You don't have to use cheese salt, just don't use iodized salt. DO NOT use ultra-pasteurized milk.

A cooking thermometer would be good to have before you begin. Cheesecloth can be purchased at the grocery store. Supplies can be found at: [www.cheesemaking.com](http://www.cheesemaking.com) Also check out the other web sites I have

included in the newsletter. They are helpful and interesting. This isn't for all of you, but for those of you that are willing to try it, and can catch a fragment of time to get it finished....good luck!

### 30 minute Mozzarella

1 gallon milk

1 1/2 tsp. powdered citric acid (dissolved in 1/4 c. cool water)

1/4 tsp. liquid rennet (diluted in 1/4c. cool water. If using rennet tablet, follow conversion instructions on the package)

1-2 tsp. cheese salt

Slowly heat the milk to 55 degrees in a stainless steel pot. While stirring, slowly add the citric acid solution to the milk and mix thoroughly but gently. Heat the milk to 88 degrees over medium low heat. The milk will begin to thicken like yogurt.

Gently stir in the diluted rennet for 30 seconds. Then don't disturb the milk while you let it heat to between 100 and 105 degrees. In about 5 to 8 minutes, the curds should begin to break up and pull away from the sides of the pot. Turn off the heat.

The curds will look like thick yogurt and become a bit shiny, and the whey will be clear. If the whey is still milky white, wait a few more minutes before turning off the heat. Scoop out the curds with a slotted spoon and put in a bowl. Reserve the whey.

Press the curds gently with your hands, squeezing out as much whey as possible.

Heat the reserved whey to 175 degrees. Shape the curds into several small balls, rolling them between your palms. Put them one at a time, into a ladle, and dip them in the hot whey for several seconds. Then gently fold the cheese over and over (as kneading bread) with a spoon or your hand. (You'll want to don rubber gloves at this point, as the cheese will be extremely hot.) This distributes the heat evenly throughout the cheese, which will not stretch until it is too hot to touch (145 degrees inside the curd).

Repeat this process several times until the curd is smooth and pliable; mix in salt after the second time. When the cheese stretches like taffy, it's done. If the curds break instead of stretch, they are too cool and need to be reheated.

When the cheese is smooth and shiny, roll it into balls and eat while warm. Although best eaten fresh, it can be stored in the refrigerator for a week or so. Yields about 1 pound.

(Yum!!)