



Field Notes

Week of May 28, 2007

Newsletter for the Phillie Bridge Farm Project CSA

A warm spring welcome to Phillie Bridge Farm Project's first CSA distribution of the 2007 season!

The start of the CSA always confirms for us that the season has actually begun, and that all the planning and seeding and tilling and weeding are towards a goal: to provide you with the best, freshest, tastiest produce we can grow!

The season started slowly this year, with cold weather and a wet spring delaying tillage and slowing down growth in the greenhouse. It was as if Old Mother Winter, once she'd finally arrived, couldn't bring herself to leave again – a guest at a party who's overstayed her welcome.

In farming, however, weather is never exactly what you'd like it to be. Now that Old Mother Winter has long since put on her coat and shuffled home, we look up at the sky and wonder where her close cousin, Old Grey Rain Cloud, might be. Our sandy soil awaits a soak. The rye and vetch (cover crops sown in the fall to add nitrogen and organic matter to the soil) have now been mowed and could use some moisture to aid them in breaking down. We are eager to resume tilling and preparing beds for the summer and fall crops we have yet to plant: tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, cucumbers, summer squash.

We are excited to introduce you to this season's terrific group of

interns: Aileah Kvashy, Liz Herman, Nina Budabin McQuown and Kim Burke. Aileah contributes skills and knowledge she gained from various farming positions in Hawaii, Norway and Oregon. Liz also has previous farming experience: she worked last summer on a small-scale organic veggie farm in coastal Maine. Nina and Kim come to PBFPP without prior work in farming, but they bring wonderful qualities to their positions: Nina waxes poetic during harvest and planting, and Kim Burke runs laps around the bunch of us!

– *Gwenaël Engelskirchen*
Co-farmer/project coordinator

Join us in the fields!

Part of the fun of joining a CSA is experiencing a tangible connection to the people and the processes that grow your food. At Phillie Bridge Farm Project, we invite you to get your socks wet with dew at a morning harvest:

- **Tuesdays or Saturdays, 6:30 – 9 AM**

Or join us for any other of a myriad of farming tasks (weeding, transplanting, mulching) on any of these designated volunteer times:

- **Tuesdays, 4 – 6 PM**
- **Thursday, 3 – 5 PM**
- **Saturdays, 9 AM – 12 PM**

We appreciate advance notice (call, send an email or write your name on the sign-up sheets in the Harvest Room), but also welcome drop-ins!

When possible, please remember to bring work gloves, a water bottle, and sunscreen/sun hat. We look forward to working with you!

Four Easy Recipes for First Distribution

Wilted Hothouse Greens

This is the quick version of southern greens. They finish a brighter green, with a little more zip and they still go well with cornbread or rice and beans. For a vegetarian version, omit the bacon, and sauté the onions in 2 tablespoons of oil with some diced red pepper thrown in.

½ bunch mustard greens
1 or 2 strips bacon, diced
1/3 cup onion finely diced
1 tablespoon olive oil
2 tablespoons cider or vinegar
1 teaspoon brown sugar
Few dashes hot sauce
Salt to taste

Rinse greens and remove stems. Gather the leaves and cut into a chiffonade (thin strips about 1/2 inch wide). Heat a cast iron or other heavy skillet on medium high heat and add bacon. Cook until the fat is rendered, turn the heat down to medium and add onions and oil. Continue to cook until the onions are softened, about another three minutes.

Meanwhile, combine the vinegar, sugar and hot sauce in a small bowl, keep stirring until most of the sugar is dissolved. When the onions are

done, turn off the heat and quickly add the greens, giving them a stir until they begin to wilt, about a minute. Transfer to a serving bowl and add the vinegar mixture to taste – a couple of spoonfuls should do it. Add a pinch of salt and you're ready to go – serves four.

Rhubarb Relish

From Joy of Cooking by Rombauer, Becker, Becker.

I haven't tried this recipe yet, but how can you go wrong with orange juice, cardamom and ginger? The JOC says to try it on poultry; I imagine it also goes well with pork. Let me know how it turns out.

2 cups diced rhubarb
 ½ cup sugar
 Grated zest of 1 orange
 1/3 cup fresh orange juice
 ¼ cup chopped shallots or red onion
 ½ teaspoon chopped peeled fresh ginger
 ¼ teaspoon ground cardamom
 1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and chopped

Combine all the ingredients in a medium saucepan and bring to a boil over high heat. Once it is boiling, reduce the heat and simmer until the rhubarb softens, about 12 minutes.

Cream of Asparagus and Ramps

This soup, made with fresh asparagus and ramps (wild leeks) is so sweet, it almost counts as dessert. If you don't know where

the nearest ramps patch is, leeks are a fine substitute.

3 - 4 tablespoons butter
 1 pound asparagus, chopped into 1 inch pieces
 1 medium leek or one bunch ramps, trimmed and chopped (about 1 full cup)
 3 level tablespoons flour
 4 cups chicken or vegetable stock
 ½ cup cream
 Salt and freshly ground pepper

Melt the butter in a medium soup pot on medium high heat. Add the ramps and sauté until softened, about 2 minutes. Add the asparagus and cook for another 5 minutes. Dust on the flour and stir for a minute.

Pour in the stock while stirring and turn the heat to high until it boils, then turn the heat down and simmer for about 20 minutes. Remove from heat and puree in batches or use an immersion blender until smooth. Season with salt to taste.

My favorite presentation is to ladle out the soup into bowls and use about 2 tablespoons (1/8 cup) of cream to make a spiral on the top of the soup. Sprinkle it with some freshly ground pepper. Serves four small bowls.

Roasted Eggplant and Last Year's Tomato Sauce

This is really an excuse to use any tomatoes you jarred up from the harvest last year along with some fresh herbs from the garden, but it

still tastes good with regular canned tomatoes. The lovely smokiness from the eggplant is something you'll want to remember when eggplants come into season here.

1 medium eggplant, cut lengthwise
 1 quart jar (or 28 oz) diced tomatoes diced
 1 medium onion, diced
 3 cloves garlic, minced
 1/3 cup chopped lovage leaves
 1/3 cup chopped fresh oregano
 ½ cup chopped fresh parsley
 4 tablespoons olive oil
 Splash of dry red wine (optional)
 Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat the oven to 450 degrees on broil. Brush the cut side of the eggplant halves with a little olive oil and set cut side down in a shallow baking pan. Broil for about 30 minutes, until soft all the way through, and don't worry if the skin gets a little charred. Set aside to cool.

Meanwhile, sauté the onions with the oil in a medium pot. Once they are soft add the garlic and tomatoes. Cook down for a couple minutes and add the herbs. Scoop out the flesh from the eggplant, roughly chop and add to the mixture. Continue to cook down on simmer for about 15 minutes, adding a little water or wine if the sauce gets too thick. At the very end, add a good amount of pepper and salt.

Serve with a hearty pasta and lots (I mean lots) of grated parmesan.

Bon Appetite! -- Jes Pascual
Co-farmer/project coordinator