



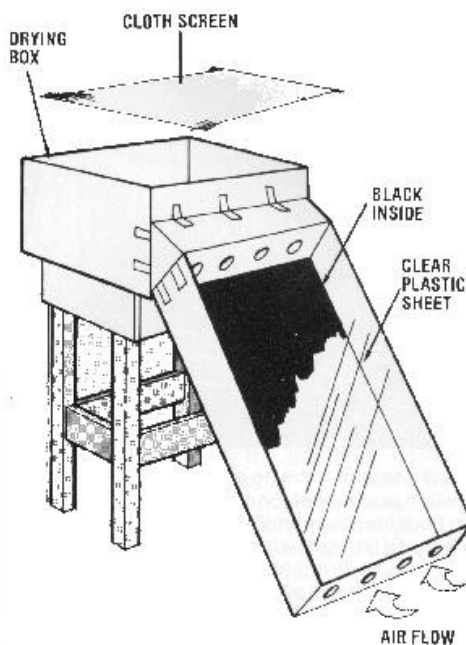
# Field Notes

## SOLAR DEHYDRATION

A few of us here on the farm get together and make granola once a week. It is a delicious, nutritious, affordable breakfast companion to the yogurt we make from our weekly Old Ford Farm milk. I love my granola with some kind of dried fruit, but quality, affordable, local dried fruit is hard to source. When I lived in LA there was no shortage of fruit growing all around free to whomever could harvest it, and the climate lent itself to air drying almost anything. Figs, raspberries, persimmons, papayas, guavas and mango all had cameos in my Los Angeles granola. This coast, with its seasons and humidity is different, but in hopes of still having quality breakfast I have been looking to make a solar dehydrator so that I can dry produce we have around the farm. This week is perfect for such an endeavor, with high temperatures and zero precipitation predicted until at least the end of the week. I have not constructed it yet, but have learned some basic concepts that will aid in the construction.

A solar dehydrator needs to do two things to work effectively. It needs to collect heat and needs to keep air moving over the food that is drying, to move away moisture. A low heat of a minimum of 120° F to a maximum of 185° F is the recommended range of air temperature with which most foods are conventionally dehydrated with success. Different foods have different moisture con-

tents, and therefore different drying times. I am not sure that my dehydrator will get to temperatures that high, but hopefully the temperatures will get at least high enough to inactivate the enzymes that lead to fermentation or spoilage while remaining low enough so that cooking or crusting of the food is avoided, moisture is removed evenly, and mineral/vitamin content is not greatly diminished. The super basic model I think I am going to test out can be constructed of cardboard and either an old window, or simply clear plastic. The difference in air temperature between the drying box and heat collection box will keep air moving over the food, and the collection box can be moved to follow the sun. I've included the plans I am following to make my dehydrator, in case you want to try one too. Maybe I'll even install it down near the harvest room, so that we can all follow its failure or success. These plans are from **Mother's Energy Efficiency Book**, and were posted on JR Whipple's Self Reliance website, [www.jrwhipple.com](http://www.jrwhipple.com).



### In The Harvest Room:

#### LETTUCE

*New Red Fire*

#### CUCUMBERS

*Olympia, Little Leaf, and Tasty Jade*

#### SUMMER SQUASH

*Raven and Success PM*

#### KALE

*Red Russian and Winterbor*

#### CARROTS

*Mokum*

#### ONIONS

*Purplette*

#### BASIL

#### BUSH BEANS

**(U-PICK)**

*Provider*

### *New Vegetables/ Herbs This Week*



45 Phillies Bridge Rd, New Paltz NY 12561  
(845) 256-9108 [www.philliesbridge.org](http://www.philliesbridge.org)



**Basil:** Let the basil begin! We have chosen to harvest your basil for the weeks as full plants to allow you to enjoy a continued harvest, if you choose. These plants were harvested this morning. You can put your basil plant(s) in a jar of water (roots submerged) upon arriving home, and the leaves should stay good longer—enjoy a harvest of leaves for a week or two. You can plop that plant in the ground, give it some water (especially with this weather!), and harvest leaves off of it as long as it produces—many weeks! Or you can go the way of the pesto, chop those roots off, and make a big batch of everyone's favorite pasta topping. We will not be harvesting basil again for another month, most likely, so make this batch count!

**Carrots:** We had quite a difficult time getting our carrot sowings to germinate this spring, so you are about to eat the fruits of our second (and more successful) sowing. Still in a young stage, these carrots are sweet and tender. Great raw, amazing roasted.

**Bush Beans:** We have transitioned from Snap Peas to Bush Beans—also known as your familiar “green bean.” First picks (which this week is) are always the most tender and delicious. Save the later picks for dilly beans—the recommended consumption method for this first pick is raw or lightly teamed or sautéed.



### *Baked Cucumbers (or Summer Squash) in Basil Cream*

*The original recipe can be found in the [Farmer John's Cookbook](#), a wonderful seasonal cookbook that is conveniently organized by vegetable. An exciting new way to experience cucumbers, or sneak in your squash.*

#### Ingredients

1 1/2 TBSP red wine vinegar  
1 tsp salt  
1/4 tsp sugar  
4-5 cucumbers, peeled, halved lengthwise, seeds removed, cut into 1-inch slices  
2 TBSP unsalted butter, melted  
1 scallion (or purple onion), finely chopped  
1 cup heavy cream  
3 TBSP chopped fresh basil leaves  
Salt  
Freshly ground pepper

#### Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 375° F.
2. Mix the vinegar, salt, and sugar in a medium glass bowl. Add the cucumber slices and toss to combine. Set aside to marinate for 30 minutes.
3. Drain the cucumber slices in a shallow baking dish. Pour the melted butter over them and add the scallion; toss to combine. Bake the cucumbers, stirring occasionally, until tender, about 45 minutes.
4. Meanwhile, heat the cream in a small pot until it comes to a light boil. Continue to cook the cream, stirring frequently, until it is reduced to 1/2 cup, about 20 minutes. Stir in the basil and turn off the heat; let mixture steep for 2 minutes.
5. Pour the basil cream sauce over the cooked cucumber slices. Season with salt and pepper to taste.



### *Basil Pesto*

#### Ingredients

2 cups packed fresh basil leaves  
2 cloves garlic  
1/4 cup pine nuts  
2/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil, divided  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste  
1/2 cup freshly grated Pecorino cheese (see Cook's Note)

#### Directions

1. Combine the basil, garlic, and pine nuts in a food processor and pulse until coarsely chopped. Add 1/2 cup of the oil and process until fully incorporated and smooth. Season with salt and pepper.
2. If using immediately, add all the remaining oil and pulse until smooth. Transfer the pesto to a large serving bowl and mix in the cheese.
3. If freezing, transfer to an air-tight container and drizzle remaining oil over the top. Freeze for up to 3 months. Thaw and stir in cheese.