



July 10, 2013 —

Farmer Smarts

I'm in the middle of reading a book called The Dirty Life, a highly entertaining story about a young couple starting a farm on the east coast. Throughout the story the woman, Kristin, chronicles her startling journey from city girl to farmer, and her process of gaining a whole new kind of intelligence along the way.

During their first winter on the farm, Kristin tells about tackling the seemingly simple task of moving pigs from one barn to another. She has little idea how to herd pigs, and ultimately decides the most direct route required cutting a hole in the barn wall instead of channeling the pigs all the way to the barn door. A visiting neighbor caught her at the task, and pointed out that she was using a hack-saw to cut through her barn when she should be using a wood saw. The whole episode gave her pause.

"I was coming up against a cold, hard truth," she writes. "I was well-educated, well-read, and well-traveled. I could hold my own in cocktail conversations most places in the world. But when it came to physical work, I was virtually [dim]."

Her feelings as a first generation farmer aren't unique — it is deeply humbling to approach starting a business where you to-do list contains

items like *lean to build a shed, figure out irrigation pumps, research soil chemistry, and learn to fix small engines*. With no background to lean on, these feel like monumental tasks. Though many of us beginning farmers come at it with determination, a love for growing things and commitment to making the world a better place, it quickly becomes apparent that ideals get you so far and farm smarts take you the rest of the way.

Kristin finishes her story with the reflection, "As I patched the barn with scrap lumber, pig-tight but ugly, I was forced to confront my own prejudice. I had come to the farm with the unarticulated belief that concrete things were for dumb people and abstract things were for smart people. I thought the physical world—the trades—was the place you ended up if you weren't bright or ambitious enough to handle a white collar job. Did I really think that a person with a genius for fixing engines, or for building, or for husbanding cows, was less brilliant than a person who writes ad copy or interprets the law? Apparently I did, though it amazes me now."

I started working young and didn't develop such negative views of blue collar job skills. However, I also never had a good idea of how much there is to them, and how fascinating each skill set is. As I slowly build my arsenal of farm skills I have gained a deep admiration for the people who understand the mechanics of things. I want to be like them. I want to know how to put together every piece of a farm and fix it when it breaks. I LOVE all of the teachers I've gained, the ones who see my inexperience but don't let it stop them from sharing what they know.

The beauty is that it's possible to learn a task, and another, and another, until eventually the way the world is put together starts to make some sense.

- by Elizabeth Powell, Grassfed Gardens

Full Share:

- Blueberries
- Romaine
- Spinach
- Rosemary
- Kale
- Summer Squash
- Broccoli
- Snap Peas
- Onions
- Parsley
- Sunflower Sprouts

Half Share:

- Blueberries
- Romaine
- Kohlrabi
- Snap Peas
- Onions
- Radishes

What Grows Where:

DAWN GARDENS

summer squash, parsley, kale, broccoli

GRASSFED GARDENS

sunflower sprouts, kohlrabi, snap peas

SIERRA VALLEY FARMS

romaine, radishes, spinach

GREEN CEDAR FARM

blueberries, rosemary

HARMONY ACRES

snap peas

THE STUMP FARM

onions

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Bread Share Flavor:

Southwestern Corny Cheese

Pasta Share Flavor:

Garlic and Parsley

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Homemade Herb Salt

Herb salts are an easy way to add flavor and fragrance to any dish. Use them while cooking or at the table as a finishing salt. Some chefs say that hearty, resinous herbs like sage, oregano, rosemary and thyme work best, but we've found recipes calling for more delicate herbs like parsley too, which can be used fresh or dried.

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup coarse sea salt
- 1/2 to 1 cup fresh herbs (depending on how strong you want it to be)
- 1 cup sea salt

DIRECTIONS

Wash herbs and dry them well on a towel. Place 1/2 cup coarse sea salt and herbs in the bowl of a food processor. Pulse, grinding until herbs have a fine consistency. Add the remaining cup of sea salt and pulse lightly just to combine. (If you don't own a food processor you can also chop everything together by hand.) The mixture should be coarse, not powdery. Pour into a shallow baking dish and let air dry for 24 hours. Transfer salt to sealed glass jars, or for gifts pack into bags and tie with a ribbon. Use the herb salt on French fries, popcorn, meats or veggie dishes!



Modified from AllRecipes.com and SplendidTable.com

CROP Updates

Onions — We know you'll be happy to see the return of bulb onions from The Stump Farm this year. Abby Edwards is a local teen and Plumas County's star onion grower. She loves growing food, though she doesn't think she wants to be a farmer as a career (we're still

holding out hope, though!). If you see her Abby's Produce booth at the Quincy Farmers' Market tell her how beautiful those onions are!

Kohlrabi — Half shares are getting some strapping kohlrabi bunches this week. This variety of kohlrabi have purple stems (except for one or two green ones...), which swell to form a bulb that can be eaten raw or cooked. Don't forget to use the leaves too, they're much like kale!



KOHLRABI QUIZ

FROM THE NY TIMES WELL BLOG

Before you start cooking with it, take this quick quiz to test your kohlrabi smarts.

- Where does the name kohlrabi come from, and what does it mean?
 - An African word meaning "ugly root."
 - A Middle Eastern word meaning "little cabbage."
 - A German word meaning "cabbage turnip."
- In his book "The 150 Healthiest Foods on Earth," the nutritionist Jonny Bowden describes kohlrabi as:
 - The ugliest vegetable you've ever loved.
 - What happens when broccoli & cabbage get married.
 - A cross between an octopus and a space capsule.
- In her latest Recipes for Health, Martha Rose Shulman suggests making what with kohlrabi?
 - Pie.
 - Home fries.
 - Both of the above.

If you answered "C" to every question, then you know your kohlrabi! Ms. Shulman has this advice for cooking with kohlrabi.

Inside its thick skin lies a crisp, juicy vegetable that I like equally raw or cooked. It's a member of the brassica family, those nutrient-dense cabbages (as well as kales, brussels sprouts, broccoli and cauliflower) whose phytochemicals are highly regarded for their antioxidant properties.

If you can get kohlrabi with the greens attached, cook them as you would turnip greens or kale. The greens are never quite as copious as the greens on a bunch of turnips, but they make a nice addition to most kohlrabi dishes. It's important when you cook with kohlrabi to peel it thoroughly. Beneath the thick, hard skin is another fibrous layer, which should also be peeled away. The fibers will not soften when cooked, and they can get stuck in your throat. So peel once, then peel again until you reach the light layer of crisp flesh.

Source: well.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/03/09/discovering-kohlrabi-its-a-vegetable/