



August 14, 2013 —

**Book Review:  
Why I Farm**

While we know that farmers have to be adept at a diversity of tasks, Gary Romano has raised the bar by becoming a published author. His first book, Why I Farm; Risking It All for a Life on the Land, allows eaters a deeper view into the story of Sierra Valley Farms.

Gary paints a fascinating picture of his childhood on the family flower farm in the bay area. There were no summer vacations, sports tournaments or weekends off for this family; they worked. Even the children. Gary and his twin brother Larry got up 3 days a week at 2:15am to sell at the San Francisco flower market. Summer was full of 12 hour work days weeding, irrigating and harvesting, and Christmas gifts were work-related items like pruners, gloves and hoes. They worked for each other—la familia—and for a love of farming.

It was a hard youth. Gary and his brother knew that other kids had easier lives and they were both eager to get away from farming as young adults. But years later, when Gary's aunt and uncle offered to sell him the last remaining family ranchland in Sierra Valley, it was the memories of his childhood that moved him to become

a farmer once again.

Now, twenty plus years later, Sierra Valley Farms has grown into a highly diversified organic farm operating against the odds. For beginning farmers Gary's story is equally inspiring and sobering.

Sierra Valley Farms is a model for agriculture in the high sierras. They've done everything right - innovative marketing, season extension, agritourism, killer PR and organic growing methods. Romano has built one of the most successful farms in our region (he has somewhat of a farmer rock star status in the Reno-Tahoe area!).

In the end though, Gary makes it clear that maintaining the small family farm is a struggle. He doesn't pull his punches in this respect. He says that farm families aren't in it together like they used to be, that the government does a horrible job of supporting small farmers, and that eaters need to do a better job of really eating local (like you HAH members do!). He's not just complaining, he's calling for action, for change in our food system on a national level.

For Gary farming is a challenging lifestyle choice, but one where the rewards outweigh the hard times, one that he believes in and is willing to give his life to. In a way he has surrendered to his own nature, to the roots of his Italian farm family and his destiny to grow good food on the land.

We don't know when and if all of the food system change Gary calls for is



Romano leading a recent farm tour

going to happen, but we do know that we're committed to working towards positive change right there along with him. Long live the small farmer!

*Full Share:*

- Summer Squash
- Green Peppers
- Garlic
- Spring Mix
- Carrots
- Slicer Tomatoes
- Green Onions
- Turnips
- Mesclun Mix
- Sunflower Sprouts

*Half Share:*

- Cherry Tomatoes
- Basil
- Summer Squash
- Cucumbers, Lemon & Green
- Kale
- Blackberries

*What Grows Where:*

**DAWN GARDENS**

summer squash, kale, basil, cherry tomatoes, blackberries, garlic, slicer tomatoes, peppers

**GRASSFED GARDENS**

sunflower sprouts, turnips, summer squash, mesclun mix

**SIERRA VALLEY FARMS**

spring mix, carrots

**GREENVILLE HIGH SCHOOL**

cucumbers

**THE STUMP FARM**

green onions

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*Bread Share Flavor:*

Potato, Sage & Asiago Cheese

*Pasta Share Flavor:*

Fresh Basil Pappardelle

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# Chicken and Kale Casserole

Here's something different to do with your kale this week. We'll put a link to the video version of this recipe on our facebook page if you'd like to see it in action. As is usually the case with casseroles, this recipe is pretty much synonymous with "cheesy goodness."

## INGREDIENTS

Coarse salt and ground pepper  
3/4 pound large pasta shells  
2 tablespoons unsalted butter  
1 large yellow onion, diced medium  
3 garlic cloves, minced  
2 bunches kale (1 1/2 pounds), tough stems and ribs removed, leaves coarsely chopped  
2 cups shredded or chopped cooked chicken (from 1/2 rotisserie chicken)  
1 container (48 ounces) part-skim ricotta  
3 tablespoons finely grated lemon zest (from 2 lemons)  
3/4 cup Parmesan, grated (2 1/4 ounces)



## DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a large pot of boiling salted water, cook pasta according to package instructions. Drain; return to pot. In a large skillet, melt butter over medium-high. Add onion and garlic; cook until onion is beginning to soften, 4 minutes. Add kale, cover, and cook until almost tender, about 5 minutes. Transfer to pot with pasta. Stir in chicken, ricotta, lemon zest, and 1/2 cup Parmesan; season with salt and pepper. Transfer mixture to a 9-by-13-inch baking dish; top with 1/4 cup Parmesan. Bake until top is golden, 30 minutes.

Source: [www.marthastewart.com](http://www.marthastewart.com)

## CROP Updates

**Cucumbers** — We have the season's first cucumbers coming from teacher Dan Brown at the Greenville High School Garden this year. Dan is tackling the first couple of harvests solo, but as soon as school is back in session he'll have his students out there picking each week. His crops are grown in beautiful cedar raised beds that were built with his classes over the past few years.

**Tomatoes and Peppers** — Two more firsts for the season this week—slicer tomatoes and peppers from the Dawn! Keep 'em coming Farmer Manuel!

**Mesclun Mix** — Grassfed Gardens is providing the mesclun mix in this week's share, a mixture of mustard greens that includes Red Russian kale, Mizuna, Tat Soi, Spring Raab, Pac Choi and more. It can be used as a salad green, or as a cooking green by wilting very lightly.

**Blackberries** — We're thrilled to have blackberries this week too, which grow at the Dawn in big bramble hedges that skirt the perimeter of the main garden. Interns pick the berries one at a time, left hand gloved to maneuver the canes, right hand reaching for the ripe berries. Sometimes they loose an intern or two into the brambles, but that's the price you pay for good wild fruit. (Kidding...)

## TURNIP FRIES

This is a simple way to make your turnips oh-so-snackable. Turnip fries are approved by the low-carb folks too, if you're into that kind of thing.

### Ingredients

3 or 4 turnips, cut into fries  
2 Tablespoons olive oil  
Spices (see suggestions below)  
Parmesan (optional)

### Directions

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. On a rimmed baking sheet, combine turnips, spices and oil. Season with salt and pepper and toss well to coat. Sprinkle with Parmesan and toss gently to combine. Arrange turnips in a single layer and roast until golden on both sides, 25 to 30 minutes, flipping halfway through.

### Spice Combos

1/8 tsp cayenne, salt, pepper  
2 pinches nutmeg, salt, pepper  
1 tsp each garlic salt, paprika, onion powder  
1 tsp chili powder, salt

Source: adapted from [marthastewart.com](http://marthastewart.com)

**Wash It!** All of our produce is fresh off the farm. Please wash before using.