



August 21, 2013 —

**We Need New Farmers!**

Have you heard that farmers are becoming an old and decrepit population? At least that's what the numbers suggest — the average age of the US farmer is just over 57 years, and the fastest growing population of farmers are those 65 and older. Only 23% of all farmers are under the age of 45!

Don't get us wrong, we have nothing against crusty old farmers—those of us in our 30's hope to have the wisdom and stamina to still be growing 35 years from now. (And yes, we know that 65 isn't *that* old.) But the demographics show that there aren't many young farmers getting into the business, and that's the troublesome part. If we plan on eating in the future we kind of need people to keep growing food.

In Plumas County the Sierra Intensive Farmer Training program—aka SIFT—is working to increase our population of farmers. This program gets new farmers up and running by guiding them through the process of farm development, from business planning to site selection, marketing, production and everything in between.

The SIFT program was started with USDA funding by the non-profit Plumas Rural Services and will continue through the summer of 2014.

A total of 6 trainees will go through the 10-month program, 3 per year. The first batch of SIFT trainees are nearing graduation and the next group will start up in January of 2014.

You might think that training new farmers would create too much competition within a small community, but we would argue the opposite; more farmers creates opportunity for cooperation. By building a more diverse and close knit group of farmers, everyone's chances of success are increased. A community of farmers can support each other by having work parties, swapping tools, marketing cooperatively, sharing knowledge and - maybe most importantly - providing moral support.

HAH is a great example of cooperation trumping competition. By pooling together produce from many growers we're able to reach more members, specialize in what we're good at growing, and share the cost of coordination and distribution. If each of us farmers were running our own CSA's we'd be pulling our hair out trying to grow 40 different crops each, and when something failed there wouldn't be other farmers to fill in the gaps.

It's a beautiful system, and we think this spirit of cooperation can be replicated to other parts of the local food scene. It's just up to innovative new farmers to roll up their sleeves and tackle the challenge!

You can request more information about the SIFT program by e-mailing [food@plumasruralservices.org](mailto:food@plumasruralservices.org) or calling 530-283-3611 ext \*839.



SIFT trainees getting some welding skills

*Full Share:*

- Apples
- Spring Mix
- Summer Squash
- Cherry Tomatoes
- Basil
- Carrots
- Mesclun Mix
- Cucumbers
- Blackberries
- Sunflower Sprouts

*Half Share:*

- Summer Squash
- Peaches
- European Spring Mix
- Slicer Tomatoes
- Green Peppers

*What Grows Where:*

**DAWN GARDENS**

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

**GRASSFED GARDENS**

sunflower sprouts, carrots, summer squash, mesclun mix

**SIERRA VALLEY FARMS**

spring mix, euro spring mix

**GREENVILLE HIGH SCHOOL**

cucumbers

**GREEN CEDAR FARM**

peaches, apples

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*Bread Share Flavor*

Sun-dried Tomato,  
Kalamata Olive & Asiago

*Pasta Share Flavor*

Sun-dried Tomato Linguine

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## Spiced Sweet Potato and Carrot Puree

"It's not rocket science, nor is it the latest in modernist cuisine. It's just one of those dishes that's almost perfect because of its simplicity."

### INGREDIENTS

4 large garnet sweet potatoes, peeled & chopped into 1" cubes  
8 large carrots, peeled & chopped into 1" cubes  
2 T olive oil  
Pinch of salt & pepper  
1½ c nonfat milk  
2 T butter  
½ t freshly ground nutmeg  
¼ t ground allspice  
¼ t ground ginger  
3-4 anise pods



### DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 400°. In a large bowl, toss the sweet potatoes and carrots together with the olive oil and a large pinch of salt & pepper. Place in a single layer on a cookie sheet lined with foil and roast for about 20-25 minutes, until tender.
2. In a large pot, combine the milk & spices and bring to a simmer. Add the butter and whisk together until melted. Simmer over low heat for 3-4 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from heat and remove the anise pods from the milk.
3. Add the sweet potatoes & carrots to the spiced milk. Working in small batches, puree in a blender until almost smooth (a little texture is fun for both visual and mouth appeal). Garnish with extra star anise if you have it, serve as a side with meats or as part of a vegetarian meal, and enjoy!

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

## CROP Updates

**Mesclun Mix** — It got bigger this week! The mesclun mix at Grassfed Gardens grew to bunching size, which can still be used for salads or lightly cooked.

**Carrots** — Funny thing, ever since Grassfed Gardens started considering changing their name to Five Foot Farm (putting the SMALL back in farming!) they've ended up growing some monster produce. First a 2.625 lb kohlrabi, then turnips the size of a baby's head, and now carrots as thick as your forearm. No, thankfully they're not quite that big, but they are hearty. Don't let their size fool you though, these carrots are tasty and crisp despite their girth.

**Carmen Green Peppers** — The long green peppers from the Dawn Gardens are Carmens, which is an abundant producer that does great in the mountains. No need to worry about heat — they're a mild green pepper. If they're left on the plant longer they'll turn red and sweeter, so you might see a red blush on some here and there. Later in the season we expect to get green bells and jalapenos from the Greenville High School garden as well.

**WE LOVE IT WHEN YOU RETURN YOUR  
LITTLE BASKETS. THANK YOU!**

## SUMMER SQUASH CHIPS

### WITH BASIL AND BALSAMIC DRIZZLE

Have you ever tried roasting your summer squash in the oven? The author of this recipe says, "Roasting makes the squash slightly crispy, dense, and intensely squash flavored." We love that—Intensely Squash Flavored. Bring it on, zucchini!

### Ingredients

2 medium squash, thinly sliced (on a mandolin or by hand)  
olive oil  
coarse sea salt  
balsamic vinegar  
a handful of basil, torn

### Directions

Arrange the thinly sliced squash on a baking sheet. Season with salt, drizzle with olive oil, and toss together so all the pieces are evenly coated. Spread as evenly as possible (there will be some overlap) and place in the oven.

Bake until golden brown and crispy, about 20 to 30 minutes.

Arrange on a plate and season with coarse salt. Using your thumb over the bottle top, drizzle a little balsamic over the chips, and garnish with some torn fresh basil.

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