



September 12, 2012 —

I am writing this week with my “Farmer” hat on, instead of my usual Wednesday “CSA Coordinator” hat.

The love of growing plants—veggies in particular—has been working its way into my bones since I was young teenager. My great-grandmother Dorothy kept me busy with acres of flower beds, which lead to working in a plant nursery. When I landed in Quincy I worked for the Dawn Gardens and Sierra Valley Farms, which sealed my fate. I wanted to be a FARMER!

Now, after years of s-l-o-w-l-y building a market farm business (Grassfed Gardens), my friend Cody Reed and I are on the verge of expanding onto a 2 acre farm site in Quincy. We are hashing and re-hashing farm plans, pricing out start-up and operation costs (fencing, soil amendments, irrigation, etc.), and projecting just how much produce we could sell here in Plumas County.

On the brink of my long-time dream launching into fruition, the mixture of exhilaration and foreboding leaves an interesting taste in my mouth. The truth is, I’ve come to believe that creating a financially viable farm is akin to working miracles. Small farmers today are operating in a food system dominated by corporate

agriculture, which is fueled by cut-rate labor and chemical inputs, and spits out artificially cheap food. Sure, local food demands a premium price, but it often still doesn’t cover major capital expenses (how many beets do you have to sell to pay for a \$10K used tractor?), or the farmers’ actual time.

I’m not writing about this because I want to have a pity party. I just want to make sure we’re not painting a picture of local agriculture that’s more rosy than realistic. Yes, we have a growing local food movement full of passionate people (which is wonderful!). But the truth is that very few people are actually making a living farming in our community. Most of our CSA growers are beginning farmers who also have day jobs. Sierra Valley Farms is the only one of our farms actually making a living from farm income (good job Gary!).

And here Cody and I are, ridiculously excited to break ground on a new farm site. I think our drive stems from a combination of persistent idealism, a genetic predisposition to work in the dirt, and being suckers for a challenge. We just can’t let go of the idea that it should be possible for farmers to grow good food and be fairly compensated for their work.

I want to be clear that the **only** reason we are able to consider this farm site expansion is because of the solid market that High Altitude Harvest provides. It is a larger outlet for produce than all of our projected local grocery, restaurant and farmers’ market sales combined. Though what we expect to net over the first 4 years is still meager, it makes a world of difference to have a strong base of CSA members on which to base a business.

The deal isn’t sealed, but we hope to break ground this fall if all goes well. In all honesty, I think smart people would walk away now, choose a more lucrative career with fewer 15-hour days. But hey, we never said we were smart! Anyone have a good name idea for our new farm? - Elizabeth Powell

Full Share:

- Peaches
- Green Peppers
- Corn
- Pie Pumpkin
- Slicer Tomatoes
- Pears
- Spring Mix
- Carrots
- Summer Squash
- Lemon Cucumber
- Mizuna

Half Share:

- Cherry Tomatoes
- Grapes
- Snap Beans or Mesclun Mix
- Carrots
- Green Peppers
- Jalapeno Peppers

What Grows Where:

DAWN GARDENS

summer squash, cherry tomatoes, green peppers, slicer tomatoes, pumpkins, pears

GRASSFED GARDENS

beans, mizuna, mesclun mix

SIERRA VALLEY FARMS

spring mix, carrots

HANSEN FARM

carrots

GREEN CEDAR FARM

grapes, peaches

E SHEEP FARMS

corn

GREENVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

green bell peppers, jalapenos, cucumbers

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Bread Share Flavor:

Cheese & Onion

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Polenta Pizza

Use those beautiful green peppers as a topper for this unique pizza, and throw some tomatoes and garlic on there while you're at it! If you're not familiar with making polenta from scratch, it's really easy and affordable. Visit the HAH Facebook page for a link to a basic polenta recipe.

INGREDIENTS

1 tablespoon olive oil	1/4 cup sliced fresh mushrooms, or more to taste
1 Spanish onion, thinly sliced	1 slice prepared polenta, cut into 4x4-inch piece
1 green bell pepper, thinly sliced	1/4 cup spaghetti sauce, or as needed
1 link hot Italian sausage, sliced	1 ounce shredded mozzarella cheese

DIRECTIONS

Heat olive oil on a griddle or large skillet over medium heat; cook and stir onion, green bell pepper, sausage, and mushrooms until sausage is fully cooked and onions are lightly browned, 10 to 15 minutes. Remove from griddle. Place polenta on the same hot griddle; cook until warmed through, about 5 minutes per side. Layer polenta with vegetable-sausage mixture, spaghetti sauce, and mozzarella cheese. Cook on griddle until cheese is melted, 5 to 10 minutes.

Source: by Mary-Anne at www.allrecipes.com

CROP Updates

Full Shares this week is Mizuna, which is Japanese for "water greens." It is a very mild mustard green, without the typical spicy bite of most greens in this family. It has been cultivated in Japan since ancient times, but has just recently taken off in the United States over the past decade or so. Mizuna is great chopped in salad, or try your hand at a beautiful sauté like the one below.

Mizuna — The bunch of fringed green leaves in the

Pears — Coming from the Dawn Gardens now, these pears are the type that ripen after a few days sitting on the kitchen counter. Watch them closely, the flavor will be amazing if you can wait for it.

Pie Pumpkin — These early pie pumpkins are also from the Dawn Garden. Pumpkin is great in soups, baked goods, and stuffed. Prepare basic cooked pumpkin by cutting it in half, taking out the seeds, and cutting the skin off with a sharp knife. Steam until soft, and you'll be ready to make pie. No canned pumpkin required!

WOK SAUTÉED MIZUNA & Portobello Mushrooms w/ Minced Chicken

"Great low fat dish full of veggies! We serve this over brown rice."

Prep Time: 30 min + marinating time **Cook Time:** 15 min

Ingredients

1 large egg white, lightly beaten	1/2 cup finely chopped summer squash
3 Tablespoons soy sauce, divided	1 cup sliced Portobello mushrooms
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped	1 teaspoon chili garlic sauce
2 teaspoons canola or peanut oil	1 Tablespoon freshly squeezed lime juice
1/3 cup finely chopped carrot	1/2 pound mizuna, trimmed
1/3 cup finely chopped yellow onion	1/4 cup unsalted peanuts
1/2 cup chopped water chestnuts	1/4 cup finely chopped green onions
1 lb boneless, skinless chicken breast, finely chopped	

Directions

1. In a medium bowl, mix egg white with 1 Tablespoon of the soy sauce, garlic and chicken. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour.
2. Heat 1 teaspoon of the oil in a wok or large skillet over high heat. Add chicken mixture and cook, stirring constantly, 4 to 6 minutes, or until chicken is cooked through and appears opaque. Remove chicken from the pan and transfer to a plate; set aside. Heat remaining 1 teaspoon of oil in the pan. Add carrots, onions, water chestnuts, squash and mushrooms, and cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute. Add remaining soy sauce, chili garlic sauce, lime juice and mizuna and cook, stirring often, until slightly wilted. Return chicken to pan and toss well. Garnish with peanuts & green onions and serve, either alone or on top of brown rice.

Source: www.recipegirl.com

