



HIGH ALTITUDE HARVEST

Community Supported Agriculture

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Farming in the Black

by Elizabeth Powell of Five Foot Farm

I was taking with a friend recently about the financial challenges of starting a farm and the uncertainty we have about how to make any reasonable profit. She asked, "You must have a plan for getting into the black right?"

Heh. Well, kind of.

The thing about starting a new farm site is the huge number of unknowns. We spent *tons* of time on financial plans, forecasting expenses and sales projections. We are bona fide spreadsheet junkies and are trying hard to put as much energy into the business as we do the physical farm.

But the thing is, there are layers upon layers of variables that can't be accounted for before breaking ground. For example, we included mustard greens like bok choy and mibuna in our sales projections, only to learn this spring that our site is pretty awful for these crops because of heavy flea beetle pressure, something we've never dealt with in 7 prior years of farming.

The list of uncertainties goes on. We've found that *accurately* projecting the costs of new irrigation systems, deer fencing, hoop houses and equipment repairs to be a minor miracle, especially as relatively inexperienced, first generation farmers.

Labor, though, is by far our biggest question mark. Right now we're a crew of two, so everything we do has to fit into our schedules, including other (paying) jobs. So if we want to add berries next year we have to figure out how much extra harvest time they'll

take, how much they will yield, and whether or not we charge enough to make them worth it. In theory we should be able to develop budgets for each crop including labor costs (our time), but it's often not possible to get accurate numbers until you've grown a crop for 2 or 3 years and have the production bugs worked out.

I know that all small business start-ups experience a ton of risk. But I'd be willing to bet there are more farmers than any other profession who are willing to operate in the red year after year, because they love what they do so much. There can also be a weird kind of martyr pride among some farmers, like you're not really farming unless you're making \$2 an hour.

We don't buy the idea that farming has to be a volunteer career, and yet we haven't found our farm's path to profitability yet. We're only in our first year, after all. We hope that by sharing the challenges of running a farm we can help eaters understand the true cost of growing food, because we want to make a living at this and keep our hands in the soil for a long, long time.

HAH is by far our best market. Thanks for being awesome eaters and true supporters of local farms. Together we aim to make farming sustainable on all fronts—ecologically, socially *and* financially!



Sunflowers and honey bees at Five Foot Farm

Full Share

- French Sugar Plums
- Slicer Tomatoes
- Cherry Tomatoes
- Swiss Chard
- Fingerling Potatoes
- Summer Squash
- Spring Mix
- Peppers, Carmen & Bell
- Jalapeno Peppers

Half Share

- French Sugar Plums
- Green Onions
- Summer Squash
- Arugula
- Cucumbers, Lemon & Green
- Basil

What Grows Where

DAWN GARDENS

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

FIVE FOOT FARM

summer squash, green onions, swiss chard

GREENVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

lemon and green cucumbers, green peppers, jalapenos

SIERRA VALLEY FARMS

arugula, spring mix

BLOOMSTONE FARM

fingerling potatoes

GREEN CEDAR FARM

french sugar plums

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Bread Share Flavor

apple and cheddar

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Zucchini Muffins with whole wheat flour and honey

Okay, we know what you're thinking— isn't this a little late in the season for zucchini muffins? Well, that's our point exactly—this may be one of your last chances to make delicious, moist zucchini muffins this season! Better jump on it, folks! This is a recipe we've had really good luck with this year. We especially like that it uses whole wheat flour.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup whole-wheat flour	1/2 cup milk
2/3 cup all-purpose flour	2 tablespoons canola oil
1/2 cup sugar	2 tablespoons honey
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon	1 large egg
1 1/4 teaspoons baking powder	Cooking spray
1/2 teaspoon baking soda	1 tablespoon sugar
1/4 teaspoon salt	1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 1/3 cups shredded zucchini	

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 400°. Lightly spoon flours into dry measuring cups; level with a knife. Combine whole-wheat flour and next 6 ingredients (through salt) in a large bowl; stir with a whisk. Combine zucchini, milk, oil, honey, and egg in a small bowl; stir until blended. Make a well in center of flour mixture; add milk mixture, stirring just until moist. Spoon batter into 12 muffin cups coated with cooking spray. Combine 1 tablespoon sugar and 1/4 teaspoon cinnamon; sprinkle over tops of muffins. Bake at 400° for 15 minutes or until golden. Remove from pans immediately; cool on a wire rack.

Source: Kathie's Zucchini Muffins at myrecipes.com

Crop Updates

French Sugar Plums: This is the second week in a row that we are blessed with French Sugar Plums from Green Cedar Farm. These plums are sweet, not tart, and are juicy but not eat-over-the-sink dripping with juice.

These sugar plums aren't to be confused with those referenced in *The Night Before Christmas*. Turns out that sugar plums are also a sweet treat made from candy coated fruits and nuts (which originally contained plums, thus the name), and apparently used to be all the holiday rage back in 1823.

These plums are meant to be eaten when firm, and are great straight up as snacks, in pies or cobblers, or cooked down and served over ice cream. We've also had of roasting plum halves in the oven with honey and butter. Oy!

Fingerling Potatoes: Full shares are getting our final batch of potatoes from BloomStone Farm this week. Good job with all that digging, farmer Sarah! She wanted you to know that these are fingerling potatoes, named because of their somewhat slender, knobby appearance. They are fully mature at this size, not to be confused with new potatoes which are immature regular-old. Fingerlings are often halved and roasted with herbs.

Arugula Pizza Topping Combos

Homemade pizza is a top notch way to enjoy your arugula. Get a ready made crust from the store, or get fancy and make your own crust. Then try out some of these topping combos with your favorite sauce:

- Arugula, tomato and mozzarella
- Fig, goat cheese and arugula
- Grilled pineapple, pork belly, tomato and arugula
- Mozzarella, parmesan, arugula, and a splash of lemon juice
- Smoked bacon, tomato and arugula
- Goat cheese, arugula and garlic
- Caramelized onion and arugula
- Prosciutto, rosemary, arugula and ricotta