



BLUE HOUSE FARM

For the week of June 7, 2008

Notes From The Field

Wind, Fog, and Rust

This is my third spring living and farming in Pescadero. As a San Diego native, I spent my youth playing in the hot, dry, scratchy mountains and the long sandy beaches of southern California. Through high school, I owned one or two pairs of long pants and wore closed-toes shoes only when playing basketball or going for a run. Shorts, flip-flops, and a T-shirt was my regular garb, even in the middle of winter. With the exception of the rare wintry day, the weather forecast in the newspaper always read “sunny” with a picture of a cheery full sun.

These days I rarely step outside the door without jeans, a thick sweat-shirt, wool socks, and boots. I’m beginning to learn the meaning of what “drizzle-fog” means in the weather forecast. The wind is a constant presence (especially this chilly, breezy spring.) I’m learning how all of these new weather patterns affect the growing of crops, the weathering of wood, and the psyche of the farmer.

Harvest knives and pruning clippers left out in the field seemingly rust overnight from the fog and salty air. Hoes and digging shovels lose their shine quickly when not being used. Oil changes, greasing, and a fresh coat of paint does wonders in preserving and bringing back to life old farm equipment. Salty, moist air has a way of reaching its corrosive fingers into the most expensive parts of the tractors electrical system. Like our field tools, the tractor must always be parked back in the barn and sheltered from the elements.

An average rainfall of 30 inches is ten times the amount southern California would get in a wet year. I used to be concerned with wood cracking from over drying in the heat. I would compulsively linseed oil any wooden gate, shed, or tool that I cared for to keep it from splitting. Now I still compulsively oil and paint to preserve wood from rot and termites, which thrive in the long wet season. Any wood that touches the ground, such as posts, or is not covered by a roof must be redwood, which is naturally rot resistant and not liked by insects. The barn displays all degrees of weathering, neglect, and old age and is a constant reminder to me that to preserve the useful integrity of structures and tools, forethought in the construction and maintenance through its life is critical.

In farming, the weather is constantly on your mind. Sometimes it is the blatant thirty mile per hour winds that remind you to stake the flowers from blowing over and developing crooked necks. Sometimes it is the “drizzle-fog” that relieves you of watering duty for a short time. And sometimes, those sunny San Diego days do happen in Pescadero and when they do, it’s obvious by the crowd of bicyclist, motorcycle riders, and crowded beaches. A 70 degree day is one to enjoy. You can see it in the crops. They grow an inch an hour, as though they have been patiently waiting through all the fog and wind for that still, sunny day to make up for lost time.

The farm now feels as though it is ready to shake off the wet fog. The crops are tired of the constant struggle to stand upright in the wind. The farm is staged and ready to blast into production. The many shades of green in the field are beginning to indicate their true crop characteristics. As the days grow longer and the soil warms, the farm begins to hum again. Despite this springs tendency for fog, chilly nights, low rainfall, and wind, I see the strawberries, lettuces, and broccoli thriving and am again thankful for what this cool weather brings.

-Ryan

In Your Box This Week

Head Lettuce	Spring Onions
Leeks	Head Spinach
Chard or Kale	Cilantro
Dill	Strawberries
Broccoli	

Recipe: Whole Steamed Spinach

Spinach	Salt	Melted Butter
Lemon Wedges		

Wash the spinach and as you do so, make an effort to keep all of the stems going in the same direction. Arrange the spinach in the steamer, again in piles of leaves with stems in the same direction. Sprinkle in a little salt, picking up piles of leaves here and there. Steam the spinach a bare two to four minutes. Arrange attractively with lemon wedges on a heated serving platter. Spoon some melted butter over the spinach. Serve immediately.

-Recipe from *Tassajara Cooking* by Edward Espe Brown

Markegard Family Grass-Fed Cattle is providing the community with locally born, raised and processed beef. Shares are available for the summer of 2008 if you sign up by June 23rd. The cattle spend their lives grazing on 1,000 acres of range-land in San Gregorio. By taking part in the community supported share program you will be enjoying beef that meet the following Standards:

- Never grain fed,
- Ranch is pesticide and chemical fertilizer free
- Cattle are not given synthetic hormones or antibiotics
- No genetically modified organisms (GMOs)
- Supports small family farming
- Cattle are not put in feedlots
- Fed only the forage the range provides
- Our grazing methods improve the biodiversity of the land.

To participate and find out more information on share options and pricing visit their website www.designs-bydoniga.com or contact them at doniga@designsbydoniga.com (650) 747 0205