

Locally Produced

Farms, Food & Gardening on the Southcoast

La Honda, Pescadero & San Gregorio

Volume 18

September 2009

Farm Visit

fifth crow farm - Operated by Teresa, John, and Mike - Visited by Annie Fresquez & Kathy Webster

As a small and diversified organic farm, fifth crow farm leases 8.8 acres of land off of Cloverdale Road in Pescadero. Being in operation almost a year, Teresa, John, and Mike are making the most of their acreage by producing a variety of vegetables and fruits from strawberries, melon, pasture-raised eggs, and flowers (sunflowers and sweet peas) to various baby lettuces, popcorn, baby leeks, tomatoes, and much more.



Sunflowers



Baby Lettuce



Basil



Onions



Pastured Chickens

Growing what's in season, they yield enough produce to sell to several different farmer's markets, including San Mateo (Saturdays), Sunset/San Francisco (Sundays), Campbell (Sundays), and Pacifica (Wednesdays). fifth crow is also a Certified California Organic Farm (CCOF). Interested in growing more grains and beans, fifth crow is experimenting with various crops, such as quinoa (pronounced KeenWa), a whole grain that is known for its high-protein content; buckwheat, and 10 different varieties of beans (that are not found in the area).

fifth crow also sells their delicious salad greens to Café Gibraltar (in Half Moon Bay) and basil and strawberries to PastaMoon (Half Moon Bay). On occasion, they sell some of their produce to Pescadero Country Store and hope to sell more produce there, next year. For more information about fifth crow farm, go to <http://www.5thcrowfarm.com/>

Our Local Schools



School Meal Program Update from Kathy Webster

It's back to school, and we're off and running! This is looking to be a much better start than last year. The kitchen is fully functional now, including the hookup of the dishwasher (makes a huge difference with clean up) and the paving of the area right next to our building (vendor deliveries and the transportation of the meals are a lot smoother and easier now).

With the 6-Week rotation menu for lunch and the weekly rotating breakfast menu both in place, the processes of ordering and food preparation has been streamlined. You can check out September's menu on the District website at: <http://www.lhpUSD.net/?q=node/490>

The new barcode driven SWIPE system for entire School Meal Program is getting closer to being in place. Parent prepayments for their children's meals are now being posted directly into the system; soon as students receive their meals, the charges will also be entered right into the database. This will greatly reduce the amount of manual paperwork processing which has been required in the past system.

In a continuing commitment to teaching students about healthier lifestyles, my job assignment at the District has been expanded to include classes to the Middle School students focusing on Fitness and Nutrition. I'll be tying in a wide variety of fitness activities with nutrition education. It's a very exciting challenge and a great bridge between the healthy eating program now in place.

Big thank you to Jered Lawson, Pie Ranch, for another donation of your locally grown wheat flour. It's excellent and we appreciate your continued support of the School Meal Program. Another hearty THANK YOU goes out to Susan Lydon for her generous donations of whole wheat and bread flours to our kitchen!

Innovations

The Rodent Wars - Submitted from the trenches by our War Correspondent Flori Curran

Are you squeamish when it comes to road kill? When you approach it, do you drive around it thinking, "Ohh, poor little creature was trying to get to the other side and didn't quite make it," or are you one of those that say, "Hey, it ain't gonna feel anything anyway!" then run over it with an audible thud? Well, when it comes to rodents in my garden that eat my plants, wasting all the time and money I spent in there, I'm **NOT** driving around them.

I've been told rodents are running rampant in gardens (without cats) everywhere this season. I have rats, mice, voles and gophers ravaging thru mine. The toll they're taking is almost more than I can stand. I've had beautiful plants that were the best I've ever grown, only to find them completely gone or half-eaten. My zucchinis completely hollowed out and my bush beans hanging there like someone came by with a machette. Flo's had enough - IT'S WAR and I'm not taking any prisoners!

I don't like using poisons of course and using the Rodenator during this time of year when harvest is aplenty is too destructive. There was one point when I was at the end of my rope and I had asked Martin to come by with the Rodenator. Well I don't know if the gopher died but my bed looked like a grenade hit it. The explosion even split the wooden sides of another bed. I had wood chips spread out like confetti. Well, so much for the Rodenator...

So I went for the old macabee gopher traps. The macabees have worked well for me but they are tricky to use. You really need vise grip hands to get it set. I'm not a bit grossed out when I trap one. That's right! In fact I've been known to hold it up and show it around like a trophy. I've even been known to put it on display...sick, huh?



My macabees took their toll on the underground pests. "Heh, heh, heh." Next mission: trap the voles, mice and rats. I went for the old-time rat trap; a little bit bigger than the mouse trap and far more effective. I bought these real neat ones that you can actually set with one hand. The strike bar travels only half of the distance of the conventional ones for a quicker reaction time and more captures. I've even caught birds - now, that bothered me! The Snap-E Rat Trap is made of plastic so it lasts a little longer and it's easier to clean. (Freddy Kruger's got nothing on me!!). I got mine from Gemplers.com.



Armed & Ready!

Inside the produce shed I use the "Rat Zapper." Armed by batteries, it electronically shocks them. Yeah, baby, when I see that tail hanging out the end, I dance in glee!! They're cleaner and easy to use when it's time to dispose of the fried creature. You can also purchase these at Gemplers.com.



So if you have all the time in the world to sit there with your pop gun and wait until the varmint pops his head up by all means go for it. But if you don't and aren't the squeamish type, try my traps. Hopefully they'll work as good for you as they have for me. Happy Rodent Hunting!!! It's War Baby!

Budding Chefs, Farmers & Gardeners



Power to the Peppers

C L O K C E L H I O Z P X H V
L A N C H O A K N B W I V M T
H Y E Z B N J A I B Q M B U Y
Z M L J A W R T C N D I W K F
K A L H Z R H E N F H E S A D
R N E W E A L M O D T N W K M
H I R S I T X N R E B T E R Y
M A A R O Q U K E Q N O E D M
E L B P J A L A P E N O T G S
X N I A A K I R P A P V J A L
L H N F N G H G E M D Z Z U T
C N R E C E R U P X G P B C W
L P H X Y H R E D R C Z T E R
L A Q B H A W O E H R Y K H C
T J S E R E C P V N W C K V Z

ANAHEIM
GREEN
PEPPERONCINI
SWEET

ANCHO
HABANERO
PIMIENTO
THAI

CAYENNE
JALAPENO
RELLENO

CHIPOTLE
PAPRIKA
SERRANO

Backyard Gardens & Orchards

Gardening for Lazy People by Sandra Stent

I'm the first to admit I'm no whirling dervish when it comes to garden labors. I tend to follow the path of least resistance when choosing a course of action. That is why I relish the layering system of lasagna gardening (no digging, I'm all for that), mulching (heck, the less bending over and weeding I have to do, the better), wide row plantings with compatible plants (the broccoli shades the lettuce, the lettuce keeps the soil cool and damp under the broccoli; they're doing all the work, not me) and yeah there's my favorite, self-seeding plants.

What a concept! I plant the seeds one time; harvest and enjoy almost all of them, but manage to leave a few here and there (PLANNED of course, NOT FORGOTTEN). Though overlooked and underappreciated, these fallen heroes go right back to work for us lazy gardeners (aka LGs). Below I've tried to capture an example of this highly specialized technique with my green onions.



I managed to use most of the onions but kinda didn't get the last few picked before they grew too large. On its own and taking care of its own business, the plant soon produced a lovely seed head. Ever neglectful, the LG (me) kept passing it by without a thought or care. As the seed head grew larger and larger, the seeds matured, then burdened by the weight of them, the top of the plant flopped over. The seeds soon spilled out onto the waiting soil. As LG haphazardly watered nearby, enough of it trickled over to the seeds and wa-la, germination and new baby green onions soon shooting up. Now all the LG has to do is gently separate all the new volunteer seedlings and replant where needed.

Isn't nature really something else? Below are Flori's Swiss chard plants that self-seeded from parent plants that were in the planter. Also potatoes which will sprout a plant off of any little tater chunk left in the soil. In my old garden I planted Sweet One Million cherry tomatoes - they were almost weed-like in their abilities to reseed and return with each gardening season - they were everywhere! (I'm more than certain they were helped along by two industrious little boys bombing each other with them!).



Swiss Chard



Reseeded Potato



Next Summer's Onions??

Of course, nothing is ever as simple as all this. The plants that you allow to reseed need to be the only ones from their plant family in your garden. Otherwise, the wickedness that is also known as cross-pollination will wreck all your lazy gardening plans. Yes, this does mean I was patiently waiting and drooling for the first of what I thought would be self-seeded zucchinis only to find I had created Pu-kinis - the result of my previous year's zucchini having been pollinated by wayward pumpkin pollen. Though green, they turned hard as a rock! Even the pig could hardly bite into those suckers. (See below about Heirloom, Open-Pollinated & Hybrid Seeds).

A diligent and well-organized gardener will carefully select the parent plants for those seeds they wish to save for another year; thus ensuring they will be propagating the best of the best. Those seeds will then be harvested, labeled and stored properly for the next gardening season. For us lazier LGs, we'll idly sit back, content with waiting to see what surprises Mother Nature has in store for us.

Heirloom, Open-Pollinated, & Hybrid 10/31/08 - posted by Matthew Kakstys <http://www.territorialseed.com/blog>

Heirloom seed is a descriptive term with no definitive definition. Most people would call a variety an heirloom if it is open-pollinated, has been around about 50 years (some say 100 years), and is not part of today's large-scale commercial agriculture. Some heirloom varieties have been around for centuries or even millennia. Heirloom varieties were preserved and passed down for a reason; usually reliable production and unique flavor.

Open-pollinated and hybrid are easy to define. The seed from an **open-pollinated** variety will produce new plants that are "true to type" or just like the parent plant, as long as it hasn't cross pollinated with another variety. Saving your own open-pollinated seed from tomatoes, peppers, beans, and peas is easy because their flowers are designed to make cross pollination difficult. It's trickier to save seed from open-pollinated corn, squash, carrots, and other vegetables that depend on the wind or insects for pollination. They need isolation from other varieties so they don't cross pollinate.

A **hybrid** is the result of the pollen from one variety fertilizing the flower of another variety. This is known as cross pollination. The resulting seed won't grow to be like either of the two parent varieties, but will be a third new variety. Hybrids happen all the time in nature. Anyone who has let volunteer seedlings grow in their garden knows this. The result is usually an inedible zumpkin or pumpchini, but there is a small chance that a random cross pollination could produce an incredibly wonderful hybrid variety that no one has ever seen before. Seed saved from a hybrid will not grow "true to type". It takes the first generation cross between the two parent strains to make a hybrid variety. Hybrid seed first became available in the late 1940's. Hybrid vigor and uniformity were a big plus for farmers. Not being able to save seed to replant was a drawback.

Over the years some gardeners have avoided hybrids because a lot of them were developed to mature all at once and withstand mechanical harvesting and long distance transportation, not things that a home gardener is interested in. Other hybrids were developed for flavor, vigor, and disease resistance. If you're interested in saving seed, choose the open pollinated varieties. For a taste of history, go with the heirlooms.

Recipes, Menus & Health



Some like it HOT!!! Some like it NOT!!

As we roll into September on the Southcoast, we start to see our phenomenal Indian Summer Days. You know the ones I mean...days that begin with cool crispy mornings that warm steadily under clear blue skies to the upper 70s and sometimes low 80s. Now that's my idea of perfect weather! It also marks harvest time for most of our slower ripening garden vegetables - especially the peppers. This month we're highlighting some of our favorite recipes showcasing the versatility of the chili pepper - some hot, some not.

***Always use caution when handling and cutting peppers - what makes peppers hot is the capsaicin in them - Think: "PEPPER SPRAY!" Consider wearing gloves... never touch your eyes, lips or nostrils (gross but true). *Fine Cooking* recommends that "if you end up with a mouth on fire, don't drink water - try a glass of milk or spoonful of sour cream, yogurt or ice cream. Milk has a protein in it, Casein, which seems to strip the capsaicin from the nerve receptors in your mouth."



Regina Silveira's Salsa Recipe (medium to hot)

6 tomatoes	1-2 Cloves of garlic, minced
4-6 jalapeños (depending on your heat tolerance)	½ tsp. salt
2 T. olive oil	Dash of cumin (optional)
1 onion, diced	1 cup Chopped Cilantro

Boil jalapeños and tomatoes together until easy to peel (approximately 5 minutes). When cool enough to handle, peel tomatoes and place in blender (or food processor) with Jalapenos (minus stems). **Please note:** If you can't tolerate too much heat, seed jalapeños.

Sauté onions in olive oil on medium heat until translucent. Add garlic and cook until fragrant. Remove from heat and let cool. Add to blender with tomatoes and jalapenos; throw in cilantro, add salt and cumin (if using). Puree until blended. Serve with your chips, burritos, tacos, or whatever.

I was visiting the kitchen recently when the salsa was being prepared for student lunches the next day - Regina had the two versions - medium and hot. I went for medium - WOW! It packed a punch but was ever so good! Give these a try! - Sandra Stent).

From A Cook's Tour of Sonoma by Michele Anna Jordan:

CHIPOTLE CHICKEN WINGS

The author's own words on page 91 best describe her recipe: "A can of peppers and some lime juice, a few cloves of garlic and some chicken wings? What is the big deal, you might ask; why is this in a Sonoma cookbook? Trust me. Few things I have ever served have resulted in such cries of pleasure as these simple appetizers. *Chipotle* peppers have a distinctive flavor that is extremely hot, but so delicious that even those who admit to "wimpy palates" have begged for more."



1-8oz can chipotle peppers in adobo sauce



Juice of 2 limes



8-10 cloves of garlic



2 lbs of Chicken Wings (used to be drumettes, now called Party Wings)



¾ cup of water



½ cup sour cream

Puree chipotle peppers with the garlic, water and lime juice. Place the chicken wings in a baking dish that will just hold them all in a single layer (I use a 9x13). Pour the chipotle sauce over them and bake at 350 degrees for 45 to 60 minutes. Remove from the oven. Arrange the wings on a serving platter and place the sour cream in a bowl in the center of the platter. Serve at once.

**While I admit I am too wimpy to eat these guys, I do love the tantalizing aroma of them cooking. In my house, the wings never make it onto a serving platter; my family slurps them up right out of the pan. With running noses and burning lips, they proclaim the wings to be "Tremendous!"

I might as well take this time to comment on what a noteworthy cookbook this is. Published by in 1990, what I always liked best about it, in addition to the uniquely flavored recipes, is how the author brought me into Sonoma County, introduced its food producers and growers, and used their foods in her creations. Yeah, Eating Locally before it was the hot topic it is today! I highly recommend this book. (Available for checkout through the Peninsula Library System). Submitted by Sandra Stent



Grilled Pasilla Peppers – Submitted by Annie Fresquez

Ingredients:

6 Fresh Pasilla Peppers
 1/2 cup Blue Cheese
 1 cup Jack Cheese
 1 cup cheddar cheese
 12 Cilantro sprigs
 2 Ripe Tomatoes
 1/2 to 1 Jalapeno chile, roasted, seeded and minced

1/2 Small Red onion
 3 Scallion minced
 3 Tablespoons chopped cilantro
 2 Tablespoons rice vinegar
 6 Tablespoons Olive Oil
 Salt and Pepper to taste

Prepare the chilies by cutting all the way around the stem so that you can remove the stem and seed base in 1 piece. Keeping the stem and top intact, trim off any seeds and membranes, and if any get left behind in the pepper, remove them, too. Blanch the chilies for 2 minutes in lightly salted boiling water. Remove the chilies, refresh in ice water, and drain.

Combine the grated cheeses in a bowl and mix well. Stuff each chili with about 1/2 cup of the cheese mixture. Do not overstuff or pack the cheese in too densely. Replace the stem and top of the chili.

Cook on a grill over a medium fire, turning frequently until the cheeses are melted and the chilies are hot all the way through.

Tomato Salsa: Slice tomato into bite size chunks. Place in a mixing bowl and add the jalapeno chili, onion, scallions and chopped cilantro. Whisk together the vinegar and oil in a separate bowl, add salt and pepper to taste, and pour over the tomato mixture. Mix gently, being careful not to mash the tomatoes.

Place each grilled chili on a bed of salsa and garnish with the cilantro sprigs.



Cinnamon-Spice Chocolate Brownies (Better Homes & Gardens September 2009, pg. 202)

Prep: **20 minutes** Bake: **23 minutes** Cool: **10 minutes** Stand: **10 minutes**

NOTE: We haven't tried this recipe but when seeing it has ancho chile or cayenne pepper in it, we thought it makes a worthy addition to this month's recipes. Maybe a reader might want to give it a try?....Any takers??

Ingredients:

Nonstick cooking spray	1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1/4 cup butter	1 tsp. baking powder
1 cup granulated sugar	1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon
1/3 cup cold water	1/8 tsp. salt
3 eggs	1/8 tsp. ground ancho chile pepper or cayenne pepper
3 Tbsp. canola oil	1/3 cup miniature bittersweet or semisweet chocolate pieces
1 tsp. vanilla	2 Tbsp. hot strong coffee (optional)
1-1/4 cups all-purpose flour	Powdered sugar and/or cinnamon-sugar (optional)

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Line a 9x9x2-inch baking pan with foil, extending foil up over edges of pan. Lightly coat the foil with nonstick spray. Set aside.
2. In a medium saucepan melt butter; remove from heat. Whisk in sugar and water. Whisk in eggs, oil, and vanilla until combined. Stir in flour, cocoa powder, baking powder, cinnamon, salt, and ancho chile pepper. Stir in chocolate pieces. Pour batter into prepared pan.
3. Bake for 23 to 25 minutes or until a wooden toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool in pan on a wire rack for 10 minutes. Remove from pan by lifting up on the foil. If desired, brush hot cake with coffee. Cool completely.
4. Cut into bars. Sprinkle with powdered sugar and/or cinnamon-sugar. Makes 16 brownies.

Nutrition Facts: Calories 184, Total Fat (g) 8, Saturated Fat (g) 3, Monounsaturated Fat (g) 4, Polyunsaturated Fat (g) 1, Cholesterol (mg) 47, Sodium (mg) 67, Carbohydrate (g) 25, Total Sugar (g) 15, Fiber (g) 0, Protein (g) 3, Vitamin A (DV%) 0, Vitamin C (DV%) 0, Calcium (DV%) 4, Iron (DV%) 6, Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet

Chile Facts:



A Chile Pepper Institute publication, New Mexico State University © 2007

<http://www.chilepepperinstitute.org/documents/chile-facts.pdf>

- One fresh medium sized green chile pod has as much Vitamin C as six oranges.
- One teaspoon of dried red chile powder has the daily requirements of Vitamin A.
- Hot chile peppers burn calories by triggering a thermodynamic burn in the body, which speeds up the metabolism.
- Teas & lozenges are made with chile peppers for the treatment of a sore throat.
- The Capsaicinoids (the chemical that make chile peppers hot) is used in muscle patches for sore and aching muscles.
- Wild chiles are spread by birds because birds do not have the receptors in their mouths to feel the heat.
- Chile peppers originated in South America and then spread to Central and North America.
- The Indians of the American tropics cultivated the chile pepper for centuries for both its culinary and medicinal uses.
- On his first voyage to the Western hemisphere Christopher Columbus mistakenly called the fiery chile pepper pod “pepper” because of its heat thinking it was a relative of black pepper.
- All chile peppers are edible, even ornamentals. Ornamentals however, have been bred for their appearance and usually have little to no flavor and can be very hot.
- Chile peppers are relatives of tomatoes, potatoes, and eggplants, all belonging to the nightshade family.
- The color extracted from very red chile pepper pods, oleoresin, is used in everything from lipstick to processed meats.
- There are 26 known species of chile pepper, five of which are domesticated.



Clipart from: http://www.clipartguide.com/search_terms/vegetable.html

Fresh from the Farm

Produce Stands:

Phipps Country Store & Farm— Open daily – U-Pick Strawberries still available. Coming this fall, our freshly harvested dry beans.

Pie Ranch – We are open from 12pm-6pm, Saturdays and Sundays. Also, every 3rd Saturday of the month, we host a community volunteer time in the afternoon from 2-6pm, potluck from 6-7pm and barn dance from 7:30-10:30pm. Sliding scale donation \$7-\$15. Lots of fun! 2080 Cabrillo Hwy, Pescadero, 94060; Telephone: 650-879-0995. Website: <http://www.pieranch.org>

Farms and Ranches:

Blue House Farm – Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Fresh locally grown organic produce – Ned Conwell and Ryan Casey, 2601 Cloverdale Rd., Pescadero, Phone: 650-879-0704 Email: bluehousefarm@gmail.com; <http://www.bluehouseorganicfarm.com>

Green Oaks Creek Farm – CSA subscriptions-2060 Green Oaks Way, Pescadero, CA 94060, Phone: 650-879-1009 Email: paulandsteph@greenoakscreek.com Website: <http://www.greenoakscreek.com/>

Harley Farms – 205 North Street, Pescadero, 94060, Phone: 650-879-0480, Website: <http://www.harleyfarms.com/>

Markegard Family Grass-Fed Cattle and Lamb: Providing the community with locally born, raised and processed beef.

Plan your Fall BBQ using organic, local meat. We now have 10 and 20 pound family packs available. Call or e mail us for an order form to take advantage of our special family packs that will fit in your freezer. Also available: Ground Beef, Corn Beef, Liver, Bones and Individual Prime Steaks of Filet Mignon, Tri-Tip, Flank and Skirt Steaks. Orders are filling up fast! doniga@designsbydoniga.com or (650) 747 0205

Farmer's Markets:

Coastside Farmer's Market – Saturdays, 9am -1pm, at Shoreline Station (east side of Hwy 1, between Kelly Avenue & Hwy 92).

Santa Cruz Farmers' Markets - We have two markets open year round for your shopping convenience. The Downtown Santa Cruz Farmers' Market is open rain or shine every Wednesday afternoon from 2:30pm to 6:30pm. Our weekend market is the Westside Farmers' Market and it operates every Saturday morning from 9am to 1pm.

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Postal Service: Locally Produced
TomKat Ranch
PO Box 726
Pescadero, CA 94060

E-mail: locallyproduced@earthlink.net
Website: <http://www.locallyproduced.org>
Telephone: (650) 879-2147

Newsletter Staff: Alexis Detwiler, Annie Fresquez, Flori Curran, Sandra Stent, Kat Taylor & Kathy Webster

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****Other Information:**

If we at TomKat Ranch have surplus produce to share, we plan to harvest it ourselves, package it ourselves, and then make it available for sharing. That way, we feel we can control the impact on our land and the quality of our gift. Also, there's that liability issue always to think about and we are wrestling with how to be careful, generous and safe, all at the same time. Your ideas are welcome. And Please be careful if you decide to interact with others you may meet through the newsletter. A meeting in town versus at one's home might be more comfortable for everyone. Just food for thought...