

Updates from

# PLEASANT VALLEY FARM



JULY, 2012

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 5

## *Hello Friends!*

Summer is officially here, and it's a great time to come out to visit us. There is so much going on! We're picking cucumbers like crazy. The tomatoes are ripening quickly as well, and we'll have both of those in bulk later this summer. Watch the website, we'll post when they become available. The garden is kicking into high gear now, and we'll be featuring new offerings pretty much every weekend throughout the month. This weekend (June 30) we'll be digging the first new potatoes of the season. Coming soon are vegetables like patty pan & crookneck squash, eggplant, plus lots of peppers!

Meats will be plentiful this time of year as well. We start the month out with fresh chicken, and fresh pork & homemade sausage will be available periodically as well. Watch the website for details on which weeks we'll be offering fresh pork, or pick it up frozen anytime. We also have lots of grass-fed, heritage breed Dexter beef. It's lean and flavorful, and we have a nice selection of roasts, steaks and ground beef in stock.

As the list of what's growing in the garden gets longer, so does the variety of canned goods coming from Emily's kitchen. We will again be offering the Strawberry Sensation vinegar and we're looking to add a bread & butter pickle soon as well. Also new right now is a Honey Processed coffee from El Salvador from Happy Mug...it's quickly become our favorite! Stop by soon and check out what's new. We always have samples, so often you can taste a new product before you take it home.

See you at the stand!

*-Emily*

## *Herb Spotlight: Mint*

We all know the distinctive flavor of mint—it's found in gum, candy and ice cream. But did you know there are more than 30 varieties of mint? Here at the farm we grow three! We have **Peppermint**, which has higher concentrations of menthol than other varieties, and so tastes fresher and sharper. **Chocolate mint** has an initial minty freshness followed by an earthy chocolate flavor.

It's like the plant form of a peppermint patty! It adds a sophisticated twist to any dessert calling



for mint. This year, our **Apple Mint** has established itself enough to appear at the stand for the first time. Fruity mints like apple have a bright flavor that pairs well with lighter flavors, like fish, salad and sorbets.

It's well known that mint freshens breath, but did you know that it also contains antibacterial tannins that actually prevent odor-causing bacteria from colonizing your mouth? Mint also fights nausea by relaxing your muscles, settling your stomach and easing stomach cramps. Studies

have even shown that the smell of mint can curb appetite and heighten concentration!

Here's an easy, yet refreshing recipe—**Mint Tea**. Try it hot or cold!

Heat 1 quart (plus a little extra) water to boiling. After swirling a little in your teapot to warm it, add 3 bags of green tea and the rest of the hot water. Let steep 3 minutes. Add 3/4 cup sugar and one bunch of mint leaves and tender stems, crushed. Steep for 10 minutes, stirring halfway through.

## **JULY HAPPENINGS:**

- ◆ Open for the season!  
Visit us every Saturday from 10 AM-2 PM
- ◆ Beef, pork and chicken now available
- ◆ New veggies coming into season weekly



## **PLEASANT VALLEY FARM**

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## *Making Hay the Old-Fashioned Way*

We like to say that the outline of a man using a horse-drawn plow is, for us, more than just a logo. It's really how we farm. Hay making is no exception. We use a variety of horse drawn, antique equipment each year. Hay making is one of our most important tasks of the year. The amount & quality of the hay we produce and store in the barn will determine the number of animals we will be able to support. This directly affects the amount of meat we raise.

Making hay is also about coming full circle with our sustainable methods. We use the horses to power the machinery that makes the hay, so they are active participants in making their own food. They convert that food into manure, which is then spread onto the fields, pastures and garden. The manure improves the soil, making it more nutrient-rich, and over the years, will actually help create more topsoil. This rich, fertile soil then supports lots of plant life—grasses and legumes in the pasture and hay fields, or fruits and vegetables in the garden fields.

While we've detailed the steps we use on our website, this year was a little different thanks to the addition of a new-to-us piece of equipment, an antique hay loader. This John Deere

single cylinder loader is a very old style, probably built some time in the 1920's. It had sat in a barn for about 70 years before it came to us, so Dan & I took some time to fix a few broken boards, thoroughly grease up all the moving parts, and repair anything else necessary for it to be in to working condition.

Haymaking always begins by looking at the weather forecast. Rain at the wrong time will ruin your crop. A stretch of at least 3 rain-free days is necessary for us to make hay. Once the weather looks clear, Dan harnesses up the horses and begins to mow the field. The mowing machine uses a sickle bar, so the hay is cut off only at the bottom of the stalk, unlike a lawnmower which chops things up many times. It is then left to dry in the sun for a day or so. After that, we use the side-delivery hay rake. This takes the even layer of hay across the field and collects it into long lines, called windrows. As it rakes, it fluffs the hay up, allowing air to circulate and hastening the drying process. Depending on things like weather and humidity, the hay may be raked just once or several times.

In past seasons, we were

using a dump rake to gather the windrows into piles. These piles were then loaded up onto the wagon by hand, using just a pitchfork. Our "new" hay loader has made haymaking much less demanding, in terms of both labor and time.

After making some final adjustments to the hay loader, we took it out into the field. It picked up the hay perfectly. It uses a moving system of wooden slats and ropes to act like a conveyor belt to move the hay off the field and up onto the wagon. Once on the wagon, we use pitchforks to move it to the front of the wagon and walk across to pack the hay down, which allows us to get more hay on each wagon load.

The hay is then taken to the haymow, or upper floor, of the barn. The wagon is backed in and a large metal claw (looking similar to the toy cranes you see in arcades) is pressed into the hay. The horses are then hooked to a large rope, and using some pulleys, the claw lifts up to the top of the barn and then slides along a track. Once it reaches the end of the track, a trip rope is pulled, and the hay is deposited in a big stack in the haymow.

There it stays until the days get short and our critters need more to eat than they find in the pasture fields!



HAYMAKING IS ONE  
 OF THE MOST  
 IMPORTANT TASKS  
 OF THE YEAR.

## HAYMAKING WITH HORSES



**Step 1: Mowing the hayfield with the McCormack-Deering No. 7 mower**



**The field, raked into long windrows**



**Step 2: Raking the hay with the side-delivery rake**



**Step 3: The John Deere Single Cylinder hayloader in action**



**Step 4: An antique trolley system takes the hay from the wagon to the hayrack**



**A sweet sight to any farmer– the hayrack filling up!**

## FUN WITH ZUCCHINI!

Zucchini has a bad rap as being the veggie everyone has too much of in the summertime. It's a prolific plant, but also a versatile veggie...so this month we devote our recipe page to the many flavors of summer squash recipes! (Any summer squash will work in place of zucchini, so don't be afraid to experiment with other varieties, like crookneck or pattypan!)

### Parmesan Zucchini Bread

3 cups all-purpose flour  
 3 Tbsp grated Parmesan cheese  
 1 tsp salt  
 1/2 tsp baking powder  
 1/2 tsp baking soda  
 2 eggs  
 1 cup buttermilk  
 1/3 cup sugar  
 1/3 cup butter, melted  
 1 cup shredded, peeled zucchini  
 1 Tbsp grated onion

In large bowl, combine the flour, cheese, salt, baking powder & baking soda. In another bowl, beat the eggs, buttermilk, sugar & butter. Stir into dry ingredients until just moistened. Fold in zucchini & onion.

Pour into greased 9"x 5"x 3" loaf pan. Bake at 350 for an hour, or until toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean. Cool for 10 minutes before removing from pan to wire rack.

### Summer Squash Gratin

4 summer squash, thinly sliced  
 1 Tbsp kosher salt  
 1 bunch spring onions  
 1 bunch each parsley, mint & thyme  
 3 Tbsp olive oil  
 1 seeded jalapeño or other hot pepper  
 1 tsp lemon zest  
 1 cup grated havarti raw milk cheese

### Zucchini Alfredo

Homemade Egg Noodles or Whole Wheat Egg Noodles  
 3 Tbsp vegetable oil  
 4 cups shredded zucchini or other summer squash  
 Herbs– Oregano and/or Basil– 1 bunch, chopped  
 2 cloves garlic, minced  
 1/2 cup milk  
 Havarti Raw Milk Cheese

Boil water and add noodles, cooking for the amount of time on the package card. Drain and keep warm, reserving some of the cooking liquid..

Heat oil in skillet, stir in garlic and sauté for 2 minutes. Add zucchini and cook about 10 minutes or until some of the moisture has evaporated. Add the milk, cheese and herbs and cook until heated through and cheese has melted. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

For an even heartier meal:

For Carnivores– brown some bulk *Mild Italian Sausage* and add.

For Veggie Lovers–shred some *spinach* or *Swiss chard* and add to the sauce.

Toss squash with salt and let sit for 20 minutes, then rinse and pat dry.

Chop the onions, herbs, olive oil, jalapeno and lemon zest in a food processor, toss with squash and 3/4 cup of the cheese. Arrange evenly in a baking dish, then top with remaining cheese.

Bake at 400 degrees for 35-40 minutes.

