

Cobble Hill CSA

community supported agriculture 

Newsletter

June 19, 2007

Notes From Green Thumb Farm

Strawberries are ripening but the cold, damp sunless days of the last week has affected the quality of the berries. They're not as sweet as we would like and we're getting more damaged fruit from all the rain and the fact that the soil is not drying out. The berries we have brought in have been flavorful with good quality.

Our Spring farm tour and strawberry picking, a walking tour, will take place Saturday June 23rd at 10:30 a.m. and 1:00 pm. We will walk and see one of our fields which has our early plantings of lettuce, beets, fennel, peas, and squash. This year we will meet at the field which is located approximately a half mile EAST of our farm stand on Montauk Highway. It's the 2nd right, "Rose Hill Road" on the corner of Montauk Highway. All members and their families are invited--rain or shine. Everyone will be able to pick one quart of berries. For more information, give us a call at 631.726.1900.

Organically yours,
Farmer Bill

About Green Thumb Farm

Green Thumb is a rare success story in the history of American family farms. Located in Water Mill, New York, just east of Southampton on the South Fork of Long Island, Green Thumb has been farmed by the Halsey family since the mid-1640s.

In the 1960's, the Halsey farm was growing only potatoes, as were most of the neighboring farms on Long Island at that time. Due to development in the area and more competition from other potato growing states, spuds were becoming less profitable to grow. Realizing that he had to put his four children through college, Ray Halsey diversified his crop allotting 35 acres to raising tomatoes, corn, peppers, and eggplants. The yield was sold at a roadside stand on Montauk Highway and the venture became so successful that he stopped growing potatoes altogether.

In 1978 Ray's sons, Bill and Larry, sensed a need for environmentally friendly farming methods and started growing some organic vegetables on three acres. Today 95 acres are certified organic, which means that they have passed inspection by the National Organic Farmers' Association (NOFA).

Organic farming is very labor intensive. While conventional farmers can spray their crops if bugs or weeds invade, organic farmers must let a crop go if the bugs start to overwhelm it or, in the case of weeds, they must weed by hand. In spite of the chal-

lenges and expenses involved, Green Thumb Farm has made the commitment to go totally organic. The Halseys continue to farm because they value being able to raise their children in a rural environment, to produce on land that has been in the family for generations, and to preserve and improve the land for future generations.

Green Thumb sought out additional avenues of income to keep the farm in business. They delivered produce to the Union Square Farmers' Market for four years, but found that it didn't bring in the income they realistically required to support their large extended family on the farm. After researching the burgeoning CSA movement and attending a networking event hosted by Just Food, Green Thumb linked up with its first CSA group in Cobble Hill in 1995.

"The CSA movement is very good for the local farmer," says Bill Halsey. "A good core group is a very important part of the equation. It takes a lot of behind the scenes organizing to keep everything running smoothly. We want to concentrate on growing the product. We've been lucky with the Cobble Hill CSA."

Today, Green Thumb supplies seven CSAs, with pick up sites in Queens, Huntington, Brookhaven, East Quogue, and one on the farm in Water Mill. Altogether, Green Thumb supplies local, organic produce and flowers to 450 families.

Swiss Chard Omelet (Tortilla de Grelos)

The slight tartness of Swiss chard lends a wonderful flavor to this simple tortilla, which serves 4.

1/2 pound Swiss Chard, or other greens like collards, thick stems removed
Salt
2 Tablespoons olive oil
1 Tablespoon finely chopped onion
1 clove garlic, minced
4 eggs

Place the greens in a pot with salt, 1 tablespoon of the oil, and water to cover. Bring to a boil, cover, and simmer for 15 minutes. Drain well, using paper towels to absorb some of the excess liquid. Chop coarsely.

Heat another tablespoon of the oil in a small skillet. Sauté the onion and garlic until the

onion is wilted. Add the greens and salt and stir fry for a minute or so. Beat the eggs in a bowl with a fork and season with salt (This can be prepared ahead). Stir the skillet mixture into the eggs and wipe the skillet clean.

Heat the remaining tablespoon of oil until quite hot. Pour in the egg mixture quickly, spreading it evenly with a pancake turner. Lower the heat slightly and cook until very lightly browned, shaking the pan constantly. Flip the omelet to the other side, adding a drop more oil if necessary, and continue cooking until the omelet is set but still juicy within. To serve, cut into wedges.

From *Tapas: The Little Dishes of Spain*, Penelope Casas, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, New York, 1985.

Lavender And Thyme Roasted Chicken

1 whole (3- to 4-pound) chicken, trimmed of excess fat, then rinsed and patted dry with paper towels
3 tablespoons olive oil
2 teaspoons fresh lavender flowers, minced
1 teaspoon fresh thyme leaves, minced
1/4 teaspoon finely grated fresh lemon zest
1 small lemon, halved
1/4 cup Sauternes
Chopped lavender and thyme leaves for garnish

Preheat oven to 500° F.

Place the chicken, breast side down, on a rack in a roasting pan. Begin roasting. Mix together the olive oil, lavender, thyme, lemon zest and juice, salt and pepper.

After the chicken has roasted for about 20 minutes, spoon some of the olive oil mixture over it, then turn the bird breast side up. Baste again, then again after 7 or 8 minutes; at this point the breast should be beginning to brown (if it hasn't, roast a few more minutes). Turn the heat down to 325° F, baste again, and roast until an instant read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the chicken reads 160° to 165° F. Total roasting time will be under an hour.

Before removing the chicken from the pan, tip the pan to let the juices from the bird's cavity flow into the pan (if they are red, cook another 5 minutes). Transfer the chicken to a platter and loosely cover with foil to keep warm. Add Sauternes to roasting pan and deglaze over moderate heat, scraping up brown bits. Transfer jus to a small saucepan. Skim fat from jus and simmer until reduced to about 1/2 cup.

Garnish birds with herbs and serve with jus.

