Notes from the Field by Heide Bruckner, First Year Apprentice

This week brings a breath of fresh air, rejuvenation, and rest. While the harvest abounds, about two-thirds of the apprentice class is away from the farm to enjoy their annual break week of our summer program. For the rest of us on-site, the farm work continues as usual, steady and fulfilling. Yet the normal hustle and bustle of daily communal life has been put on hold-- and the quieter, intentional moments of conversation with the remaining crew seem all the more meaningful.

The change in atmosphere is palpable, and nowhere more so than in the kitchen. Leisurely meal preparation is the modus operandi, with deliberate attention to selecting, slicing, roasting, broiling, or searing the widest variety of our hand-picked ingredients. The result: scrumptious dishes, shared joyfully around the large wooden table. The meal becomes the center, an opportunity for conversation and togetherness. It feels like a gathering, a dinner hosted and generously shared in a dear friend’s living room.

It actually reminds me of a potluck series I was involved with last summer in my previous residence of Tucson, Arizona. The “summer soup series” we called it, a string of weekly chilled-soup-themed potlucks at rotating abodes. Escaping the desert heat, friends new and old would emerge to partake in local prickly pear lemonade and cucumber gazpacho, mesquite biscuits and creme caramel. Those nights I learned to love the desert, to feel grounded by its bright skies and the surprising bounty of its edible plants. It’s where the magical simplicity of just being and eating was at the forefront.

With the chowder ladled into friends’ bowls, chatter and laughter quickly filled our farm center. The summer soup series has re-emerged, and I eagerly await more episodes. For some favorite soup recipes, check out this week’s recipes.

Upcoming Event

Fall Gardening Workshop
Sunday, August 25 – 10 am - 1 pm
UCSC Farm & Garden

Gardening instructor Trish Hildinger will teach you how to plan ahead and extend your gardening season with timely tips on what to plant and how to plant it for harvest in November and through the winter. (Workshop designed for beginning and intermediate gardeners.) $30 general, $20 FF&G members, $5 for UCSC students (cash or check only). Pay online at http://fallgarden.bpt.me. For more information, email casfs@ucsc.edu or call 831.459-3240.
Roasted Poblano, Potato and Corn Soup

2 T oil of your choice
1 large onion, diced
1-1/2 teaspoon chili powder
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1-1/2 teaspoon dried oregano
3/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes
1 pound potatoes, peeled and sliced
4 to 5 cups vegetable stock
2 poblano chiles, roasted, peeled seeded and diced
1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro leaves
1/2 cup sour cream for garnish (optional)
fresh ground pepper to taste

Heat 1 tablespoon of oil over medium heat. Add onion and cook until translucent but not brown, approx. 4 mins. Stir in the chili powder, cumin, red pepper flakes, oregano, salt and pepper. Add the potatoes and stock and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer until the potatoes are tender, approx. 15-20 mins.

Heat 1 tablespoon of oil over medium-high heat until hot. Add the corn and cook, stirring occasionally, until lightly browned, approx. 3 mins. Transfer potato mixture to a blender and process until smooth, working in batches.

Return soup to the saucepan. Stir in the chiles and corn. Bring back to simmer and remove from heat.

Whisk in chopped cilantro. Put a dollop of sour cream on top for garnish.

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Chilled Cucumber Soup

2 cups yogurt
1 cup vegetable broth
2 cucumbers, peeled, diced, and divided
4 green onions, sliced, divided
2 tablespoons fresh dill, chopped
2 tablespoons fresh parsley, chopped
4 teaspoons fresh lemon juice (a little over 1/3 lemon)
2 teaspoons salt

In a large bowl, combine yogurt and vegetable broth; set aside. In a food processor, purée 1 peeled, diced cucumber, 2 sliced green onions, chopped fresh dill, and chopped fresh parsley. Add the cucumber mixture, fresh lemon juice, and salt to the yogurt mixture; whisk to combine. Stir in 1 more peeled, diced cucumber and 2 more sliced green onions; refrigerate for one hour.

Garnish each serving with chopped dill and croutons.

Marcella Hazan's “Cucina”