Notes from the Field by Matthew Gregory, First Year Apprentice

Summer is sauntering along gracefully here in the field at CASFS. One tends to feel stashed away in our ‘pocket within a pocket’ farmscape, delighting in the solitude and forgiving soil. It’s this state of being that Robert Service invokes in ‘Dreams Are Best’:

O you Dreamers, proud and pure,
You have gleaned the sweet of life!
Golden truths that shall endure
Over pain and doubt and strife.

Yet it’s not all daisy chains and bare feet. We in the field keep ourselves occupied by harvesting root crops, stringing tomatoes, mowing down broccoli plants, setting gopher traps and weeding, weeding, weeding. Nearly two weeks of gloomy weather has afforded us several opportunities to transplant into Ocean View field. Now folks can look forward to happy, supple salad mix for weeks to come. This marathon plant out should yield steady broccoli, beans and peppers on through September.

For those growing impatient, I have bad news: tomatoes and peppers are not yet ripe. Despite this underwhelming revelation, there is more than one reason to be grateful. I am particularly grateful for Florentina, our resident weasel. That’s right, our very own long-tailed weasel (Mustela frenata) has made its presence felt this week here at CASFS by unleashing smack downs on multiple rat nests in and around the mulberry trees. Weasels and other predators provide invaluable services by hunting the pesky wood rats, gophers and ground squirrels. Stay tuned for more stories and videos of our celebrity weasel!

A big shout out goes to all the predators on the farm, especially the screech owls. Every night we sleep to the gentle whispers of a parliament of screech owls hunting from the kiwi trellis owl box. These youngsters are all grown up and loud as ever. Only the moonlit, roving bands of coyotes howl and wail with such urgency. As anyone living in the tent cabins can attest, both owls and coyotes rock the party ‘til the break of dawn.

Meanwhile, as owls and coyotes frolic hither and fro, I am content with yanking out Bermuda grass in the dwarf apples or ‘pedestrian orchard’—my own pocket of paradise.

In the Orchard

Leave go my hands, let me catch breath and see;
Let the dew-fall drench either side of me;
Clear apple-leaves are soft upon that moon
Seen sidelong like a blossom in the tree;
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

The grass is thick and cool, it lets us lie.
Kissed upon either cheek and either eye,
I turn to thee as some green afternoon
Turns toward sunset, and is loth to die;
Ah God, ah God, that day should be so soon.

–Algernon Charles Swindburne
**Plum Upside Down Cake Recipe**

- 5-6 ripe red plums, cut in half and pitted
- 1 C sugar
- 3 sprigs rosemary
- 6 T butter, room temperature
- 3/4 C brown sugar
- 2 large eggs

Preheat oven to 350°F. Generously butter a 9-inch glass pie plate and arrange plums cut side down, cutting into smaller pieces to fit as necessary in the middle.

In a small saucepan combine granulated sugar with rosemary sprigs and 1/3 cup water and cook over medium high heat until a golden amber color, about 10 minutes. Swirl the pan occasionally without stirring.

While caramel sauce is cooking, make the batter.

Cream butter with brown sugar for 3 minutes. On low speed add eggs one by one. Add yogurt, lemon zest, and almond extract and mix until combined.

Stir flour, baking powder, and salt together. Slowly add to batter on low speed and mix until just incorporated.

When caramel is done, discard rosemary and pour evenly over plums. Top plums with the cake batter and spread to the edge. Bake for 35-45 minutes until the cake is golden and a toothpick in the center comes out clean.

Let cool for 15 minutes, then invert cake onto a large plate. Serve with a dollop of sour cream.

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**Roasted Beet Balsamic Mustard**

*Makes one half cup*

- 2 T yellow mustard seeds
- 2 tsp. brown mustard seeds
- 2 T plus 2 tsp. balsamic vinegar
- 2 T plus 1-1/2 tsp. water
- 1 beet, cleaned, peeled and cut into quarters
- 1 T olive oil
- 1/2 tsp. sea salt
- 1/2 tsp. ground black pepper
- 1/4 tsp. brown sugar

In a sterilized 4-oz. canning jar, mix together mustard seeds, balsamic vinegar and water. Cover and let sit at room temperature for 2 days.

Toss the beet quarters with the pepper, olive oil and 1/4 tsp. of the salt and roast at 375°F for 35 minutes on a baking sheet lined with foil or parchment paper.

In a blender or food processor, blend one of the beet quarters with the mustard, brown sugar and remaining 1/4 teaspoon of salt until pureed to desired smoothness.

Use within one month.

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**Coleslaw with Toasted Walnuts and Tahini Vinaigrette**

*Serves 2*

- 1 C cabbage, finely sliced
- 1 medium carrot, julienned
- (use a julienn peeler, a mandoline or a sharp knife)
- 3 small scallions (green parts only) sliced
- 1/4 cup walnuts, roughly chopped

**Vinaigrette:**

- 3 T extra virgin olive oil
- 1 T apple cider vinegar
- 1 T tahini
- Pinch of salt
- Pinch of black pepper

In a medium pan over medium heat, toast the walnuts stirring frequently, until fragrant. Set aside.

In a large bowl toss cabbage, carrots and scallions. Add toasted walnuts and toss gently until well combined. Season and coat with vinaigrette.

**Vinaigrette:** Combine all the vinaigrette ingredients and whisk until smooth. Taste and adjust seasonings if needed.

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**Hawaiian Slaw**

*Serves 6*

- 1 C shredded green cabbage, packed
- 1 C shredded red cabbage, packed
- 1/2 C grated carrots, packed
- 1 C fresh pineapple, diced
- 2 green onions, sliced
- 1 T ginger root, grated
- 3 T rice wine vinegar
- 1 T soy sauce
- 1-1/2 tsp. honey
- 1 tsp. sesame oil
- 1/2 lime, juiced
- 1 tsp. black sesame seeds
- 1/8 tsp. red pepper flakes (opt.)
- generous pinch of salt

Combine slaw mix, carrots, pineapple and scallions in a large bowl and set aside.

Add the remaining ingredients to a mason jar, shake well to combine, and pour over the slaw. Stir to combine. Cover and refrigerate for 30 minutes prior to eating.

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