Notes from the Field by Julie Farrell, Second Year Field Assistant

Thank you for sharing the bounty with us in this first week of the 2015 CSA season! We are excited to welcome new members and express gratitude for the continued support of those returning.

This marks the sixth week of our 2015 Apprenticeship season, and I’d like to think this box, filled with berries and crisp greens, reflects the incredible sweetness of our newest cohort. We are overjoyed to have our farm center, tent cabins, classrooms and fields filled again with the laughter, music, curiosity and commitment of thirty-nine brilliant apprentices. Despite (or perhaps in spite) of the chilly spring, spirits are high and—though I am a bit biased—it’s hard to imagine the farm looking any better than it does at this moment. A later-than-usual start to vegetable plantings allowed us to pay it forward for our perennial and full-season crops. Five varieties of sweet and dry corn seem to grow taller by the minute. Lush potato plants expand with every hilling. Our many orchards, having been lovingly mulched, weeded, thinned and trellised, fill with tiny, jewel-like fruits. Despite the continued drought, even the dry-farmed tomatoes appear verdant, stretching their persistent roots deep into the soil.

This week, we are happy to share a few of our earliest fruiting crops as you propitiously catch the tail end of our blueberry and lemon seasons (or, more optimistically, just the beginning of pie season). A few brave apprentices, undaunted by the towering, decades-old avocado trees, took to the canopy for a record harvest. This incredibly creamy, Bacon variety avocado will ripen on its own at room temperature. If you simply cannot contain your excitement, place avos in a paper bag along with a banana or apple, either of which will generously give off its natural ethylene to speed up the process. Strawberries will be steady stars of the CSA box, along with the several varieties of tender greens, all of whom are truly benefitting from cooler temperatures and misty mornings up here on the hill.

It is hard to imagine that only a few months ago red-winged blackbirds still alighted on the tall cover crop blanketing each field. When apprentices arrived, all but a few corners of the farm lay quiet with bare earth. Today, the main field is nearly at capacity, a testament to the diligence and skill of those who tend it. I have no doubt that the joy and dedication of everyone involved—staff, apprentices, volunteers, work-study students, and interns—will show through in each and every CSA box. Thank you for your support, and here’s to a wonderful season!
**Lemon Blueberry Muffins**

- 1-3/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, softened
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 2 teaspoons grated lemon zest
- 2 teaspoons poppy seeds
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/3 cup milk
- 6-9 ounces blueberries

Preheat oven to 375°F. Lightly butter or grease a 12-cup muffin pan or line with paper liners.

Whisk together flour, baking powder and salt in a medium bowl. Beat butter and sugar in a large bowl with an electric mixer on medium-high until light and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Beat in eggs, one at a time, scraping down sides of bowl as necessary. Beat in lemon zest, poppy seeds and vanilla until evenly blended. Reduce speed to low and add flour mixture, alternating with the milk, beginning and ending with the flour mixture, just until incorporated. Fold in blueberries.

Divide batter evenly between muffin cups. Bake muffins about 25 minutes or until muffins are golden brown and toothpick inserted in center comes out clean. Cool in pan 3 minutes. Remove to wire rack to cool completely.

**TIP:** To distribute blueberries evenly in batter, toss with 1-2 teaspoons flour to coat before folding into batter to prevent blueberries from dropping to bottom of muffins.

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**Strawberry Salsa**

- 1/2 cup red pepper jelly
- 1/3 cup chopped fresh chives
- 1/3 cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 tablespoon lime zest
- 1/4 cup fresh lime juice
- 1/4 teaspoon dried crushed red pepper
- 2 cups chopped fresh strawberries
- 1/3 cup sweetened dried cranberries
- 1 small avocado, diced

Whisk together red pepper jelly, chives, cilantro, lime zest, fresh lime juice, and dried crushed red pepper in a medium bowl. Stir in strawberries and sweetened dried cranberries; cover and chill 1 hour. Stir in diced avocado just before serving. Serve with grilled or pan-fried meats, poultry, or seafood.

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**Lettuce Snap Pea Salad w-Meyer Lemon Cream**

**Salad:**

1 Meyer lemon
10 oz. salad mix or 1-1/4 pounds mixed whole small lettuces (4-6 inches long), ends trimmed
1 cup sugar snap peas, thinly sliced on a diagonal
3/4 cup thinly sliced radishes
1/2 cup torn fresh mint leaves

**Meyer Lemon Cream Salad Dressing:**

2 tablespoons finely diced shallot
1/4 cup Meyer lemon juice
About 3/4 tsp. kosher salt, divided
1/2 cup plus 2 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
About 1/8 tsp. pepper
1/3 cup heavy whipping cream

Very thinly slice lemon crosswise, using a handheld slicer and remove seeds with a knife tip as you go.

Toss salad mix in a large bowl with about 1/2 cup Meyer Lemon Cream salad dressing. Add snap peas, radishes, and a little more dressing and toss again. Arrange salad on chilled plates and tuck in lemon slices and mint.

**Salad dressing:** Put shallot, lemon juice, and 1/4 tsp. salt in a small bowl and let stand 5 minutes. Whisk in oil, then whisk in 1/2 tsp. more salt, 1/8 tsp. pepper, and the cream. Taste and add more salt and pepper if you like. Stir before using.

**NOTE:** Make dressing up to 3 days ahead, refrigerate.

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