

RED DOG FARM Newsletter



Giant Hay stack: all in a days' work

In your share this week:

Strawberries
 Spinach
 Iceberg Lettuce
 Sweet Walla Walla Onion
 Hakurei Turnip
 Brandywine Tomato
 Baby Summer Squash
 Cucumber
 Rhubarb (large only)
 Carrots (large only)

Whew! What a week. I, Karyn, had a lovely, relaxing vacation to Leavenworth for a couple days last week. It was a wonderful break and the crew held down the farm in fine form. The days since have been a whirlwind as Red Dog Hay Madness 2011 began immediately upon my return. The hay was baled Sunday, then, of course, as is ALWAYS the case when it comes to hay, rain was predicted for the following morning. Arghh! Luckily, the powerful Red Dog crew came through Monday morning to buck the hay. Bucking hay involves driving the trucks (including my little Nissan, which my dad had just washed for me while I stopped in Seattle- thanks, Dad!, quickly turning from shiny to hay covered) around the field and loading, by hand the 50 pound bales of hay onto the beds, then driving to the platform of pallets we laid down and stacking the hay. We pulled in about 350 bales in just a couple hours. Although we were all sweating, limp-armed, and covered with hay by the end of it, we did beat the impending rain, which did arrive, right on time, at 11am. Whew! Another hay disaster swiftly avoided.

One thing I love about farming is seeing the natural world coexist with the farm. When picking up hay bales the other day, one bale had on top of it a very large half-eaten radish, apparently by some creature with a very strong beak. I suspect that it was one of our raven friends. I like to imagine the raven collecting the discarded radish from the field after our Friday harvest day, then finding a comfortable resting spot on a conveniently placed hay bale; close enough to the radish patch, but far enough away from regular human traffic, and just a little elevated off the ground to give a better view of any approaching avian-herding red border collies. I imagine the raven very satisfied as it enjoyed its pungent, watery treat.

Another fun wildlife spotting, this one not imagined, was today as I was harvesting the rhubarb for the large shares. A large tree frog hopped from the ground onto one of the huge rhubarb leaves, its skin blending in perfectly with the bright green of its backdrop. Surprise visits from tree frogs always put a smile on my face!

It really feels as though we are in the thick of harvest season now. Aside from moving irrigation, we do little else but collect the fruits of our labor. The harvest of summer crops like cucumbers, summer squash, tomatoes, beans and strawberries monopolize much of our time. I call this time of year “riding the rollercoaster”. There’s a lot less thinking, and not a lot of start-up efforts. It is a time of enjoying the season, harvesting what we have sown, starting to dream of long winter naps, and plans for next season. I tell myself and my crew: “Hang on!” None of us would want to miss this ride.

Recipes

Strawberry Spinach Salad

Spinach leaves
Strawberries, sliced
Sweet Walla Walla onion, minced
Chevre or feta
A simple vinaigrette

Arrange, drizzle and serve. Expect rave reviews.

Just a strong suggestion: You absolutely must make a BLT (or an AvocadoLT if that’s more your style) with the iceberg lettuce and Brandywine tomato in your share this week. You will have no regrets.

Hakurei Turnips are hopefully by now considered one of your fondest veggies, but in case it’s new to you, you are in for a treat. Hakurei, often commonly known as Japanese turnips or white turnips, are known for their crisp creamy texture and mild flavor. They are best enjoyed raw, or if you must, lightly cooked. I recommend a sauté with summer squash, sweet onion, a little butter and garlic. Don’t forget: the tops are tasty as well as incredibly nutritious. These are one greens you don’t want to throw to the chickens. Sauté them as you would spinach, and expect them to cook down to a fraction of their raw bulk.

Strawberry Rhubarb Crisp

Filling:

1 lb. Strawberries
2 stalks rhubarb (or another ½ pound strawberries)
1 cup sugar (only ½ cup if you don’t use rhubarb)
3 Tbs. corn starch
2 tsp. lemon juice
1 tsp vanilla

Topping:

1 stick butter, softened
1 ½ cups brown sugar
1 ½ cups flour
1 ¼ cups oats
3 Tbs. canola oil
1 ½ tsp cinnamon
¾ tsp. salt

Toss together all the filling ingredients. Let stand 10 minutes. In a separate bowl combine all the topping ingredients. In a greased 9x13” baking pan, pour in the filling. Sprinkle on the topping. Bake at 375 degrees for 30 minutes, then reduce temperature to 325 degrees and bake for 30 minutes more. Serve warm with vanilla ice cream, of course.