



SUNSHINE IN A BOX



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Farm Updates

This week came and went and it seems like I was hardly able to check anything off my to do list. The rain we had this weekend was much needed but also required me to change my plans and work on other projects like sprucing up the chicken coop and building some herb drying screens—both projects related to the new farm products I am working on (eggs and herbal tea and culinary blends). It has been an interesting challenge to add these projects but I feel it will help make the farm more resilient by improving soil health and adding revenue streams, and with the reduced size of the CSA my work load is spread out more evenly.

I had an unexpected visit from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) this week to enforce a new food safety modernization act “produce rule” (FSMA) that affects produce growers in regards to extra training and record keeping. Even though my farm operation is exempt because of size, I took the

training this winter to brush up on food safety practices and see what the new rules involve. Since I did not respond to MDA surveys to confirm that I am exempt, they made a house call to check in! I recognized one of the agents as a CSA farmer and we had a nice conversation and got everything squared away.

Zen Gardening

Weeding the garden is tedious but nothing gives me a chance to see what is going on up close than pulling weeds by hand once they are too big or too close to the plants to hoe. As I make my way down the rows, there is something satisfying about seeing an overgrown jungle turn back into neat rows, this time with bigger plants than I remember seeing before the weeds grew up around them. As I pull the weeds I leave them neatly in the walkways behind me to keep in moisture and suppress the next round of weeds. I get a chance to see how the soil quality changes throughout various gardens or which insects are dwelling in the soil. I can even smell the earthiness of the soil and the freshness of dew drops still clinging onto the plants. Weeding is a chance to nurture an intimate relationship to the land. Every weed I pull I think about the hundreds of weed seeds I am preventing for next season. Cont. p. 2

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Life is sweet with local maple syrup

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Week 3 Produce

Cilantro: You may need to pick out a few weeds from the bunch of cilantro but it will be worth it so you can also use the stems in your recipes (try them finely chopped). Add to rice or use in a stir fry with garlic scapes (stir fry garlic scapes and then add cilantro fresh at the end)

Mixed Greens: More delicious spring mixed greens with a blue edible flower (borage). Try these with the maple vinaigrette below.

Swiss Chard: Rainbow chard is similar in flavor to spinach. Try pairing with bacon or sausage in pasta.

Peas: This snack item is great to eat raw. Expect more snap peas coming in the next few weeks. To cook, blanch in salted boiling water for 5 minutes and then add to icewater to stop the cooking. Cut into 3rds and add to a salad.

Garlic Scapes: The beautiful and delicious garlic flower. Tender shoots can be steamed or even enjoyed raw. Garlic butter can be made by finely chopping scapes and mixing with softened butter. Put in a mold or shape into a roll and wrap in parchment paper and re-solidify butter. This is great to add to steaks or any savory dish.

Broccoli or Kohlrabi: I will rotate broccoli and kohlrabi as available. Kohlrabi has the flavor of cabbage and texture of an apple and can be peeled and sliced thin to eat raw. It can also be cooked (add to garlic scape stir fry).

Maple Syrup: This maple syrup was made in Loretto, MN. Maple syrup was traditionally used by native people in our region to sweeten snacks they would take into battle or on the hunt. Think beyond the pancake—use maple syrup in salad dressing, desserts, or, my favorite, in your morning coffee.



Zen Gardening Continued from p. 1 As I get to the end of a bed, I savor the feeling of being almost done. Then, I get to turn around and look back at the results, knowing I am giving those plants a leg up to fill in. The visual effect of a freshly weeded bed is beautiful and striking.

As I drive around my neighborhood I can't help but notice the fields that have gone unplanted this season. Weeds are getting so big they risk going to seed soon. I imagine the stress those farmers must feel

knowing the thousands of weed seeds about to be released into their fields. I think about the need for stronger herbicides they might need to use to combat those weeds next season. This growing season raises a lot of questions about managing the land in our changing climate patterns and I hope it will encourage more farmers to turn to practices like cover cropping or growing different crops besides corn and soybeans. For now, I will stick to my little zen garden.

Recipes

Maple Vinaigrette

2 tablespoons maple syrup
1 tablespoon grainy mustard
1 teaspoon minced garlic scape

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup white balsamic vinegar

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup olive oil

Salt and pepper to taste

Combine maple syrup, mustard, finely chopped garlic, and vinegar in a mason jar. Shake well to combine. Add olive oil and shake until well emulsified. The dressing should appear slightly creamy. Add salt and pepper to taste. Dressing will store for up to one week.

Hazelnut Maple Sorbet

3 cups hazelnuts
4 cups water, divided

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup maple syrup to taste

Pinch of salt to taste

Preheat oven to 350F. Put the hazelnuts on a roasting pan and bake in the oven until they smell nutty and the skins crack, about 10-15 minutes. Remove, place in a clean dish towel, and rub to remove some of the skins.

Put the hazelnuts into a jar and cover with water. Soak for at least 2 hours or overnight. Strain the hazelnuts. Rinse and put into a blender with 2 cups of fresh water. Blend until smooth and creamy. Strain through a nut milk bag or cheesecloth until most of the liquid is removed.

Pour the nut milk into a bowl and add the maple syrup and salt to taste. Transfer to an ice cream maker or large baking dish and freeze. Temper slightly at room temperature before serving. Serves 4-6. (Sherman & Dooley, 2017)

Rainbow Chard with Garlic Scapes

1 bunch rainbow chard
Olive oil
Garlic Scapes, minced
Red pepper flakes to taste

Salt and pepper to taste

4 teaspoons red wine vinegar

4 thick slices country bread

If the chard stems are very slim and tender, you can just sauté them along with the leaves. If they are thicker, prep them this way: Fold the leaves in half lengthwise and slice along the edge of the venter rib and stem to cut away the stems. Cut the stem across into thin slices, or if very slender, split lengthwise into strips. Rinse the stems well in a colander and pat dry. Stack a few leaves, roll them into a loose cylinder, and cut or tear them into wide ribbons. Repeat with all the leaves. Rinse the leaves well in a colander and shake dry.

Heat $\frac{1}{4}$ cup olive oil in a large skillet or Dutch oven over medium heat. Add the minced garlic and red pepper flakes and cook slowly to toast the garlic scapes so it's soft, fragrant and not burnt—about 5 minutes. Add the chard stems, season with salt and black pepper, and sauté until they lose about 75 percent of their crunch, 4 to 5 minutes.

Add the chard leaves; if they won't all fit into the pan, just add a few handfuls and toss them with tongs until they're wilted, and then add the rest. Add a splash of water and cover the pan. Cook over medium heat until the chard is tender, 8 to 10 minutes. If there is a lot of liquid in the pan at this point, increase the heat and boil most of it off. Add the vinegar, season with salt and pepper to taste and toss well. Taste—the chard should have an appealing sweet-and-sour flavor

Remove from the heat, pour in a healthy glug of olive oil, and let the chard rest so all the flavors and textures meld nicely. This is best served 1 to 2 hours later. It's also fine to make a day ahead; just be sure to bring it to room temperature.

Toast or grill the bread slices, then rub the surface with halved garlic scape or garlic. Put the toast on plates or a board and arrange the greens and their juices on top. Finish with a ribbon of olive oil and serve. (McFadden & Holmberg, 2017)

References

McFadden, J., & Holmberg, M. (2017). *Six Seasons: A New Way with Vegetables*. New York: Artisan.

Sherman, S., & Dooley, B. (2017). *The Sioux Chef's Indigenous Kitchen*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.