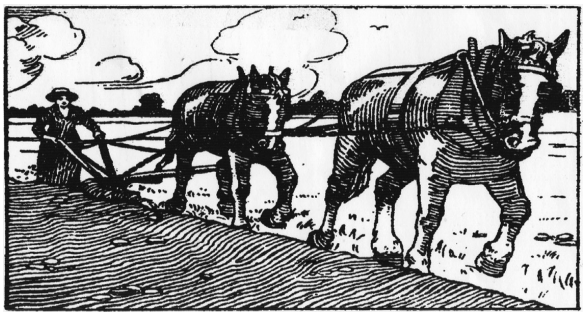
North Creek Community Farm
NEWSLETTER

Week three, June 21 and 23, 2016



IN THE BAG:

Basil – This herb just screams "summer!". I like to put it with pasta or on pizza.
Garlic Scapes – Last week of garlic scapes. Too many? Puree them in olive oil and freeze in a small zip lock bag. Lay it flat as it freezes so you can break a chunk off when needed.
Green onions
Head lettuce – red butter head (my favorite) and another romaine
Arugula – It's salad time!
Bok Choi – I usually try to not send something like this so soon but my timing was off. I have sent a recipe for an easy kimchi.
Spinach – the first spinach was killed by a hard frost on May 15 but this is holding well in the heat.
Radishes – peppery bites. Try them sautéed for a new way to eat them. The English like them sliced thinly on white bread with butter.

News From the Farm

Killing weeds

Last year was very wet which saved time on irrigating, but allowed no dry time to kill weeds. Quack grass is a very tough plant that spreads by both seeds and fast growing rhizomes that can spread as much as 8 feet in one year. They are best thwarted by digging up their roots and drying them out. If rain comes, they happily re-root where they are. I spent Sunday morning using a digger to up-root the quack grass and hoping it would dry out. This has to be repeated several times. The digger also kills the smaller weeds that have germinated. When I first bought the farm, the main vegetable producing field had not been using in over 7 years. It had become a solid mat of quack grass. Using my Fjord horses, I plowed it into strips and then used a horse drawn digger to loosen the roots. In the end there were so many roots that they had to be raked into windrows and removed by hand to the woods. Slowly they have regained some lost ground.

Hybrids and GMOs

When I talk to people about raising food and crops, there is often some confusion about hybrids vs. genetically modified organisms (GMOs). In breeding dogs, when a dog of one breed mates with a dog of another breed, it is called a mutt and is often more vigorous than either breed. In the plant world, when you cross one plant species with another, it is called a hybrid or F1 and sometimes produces a plant with better characteristics than either parent. It is just a mutt. Often these characteristics are qualities that modern food systems desire, like thicker skin or consistent ripening. Heirloom varieties are "pure breed" seeds that have traditional traits that often include good taste. They may have funny shaped fruits that have thin skins and don't ship well. They have not had their DNA altered, they have just been manipulated through selection and breeding. Most of the food we eat in fact was slowly changed over many years through cross breeding and selection.

To make a hybrid you have to control which plant pollinates which plant and this is often laborious. To make hybrid corn for example, you have to remove the pollen producing tassels and provide pollen from the desired parent crop. Tassels are removed by machine but then many high schools students make money in the summer pulling off the tops that are missed by machine.

GMOs on the other hand take a short cut approach and their DNA has been manipulated. Instead of waiting for nature to change the DNA, it is done in the lab. What is weird about GMO is that we don't know what they will produce when they cross breed with natural plants and whether something will escape that we can't control. I do not dismiss all GMOs because there may be things that could be beneficial. Faced with a deadly epidemic, would I rule out GMOs? However, when billions of dollars are on the line, full disclosure is not always provided and at a minimum, I believe that food that has been genetically modified needs to be labeled.

Bok Choy Kimchi
(OK, I couldn't find an easy recipe for kimchi but this one looked good.)
Ingredients

- 4 cups filtered water
- 4 tablespoons of sea salt or kosher salt
- 1 medium head (about 2 pounds) green cabbage, cored and chopped
- 1 medium-large daikon radish, shredded
- 3 medium carrots, shredded
- 4 baby bok choy, chopped
- 1 medium yellow onion, diced
- 4 garlic cloves, minced
- 2-inch knob of ginger, minced
- 2 teaspoons gochugaru (Korean red chili pepper flakes)
- 3 green onions, chopped

Directions:

1. Mix a brine from the sea salt and water. Stir well to thoroughly dissolve salt.
2. Add cabbage, daikon radish, carrots, and bok choy to a large glass jar or ceramic crock. Let vegetables soak in brine, covered by a plate or other weight to keep the vegetables submerged. Soak for at least 3 hours.
3. Use a food processor to process onion, garlic, and ginger into a paste. Mix in the gochugaru and green onions.
4. Drain brine off of vegetables, reserving brine. Taste vegetables for saltiness. You want them to taste decidedly salt, but not surprisingly so. If they are too salty, rinse them with water. If you cannot taste salt, sprinkle the vegetables with a couple of teaspoons of salt and mix.
5. Mix the vegetables throughly with the spice paste. Pack them tightly into a clean jar or crock, pressing down until the brine rises. If necessary, add a little of the reserved vegetable-soaking brine to submerge the vegetables. Weigh the vegetables down with a plate or other weight to keep the vegetables submerged.
6. Ferment in your kitchen or other warm place. Taste the kimchi every day and check it to make sure it is still submerged under the brine. Depending on your tastes and the temperature of where it is stored, the kimchi can be ready in as soon as a few days or a few weeks. The fermentation process generally takes longer in cool weather and shorter in warm weather. When your kimchi tastes ripe (sour and tangy), move it to the refrigerator. It can last for several months, if not longer, in the fridge as long as it still has some brine in the jar.

Notes
VERY important! :)
Be sure to ferment your kimchi in a glass jar or glazed ceramic crock. Since the brine and vegetables are heavily salted, it is important to avoid using metal or plastic.
Do NOT use iodized salt or any product with preservatives in your kimchi. Iodine is antimicrobial and will prevent the kimchi from fermenting.
You do NOT want air touching your vegetables. It is vital to keep everything submerged under the brine. As long as everything is submerged under liquid, mold will not develop.
After your vegetables have soaked in the brine, they will lose a lot of moisture and will decrease in volume. Depending on the size of your jar, some of the brine might flow over as the kimchi ferments so sometimes it's helpful to put a glass plate under the jar as it sits.

Gochugaru (Korean red chili pepper flakes) can be found at any Asian grocery store This recipe yields about 40 oz.

In the Bag:

Bok Choy
Green Onions
2 Heads of Lettuce
Arugula
Basil
Spinach
Radishes
Garlic Scapes