



This Week's Word From the Farm

9/27/10

What's In Your Box ?

- **Italian Sweet Peppers** ~ These are delicious raw, sautéed, roasted or any way you would use a bell pepper.
- **Bulbing Fennel**
- **Lettuce**
- **Tomatillos**
- **Watermelons**
- **Tomatoes** - This week we will welcome you to pick a few extra slicing tomatoes if you can use them. Salsa time?
- **Cherry Tomatoes** ~ u-pick
- **Potatoes**
- **Eggplant**
- **Assorted Hot Peppers**
- **Summer Squash/Zucchini**
- **Garlic**
- **Onions**
- **Cucumbers**
- **Fresh Sage**
- **Strawberries** ~ u-pick

Dear Friends,

This week's message is from intern Vanessa. Vanessa has been hard at work all season on the melons and watermelons we grow here at Riverhill, and with a dedication that few could possibly match. One day, I saw her in the watermelon patch holding a bee in her bare hand, moving it from flower to flower to ensure proper germination. As the melons formed and began to ripen, she spent hours in the field holding umbrellas over each melon to make sure that they didn't get sunburned. And when ground squirrels started eating the watermelons in the field before they were ripened, she called a conference of all the creatures of Riverhill Farm, who prevailed upon the ground squirrels to stop eating the melons. Now that's a lover of watermelons!

A whole month of watermelon—I hope I am not the only one that was extremely excited?!

I have a very special affinity for watermelons—I can honestly eat an entire watermelon, of any size, single-handedly, not even bat an eye, and still be hungry for more. And I am pretty sure that this is a love that was passed down to me from my grandfather, Edward Lasagna (yep, really, lasagna), who was known to have a watermelon in the refrigerator and one waiting in reserve in the cupboard at all times during the summer season.

Every time my grandpa ate a watermelon, he would get a sparkle in his eye and, holding up three fingers, he'd ask in his thick Italian accent, "What are the three things you can do with a watermelon?" Then you were supposed to answer, "You can eat it, drink it, and wash your face with it." I never quite knew if that was supposed to be funny, or if there was something that got lost in the translation from Italian, or if it was just a silly comment about how the sweet juice inevitably gets all over your hands and face. Whatever it was, Grandpa Eddie chuckled at it *every time*, and with his love of watermelon, that was often!

You may know that each year on the farm all the interns have a crop that we keep a special eye on throughout the season, and no surprise, mine is melons. This has afforded me the opportunity to learn a lot about melons that I hadn't known before from the amazing way watermelon can reseed itself in the wild to old recipes on pickling the rinds. But the most remarkable thing I have learned is that melons have both male and female flowers, the female flowers being the ones that produce fruit. These female flowers open after sunrise and remain open for only one day with a pollination window of only a few hours. Within this short window, research has shown that bees have to visit these

female flowers at *least eight times* for them to produce good quality fruits. And so, in my opinion, that makes each fruit, each watermelon, a minor miracle!

Thanks to the vibrant year-round habitat around the farm, we have plenty of pollinators buzzing about constantly, so I suppose it may not be quite as miraculous as I would like to believe, but all pollination, or any other natural process for that matter, is a miracle, so.... why not? Why not take the minute to celebrate this little miracle! The miracle of the sweet, juicy delight of a watermelon—eat it, drink it and, if you like, wash your face with it!

Recipes of the Week

Roasted Sweet Pepper Soup with Fried Sage Leaves

- 4 large sweet peppers
- 1 medium onion, peeled and diced (about 1 cup)
- 1 large potato, peeled and diced (about 1 cup)
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 quart chicken stock (or vegetable stock for vegetarian option)
- 1/4 cup cream or milk
- 3 Tbsp butter plus 4 Tbsp for sage leaves
- Cayenne, salt and pepper to taste
- Fresh sage

Roast the peppers by placing them over or under an open flame until they blacken on all sides. (You can use a grill, cooktop gas burner, or oven broiler.) Place the blackened peppers in a bag, close the bag and let the peppers steam for 10-15 minutes, or until the skins feel like they can easily be slipped off. Remove the peppers from the bag, peel off the blackened skins, remove the seeds. Chop the peppers roughly. Heat the butter in a large soup pot over medium-high heat. Add the chopped onion and sauté for 2-3 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add the potatoes and cook another 1-2 minutes, then add the garlic and roasted peppers. Stir well and cook for 2 minutes. Add the stock, stir well and bring to a simmer. Cook over medium heat until potatoes are soft. Purée the soup in a blender or food processor until very smooth. You may also use an immersion blender directly in the pot. Return to the pot set over low heat. Add the cream, stir well and taste. Add some cayenne, salt and pepper to taste. To fry sage leaves, heat butter in small sauté pan. Add 8-10 fresh sage leaves and fry until brown and slightly crispy. Float several on top of each bowl and serve.

Roasted Fennel and Potatoes

- 2 fennel bulbs, (about 4 ounces each), trimmed
- 8 potatoes, (about 1 pound), cut in half
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon olive oil

Heat oven to 425 degrees. Set a heavy roasting pan in the oven, and allow to preheat for 20 minutes. Pre-heating the roasting pan gives the veggies a crisp, golden crunch. Meanwhile, cut each fennel bulb lengthwise into six wedges. Season fennel and potatoes with salt and pepper, and toss with olive oil. Remove roasting pan from oven, and place fennel and potatoes, cut side down, in hot pan. Return pan to oven, and roast vegetables for 30 minutes, without turning, until tender and golden brown. Serve immediately.