

The Stanton Street Harvest

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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LOWER EAST SIDE'S CSA

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TODAY'S WEATHER AT WINDFLOWER FARM



74°/59°

Scattered thunderstorms.
Chance of precipitation 50%

TED'S LETTER FROM THE FARM

Water, Water Everywhere

By Ted Blomgren

Heavy rains fell all afternoon today. Rainfall every weekend has, I expect, made some of you irritable. A wet July and record-setting rainfall so far in August have certainly made this farmer grumpy. Crops suffer when conditions remain wet for a long time. Diseases settle in, nutrients wash away, tomatoes crack. Rainfall over the last 90 days has been 10 inches above normal.

To go outdoors is to sink to our knees in mud. An excavator and bulldozer sit in the backyard. We've hired our neighbor, Tom, to repair our pond and to improve the drainage around our barns and greenhouses. Soils are so saturated that water runs in a torrent through the shallow ditch he has dug.

In your shares this week are celery (which thrives in all this rain), assorted tomatoes and basil (which cannot stand the rain), bell peppers and eggplants (which, for now, just get bigger and bigger with each rain), scallions or onions, snap beans, a mix of lettuces, and assorted cooking greens. We will send larger bunches of basil next week. Consider making a batch of pesto. We'll also send tomatoes, peppers, yellow onions, red cabbages, green beans and salad greens.

You are invited to the Windflower Farm open house on the weekend of August 23-24. Come for the day or bring

—continued on page 2

MORE THAN JUST EMPTY CALORIES PLOWING THROUGH THE FEDERAL FARM BILL

By Jack Bradigan Spula

Whoever said that “the more you watch the news, the less you know” must have been thinking of how the media treat the Farm Bill. But now that we're safely past the latest chapter of this ongoing story—a couple months back, Congress overrode a presidential veto to enact the Farm Bill of 2008—we can make some sense out of it.

If we look at what's actually in the bill and where the money goes, we find the bill is misnamed. Since two-thirds of the \$60 billion in annual spending goes for Food Stamps and other nutrition programs, we really should call it the Food Bill. This rhetorical shift would transfer the emphasis to tens of millions of American families directly impacted by the bill—and contradict the view that the bill exists only to benefit special interests like Farm Belt Congressional delegations and lobbyists and the corporatized commodity producers (corn, soy, cotton) who reap humongous subsidies.

Questions about subsidies surely need to be debated—for example, why many big farmers bring home a ton of bacon while small vegetable, fruit and dairy farms that could be saved from extinction by targeted assistance are put on a low-cal diet. But thanks to years of hard slogging by progressives, there's much in the Farm Bill to celebrate.

In its review of the bill, the National Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture identified many provisions worth celebrating: a Rural Microenterprise Assistance Program to boost rural businesses through “micro-credit”; more money for the Value-Added Producer Grant Program, with new funds for small and medium-sized farms; more

funding for the Farmers Market Promotion Program; mandatory funding for the Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers program; and similarly, a shot in the arm for the Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program.

Many journalists and laypeople alike wax indignant about spending for conservation programs—usually reduced to a shorthand phrase, encouraging farmers to “idle their land.” True, in worst-case scenarios this might translate to paying farmers for doing nothing. Yet the public has a real interest in conservation programs that help preserve topsoil, streambanks and watersheds. And the Farm Bill does some of this through its Conservation Security Program, which

Beautiful, versatile eggplant



All over the world, at some point along the way, many cultures met and fell in love with the lovely appearance and creamy-smooth flesh of this surprisingly versatile vegetable. Eggplant prefers to be kept at about 50° F, which is warmer than most refrigerators and cooler than most kitchen counters. Wrap unwashed eggplant in a towel (not in plastic) to absorb any moisture and keep it in the vegetable bin of your refrigerator.

Community Notes...

NEXT WEEK'S VOLUNTEERS

Remember, we need three volunteers for each shift, and two shifts per season from each member!

Aug. 21, Early Shift (5:00-6:30 p.m.)

J. Scholvin

Aug. 21, Clean-Up (6:30-8:00 p.m.)

D. Shenfeld, C. Bernaldes

—*Ted's Letter, from page 1*

a tent and sleeping bag and stay all weekend. Note that showers are not available at the farm this year. For those not wanting to camp, a bed and breakfast or motel can be found in the area. Google “bed and breakfast” or “motel” and the name of one of our nearby villages for lists (we are midway between Saratoga Springs and Arlington, Vermont, and near the villages of Greenwich and Cambridge).

Open house activities will start in the early afternoon on Saturday with a farm tour and a trip to the Battenkill for swimming. We'll have a potluck dinner, followed by an evening with music and a bonfire (BYOB). We'll make a big farm breakfast on Sunday, followed by farm tours and a trip to the Washington County Fair. We hope you can make it.

—*What's in The Farm Bill, from page 1*

strikes a balance between “working farmland” and broad environmental values.

Last but not least are the new Farm Bill's supports for organic agriculture. The bill has some provisions to facilitate organic conversion (moving land from chemical methods to organic cultivation), including a cost-share program that helps small farmers cross that expensive bridge. There's also a \$78-million Organic Agricultural Research and Extension Initiative, which will, among other things, help develop new seed varieties well-suited to organic ag. And a new “classical plant and animal breeding” initiative will help organic farmers' efforts to save traditional strains of crops and livestock that industrialized ag has left to wither.

No legislation this massive and comprehensive can be all “wins,” of course. Organic advocates have identified some notable losses. For example, regarding contamination of crops by “genetically modified organisms,” which is an

RATATOUILLE

(from *Chez Panisse Vegetables* by Alice Waters)

With all these ingredients in peak season, now is the time for this summer classic.

1 large eggplant

Salt

3 onions

3 red bell peppers

4 summer squashes

5 tomatoes

6 to 12 cloves garlic

Extra-virgin olive oil

1 large bunch basil

Cut the eggplant into 1/2-inch cubes. Salt it liberally and leave it to drain in a colander. Peel and cut up the onions, and cut up the peppers, squashes, and tomatoes, keeping them all separate (and about the same size as the cubed eggplant). Smash and peel the garlic and chop it coarsely. Press down on the egg-

plant to extract more water and dry it.

In a heavy-bottomed pot, heat some of the olive oil and gently fry the eggplant until golden. Drain and reserve. Add more olive oil to the pot, and over medium-low heat sauté the onions. When they are soft, add the garlic and a bunch of basil wrapped tightly with a string. Stir for a minute, toss in the peppers, and cook for a few minutes; next add the squash and cook for a few minutes more, and then add the tomatoes. Cook for about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Finally add the eggplant, and cook 15 to 20 minutes more until everything is soft and the flavors have melded together. Remove the bouquet of basil and adjust the seasoning with freshly chopped basil, salt, and a bit of olive oil and finely chopped garlic, if necessary. Serve warm or cold.

Serves 8

BABA GHANOUJ

Delicious as a dip for vegetables or as a filling in a sandwich. Its distinct flavor comes from tahini, a sesame paste that is available in many supermarkets.

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

2 medium eggplants

1/4 cup pine nuts

1/4–1/2 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice

1/3 cup tahini

1–2 cloves garlic, minced

1 teaspoon ground cumin (optional)

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper

3 tablespoons chopped cilantro or parsley

Preheat the oven to 375° F. Rub 1 tablespoon of the oil over both whole eggplants and place them on a baking sheet. Roast, turning once or twice, until very

soft, 30 to 45 minutes depending on size. Let cool.

Meanwhile, toast the pine nuts in a dry, heavy skillet over high heat until they start to brown in spots and become fragrant. (Be careful not to overtoast, as they will burn very quickly once toasted.) Immediately transfer to a dish to cool.

Cut the eggplants in half and scoop out the flesh. Purée the eggplant flesh in a food processor or finely chop it on a cutting board. Transfer to a bowl. Add the lemon juice, tahini, garlic, cumin, salt, cayenne, and the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Mix until well combined. Transfer to a serving bowl and garnish with cilantro or parsley and toasted pine nuts.

Serves 4

increasingly serious problem for organic farmers located near conventional farms, the bill failed to assign liability to those responsible—namely, companies like Monsanto that develop and patent the risky, aggressive genetic invaders.

So the next time you get news about the Farm Bill—make that the Food Bill—remember there's almost certainly more to the story than what you're hearing. And if you deplore some of the bill's priorities, remember that in many significant respects the bill is right on the money—and that much of the money will pay back the taxpayer many times

over, in terms of environmental, personal, and community health.

Jack Bradigan Spula is a Rochester, NY based freelance writer and environmentalist who works with the Northeast Organic Farming Association.

The Stanton Street Harvest is published weekly by and for members of the Stanton Street CSA (P.O. Box 971, NYC 10002; <http://stantonstreetcsa.wordpress.com>). Thanks to shareholder Lucinda Sears for the lovely illustrations. We plundered most of the recipes and food info from cookbooks by Alice Waters, Deborah Madison, Farmer John Peterson, and other food geniuses. We heartily encourage all shareholders to send questions, recipes, letters to the editor or other contributions to stantonstreetcsa@gmail.com.