

Erewhon Farm

Week 10-August 09, 2009

Farmer Tim Reports

Hello from hot and humid Erewhon!

On Friday we were racing around the farm in the afternoon watering beds in preparation for a hot and windy weekend but Mother Nature was kind and sent enough rain to do the job for us. Thanks, Mother! The warmer temperatures this week should help a few of the warm weather crops (like tomatoes) ripen.

In our new west field we are hilling potatoes, watching for beetles and seeing an, as yet unidentified, disease overtaking some of the potato plants. The only beetles visible in the potato patch are lady beetles and it turns out that the lady beetles feed on the eggs of the Colorado potato beetles. We are always happy to catch sight of these bright red and spotted creatures!

The field hoophouse has recently been a scary place with enormous weeds, high humidity, extreme heat, and voracious mosquitoes. Since we will soon be ready to start planting crops to harvest in late fall, we're planning to mass our troops this morning for an invasion to clear the jungle before it gets too hot. Thanks to volunteer Steve Trisko who has already cleared a section for us. The last of the potatoes were planted to replace the two beds of garlic in section "H" – we're hoping for a late frost so the little spuds have time to mature.

Over the past couple of weeks Farmer Tim has been spotted spending more time in his hammock reading before dropping off for an early afternoon snooze. After peering through the locust trees and grape vines we saw that the book was Michael Pollan's latest, *In Defense of Food*. (In case

you're unfamiliar with Mr. Pollan, he has long been an advocate for returning to a more healthful eating culture. You can read his recent NYT Magazine article, "Out of the Kitchen, Onto the Couch", here:

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/02/magazine/02cooking-t.html?_r=1&em=&pagewanted=all)

The other day he left his journal open on the seed table and we saw he had penned a few notes about vegetable nutrients and the implications for Erewhon. First, the USDA recently released a study showing a decline in vegetable nutrients over the past 40 years or so, and attributed the decline largely to plant breeders who are selecting plants for characteristics other than for nutritional benefits. He is looking into other variables that do, or might, cause nutrient loss: time from harvest to plate, harvest before peak ripeness, home cooking process, non-organic growing methods, and post-harvest handling including washing.

Although the picture is not yet crystal-clear, we certainly have nothing to lose by making every effort to replace modern varieties with heirloom varieties as promoted by Seed Saver's Exchange, harvesting at peak ripeness the same day they are given to subscribers, and minimizing destructive processing at the farm. We'll keep you posted.

In your boxes this week

This week we should have a good supply of summer squash, a bag (finally!) of lettuce, onions, cucumbers, possibly some fingerling potatoes, cherry tomatoes, and other items. We may have enough squash to put out some 5-10# bags for canning, freezing or cooking zucchini bread. Delivery customers should email us if they

would like us to deliver a bag for you.

U-Pick includes, herbs, arugula, and possibly cherry tomatoes.

U-Forage: Purslane, lamb's quarters, stinging nettles

Delivery Schedule

12:30-1:00—van leaves farm
1:30-2:00—delivery at Lombard
2:00-2:30—delivery at Wheaton
2:30-3:00—delivery at Bartlett
3:00-3:30—delivery at Elgin

All times are approximate and may vary.

Pick your own!

Belles Berries (Jenny Gresko, Izabella Kowalski) will have pick your own berries throughout the season. If you are interested in picking your own berries to freeze/preserve or simply to snack on please contact them at BellesBerries@gmail.com or Izabella at 630.313.9632. Berries will also be available for purchase during CSA pick-up on Wednesday and Fridays. Erewhon CSA subscribers will get a discounted rate of \$3 for a 6oz. freshly picked clamshell.

Plan Your 2010 Garden Now at 20th Heirloom Garden Show

Knowledge of the past is proving critical to the future of the country and Garfield Farm Museum's 20th Annual Heirloom Garden Show on Sunday August 23 from 11 am – 4 pm is just such a wealth of accumulated knowledge. As gardens yield their bounty, now is the time to plan for the 2010 garden season.

The wonders of technology and an excessive focus on popular culture have disconnected most Americans from the basics of survival. The rise in gas prices is greatly upsetting daily life which makes the ability of GPS direction finding system in one's car irrelevant compared to simply being able to afford where one has to go. The historic record of temperatures and the glacial record have all the leading scientists convinced of global warming. The crisis of interest rates and economic cycles proves houses should be considered homes first and investments second.

These seemingly unrelated factors: oil costs, global warming, and housing sprawl have a very direct connection to plant genetics that our country depends upon for survival. Current agriculture depends on oil for powering tractors, making fertilizer and pesticides, as well as shipping food. It assumes there is no limit to productive soils or water supply. Increase in oil costs, shifts in temperature and rain patterns, and continued bulldozing of productive land for houses will make the current era of cheap food a fond memory. Only those crops, fruits, and vegetables that can survive well with a minimum of oil inputs, hotter and drier extremes, and grow in less productive soils will be critical for such an uncertain future of change.

The Heirloom Garden Show reflects hundreds of years of breeding varieties of plants to meet different conditions. Several factors have shaped the genetics of our food: resistance to disease, ability to thrive in dry, wet, weedy conditions, or poor soils, just to name a few. The mass market depends on that one or two varieties that produce the highest return. Offering food or any product at the cheapest price does not necessarily show all the real costs of production to a society. Tax dollars are spent to subsidize everything from highways, irrigation systems, and political stability in oil producing regions so these hidden costs still hit everyone's wallet. This makes genetic diversity critical to respond to ever changing conditions.

The Heirloom Garden Show will feature gardeners and produce growers from the Great Lakes region to display, offer for tasting or sell their bounty that is in season. August of course is the month for tomatoes. This being one of the most popular vegetables (technically a fruit – the seeds are inside) visitors are always amazed to see all shapes, sizes and colors at the show. Tomatoes are just some of the items from the garden that Rolling Prairie Acres will bring. Rolling Prairie, with managers Doug & Tanya Webster from Sigourney, IA will have a variety of tomatoes, as well as several types of garlic on display. What would the Garden Show be without Jimmy Doyle, from Jimmy's Chilies in Tinley Park, who will exhibit different varieties of tomatoes, as well as chilies. This year, Sacha Burns from H & H Flowers/Sunkissed Organics, shall bring vegetables from the work they have been doing in LaPorte, IN.

Many of the exhibitors are members of the Seed Savers Exchange, a remarkable grass roots effort begun in 1975 and that has expanded to 889 acre site with 51 organic garden plots with isolated gardens to prevent cross pollination of the over 3000 varieties grown each year out of a 25,000 variety collection. Located in Decorah, Iowa, Seed Savers has annually received a portion of the proceeds from the Heirloom Garden Show.

In contrast to culinary plants, the museum also grows a variety of old fashioned flowers, many the ancestors to popular modern hybrids. Balsams, kiss me over the garden gate, spider flower, love in a mist, four o'clocks are just some of the fanciful names once familiar to gardeners of 100 years ago, that can be seen at the museum's flower garden.

The focal point of the museum, the 1846 brick tavern will also be open for tours. Food and refreshments will be available from the Inglenook Pantry of Geneva, IL. The show is \$6 for adults and \$2 for children under 13 years of age. For information, contact 630 584-8485 or email info@garfieldfarm.org. The museum is

located 5 miles west of Geneva, IL off ILL Rt.38 on Garfield Road. This historically intact former 1840s Illinois prairie farmstead is being restored as an 1840s working farm museum by donors and volunteers from around the country.

Join Slow Food Chicago on August 26 for an Eat-in at Daley Plaza.

Slow Food USA & Slow Food Chicago believe that change can't wait...sign the 'Time for Lunch' Petition. It is time to provide America's children with REAL FOOD at school.

Please add your signature today. It will be used in a public display of support during this year's reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act.

Help us make this change and build a strong foundation for our children's health & support the local farmers by using their fruits & vegetables in our schools.

How else can you support this important cause? Join Slow Food Chicago's Eat-In at Daley Plaza, August 26th (11am-1pm). Bring your lunch to this free and fun event to learn more about the Child Nutrition Act and what YOU can do to get better food in school lunches. And, consider hosting your own Eat-In on Labor Day.

What is an Eat-In? An Eat-In is a group of people gathering in public in order to share a meal...it is a conscious effort to bring new people together, to strengthen our communities and to reframe the goals of the food movement.

Join us for fun, entertainment, inspiring speakers, and to meet farmers and other organizations working to make food that is good, clean and fair available to everyone.

Visit Slow Food Chicago to learn more!

Potatoes

From World's Healthiest Foods

Health Benefits

Potatoes are a very popular food source. Unfortunately, most people eat potatoes in the form of greasy French fries or potato chips, and even baked potatoes are typically loaded down with fats such as butter, sour cream, melted cheese and bacon bits. Such treatment can make even baked potatoes a potential contributor to a heart attack. But take away the extra fat and deep frying, and a baked potato is an exceptionally healthful low calorie, high fiber food that offers significant protection against cardiovascular disease and cancer.

Our food ranking system qualified potatoes as a very good source of vitamin C, a good source of vitamin B6, copper, potassium, manganese, and dietary fiber.

Potatoes also contain a variety of phytonutrients that have antioxidant activity. Among these important health-promoting compounds are carotenoids, flavonoids, and caffeic acid, as well as unique tuber storage proteins, such as patatin, which exhibit activity against free radicals.

Potatoes' Phytochemicals Rival Those in Broccoli

Potatoes' reputation as a high-carb, white starch has removed them from the meals of many a weight-conscious eater, but this stereotype is due for a significant overhaul. A new analytical method developed by Agricultural Research Service plant geneticist Roy Navarre has identified 60 different kinds of phytochemicals and vitamins in the skins and flesh of 100 wild and commercially grown potatoes. Analysis of Red and Norkotah potatoes revealed that these spuds' phenolic content rivals that of broccoli, spinach and Brussels sprouts, and includes flavonoids with protective activity against cardiovascular disease, respiratory problems and certain cancers. Navarre's team also identified potatoes with high levels of vitamin C, folic acid, quercetin and kukoamines. These last compounds, which have blood pressure lowering potential, have only been found in one other plant, *Lycium chinense* (a.k.a., wolfberry/gogi berry). How much kukoamine is needed for a blood pressure lowering effect in humans must be assessed before it can be determined whether an average portion of potatoes delivers enough to impact cardiovascular health. Still, potatoes' phytochemical profiles show it's time to shed their starch-only image; spuds-baked, steamed or healthy sautéed but not fried-deserve a place in your healthy way of eating. "[Phytochemical Profilers Investigate Potato Benefits](#)," Agricultural Research, September 2007

Blood-Pressure Lowering Potential

UK scientists at the Institute for Food Research have identified blood pressure-lowering compounds called

kukoamines in potatoes. Previously only found in *Lycium chinense*, an exotic herbal plant whose bark is used to make an infusion in Chinese herbal medicine, kukoamines were found in potatoes using a new type of research called metabolomics.

Until now, when analyzing a plant's composition, scientists had to know what they were seeking and could typically look for 30 or so known compounds. Now, metabolomic techniques enable researchers to find the unexpected by analyzing the 100s or even 1000s of small molecules produced by an organism.

"Potatoes have been cultivated for thousands of years, and we thought traditional crops were pretty well understood," said IFR food scientist Dr Fred Mellon, "but this surprise finding shows that even the most familiar of foods might conceal a hoard of health-promoting chemicals." Another good reason to center your diet around the World's Healthiest Foods!

In addition to potatoes, researchers looked at tomatoes since they belong to the same plant family-*Solanaceae*-as *Lycium chinense*. Metabolomic assays also detected kukoamine compounds in tomatoes.

The IFR scientists found higher levels of kukoamines and related compounds than some of the other compounds in potatoes that have a long history of scientific investigation. However, because they were previously only noted in *Lycium chinense*, kukoamines have been little studied. Researchers are now determining their stability during cooking and dose response (how much of these compounds are needed to impact health).

Vitamin B6-Building Your Cells

If only for its high concentration of [vitamin B6](#)-a cup of baked potato contains 21.0% of the daily value for this important nutrient-the potato earns high marks as a health-promoting food.

Vitamin B6 is involved in more than 100 enzymatic reactions. Enzymes are proteins that help chemical reactions take place, so vitamin B6 is active virtually everywhere in the body. Many of the building blocks of protein, *amino acids*, require B6 for their synthesis, as do the *nucleic acids* used in the creation of our DNA. Because amino and nucleic acids are such critical parts of new cell formation, vitamin B6 is essential for the formation of virtually all new cells in the body. *Heme* (the protein center of our red blood cells) and *phospholipids* (cell membrane components that enable messaging between cells) also depend on vitamin B6 for their creation.

Vitamin B6-Brain Cell and Nervous System Activity

Vitamin B6 plays numerous roles in our nervous system, many of which involve neurological (brain cell) activity. B6 is necessary for the creation of *amines*, a type of messaging molecule or neurotransmitter that the nervous system relies on to transmit messages from one nerve to the next. Some of the amine-derived neurotransmitters that require vitamin B6 for their production are *serotonin*, a lack of which is linked to depression; *melatonin*, the hormone needed for a good night's sleep; *epinephrine* and *norepinephrine*, hormones that help us respond to stress; and *GABA*, which is needed for normal brain function.

Vitamin B6-Cardiovascular Protection

Vitamin B6 plays another critically important role in *methylation*, a chemical process in which methyl groups are transferred from one molecule to another. Many essential chemical events in the body are made possible by methylation, for example, genes can be switched on and turned off in this way. This is particularly important in cancer prevention since one of the genes that can be switched on and off is the tumor suppressor gene, p53. Another way that methylation helps prevent cancer is by attaching methyl groups to toxic substances to make them less toxic and encourage their elimination from the body.

Methylation is also important to cardiovascular health. Methylation changes a potentially dangerous molecule called *homocysteine* into other, benign substances. Since homocysteine can directly damage blood vessel walls greatly increasing the progression of atherosclerosis, high homocysteine levels are associated with a significantly increased risk for heart attack and stroke. Eating foods rich in vitamin B6 can help keep homocysteine levels low. In addition, diets high in vitamin B6-rich foods are associated with overall lower rates of heart disease, even when homocysteine levels are normal, most likely because of all the other beneficial activities of this energetic B vitamin.

A single baked potato will also provide you with 11.7% of the daily value for fiber, but remember the fiber in potatoes is mostly in their skin. If you want the cholesterol-lowering, colon cancer preventing, and bowel supportive effects of fiber, be sure to eat the potato's flavorful skin as well as its creamy center.

Vitamin B6-Athletic Performance

Vitamin B6 is also necessary for the breakdown of glycogen, the form in which sugar is stored in our muscle cells and liver, so this vitamin is a key player in athletic performance and endurance.

Garlic Potato Pie

1 lb of scrubbed boiling potatoes.
6 cloves fresh garlic, sliced finely.
1 cup of milk.
¼ cup of breadcrumbs.

3 tablespoons of grated parmesan cheese.

3 tablespoons of butter.

Preparation Instructions:

Preheat your oven to 380°F (180°C).

Slice potatoes thinly. Butter a 9-inch pie plate.

Arrange a layer of potatoes, garlic slices, parmesan and slices of butter. Repeat using the rest of the ingredients (other than the milk), saving some of the cheese and the butter.

Heat the milk and pour over top of the potatoes. Top with bread crumbs and remaining cheese and butter.

Bake for 1 hour, until the potatoes are tender and top has turned golden brown.

Potato Latkes

1 pound potatoes

1/2 cup finely chopped onion

1 large egg, lightly beaten

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/2 to 3/4 cup olive oil
Preheat oven to 250°F.

Peel potatoes and coarsely grate by hand, transferring to a large bowl of cold water as grated. Soak potatoes 1 to 2 minutes after last batch is added to water, then drain well in a colander.

Spread grated potatoes and onion on a kitchen towel and roll up jelly-roll style. Twist towel tightly to wring out as much liquid as possible. Transfer potato mixture to a bowl and stir in egg and salt.

Heat 1/4 cup oil in a 12-inch nonstick skillet over moderately high heat until hot but not smoking. Working in batches of 4 latkes, spoon 2 tablespoons potato mixture per latke into skillet, spreading into 3-inch rounds with a fork. Reduce heat to moderate and cook until undersides are browned, about 5 minutes. Turn latkes over and cook until undersides are browned, about 5 minutes more. Transfer to paper towels to drain and season with salt. Add more oil to skillet as needed. Keep latkes warm on a wire rack set in a shallow baking pan in oven.