The Busy Bee

September 18th, 2011
Delivery Week #16
Volume 1, Issue 16

www.fazendaboaterra.com FAZENDA BOA TERRA 952-469-2278

The Dream Revisited

By John

With everything that has been going on with Lidia and I over the past five weeks or so we have gotten sidetracked in a few ways. August is already a hard month on any vegetable farm. You can go to any vegetable farm, particularly one with apprentices who might be trying their hand at farming for the first time and you will hear all about 'August burnout.' Add the emotional load that we have been carrying and some of the romance of farming slips out from between your fingers. Luckily the fall always comes to reinvigorate the spirit and help us reclaim the romance of the farm-life. We have had a lot of conversations about our mistakes this year, and how to work them out for next year. We talk a lot about where the real shortfalls in our production system are and what we need to do to be more efficient. This brings me back to the conversation that we never finished about what our ultimate end goal is for the farm. There is a lot of short-term stuff we need to discuss impending for next year and the next few after that but this week I want to talk about the big picture, the grand vision. Our primary objective is ultimately to create a model farm and become mentors and teachers to the next generation of family farmers. Diversity is a necessity on a farm that hopes to be an educational model for several reasons. The first is that agriculture is much more diverse than just vegetables for CSA. To be a well-rounded farmer you need experience in a broad array of farming systems. Second and perhaps most important is that we firmly believe that for a farm system (or ecosystem) to be sustainable financially, socially and most important, environmentally, it must be diversified. We like to think of CSA vegetable farms as diverse because of all the different crops we grow. On the surface this may be true but when you dig deeper you will find that with regards to the impact on the soil and general soil management. Vegetables are basically a monocrop and like any other monocrop they are hard on the soil. The first step in diversifying a vegetable system is to develop robust cover and green manure cropping systems (as I write this I am fuming a bit over my bid that didn't go through at a farm auction for a Brillion seeder that I could have had for a song). These systems not only allow the vegetable land to get more frequent periods of rest but build broader crop rotations. Rotating the kinds of crops we put on each field is our best way for controlling pest and disease issue and maintaining healthy soil life. Ideally we would like to have half of our land in and half out of production. For example, say we had 20 acres of good vegetable ground; only 10 of those acres would be in vegetables each year. You will sometimes hear opponents of organic farming say that it will take twice as much land for organic farmers to feed the world. They parrot this response like obedient party lapdogs, but never once have I read a study to back this up. It is simply wrong, but my assumption is that they use this idea of half of your land being in production and have out to base this argument. This is baseless for several reasons. First, farming all of your land non-stop is not financially or environmentally sustainable in the long run. Eventually you will lose your soil life increasing dependence on synthetic fertilizers and pesticides that are financially unsound as applications become more concentrated and more frequent only to maintain the status quo. Not to mention the environmental implications of increasing wildlife, soil, water and human exposure to such things. The other reason this is not true is because they are assuming that land in soil building rather that vegetable production has no agricultural use. Animals, animals are a critical component to a sustainable farm with special attention to ruminants such as sheep, goats and especially cows. There is no doubt that vegetables provide the income that will

Whats On Deck

It's that time of the year, lots of heavy things. Potatoes, carrots, beets, onions and winter squash will all keep coming in. Cabbage, broccoli and cauliflower will hopefully make an appearance soon. We have lots of green tomatoes picked, while not nearly as tasty as a summer tomato we think some will carry over into October, even after the pepper and eggplant finally give up the ghost.

float the farm, but it is animals and their ability to help move nutrients and energy through the farm that will keep it healthy. So animals are the response to criticism with regards to taking land out of vegetable production. It doesn't really have to be removed from production at all, only shifted to a different production system. When you take vegetable land out of production for a year or two let is recover there are so many things you can still do with it. Clovers, alfalfa, Sudan grass, soybeans or peas mixed with a cereal can all make fantastic forage for livestock. It may be more management intensive but just as you rotate vegetable crops out, you can rotate your animals onto those same fields. Leaving their stinky treasure behind as they go. Not only does it make great pasture, but this land can also be put into hay or straw as the rotation permits, which can be bailed and used as food, bedding pack or mulch. So to say that land is unproductive just because it doesn't have vegetables on it is pure fallacy, it just needs to be managed better. This I suppose has been more a lesson in our personal farm philosophy than our dream for the farm but it helps to establish the foundation on which we will build out farm. Its implication on the CSA I will go into further next week.

News and Notes

- Due to the weather we postponed the member picnic. It will happen this Sunday, September 25, 2011 at 12pm rain or shine. If you want can make it shoot us an email at farmers@fazendaboaterra.com .
- In the next few weeks we will have Enrollment forms available for the 2012 season. They will be available online but hard copies will be available at you site.
- We have plenty of remaining smaller chickens in the 3-4 pound (Cornish game hen) range. If you are interested in ordering any smaller chickens they are available
- Thank you again for the letters, cards and calls of support the past few weeks.

Featured Item

Winter squash again, but this week we are featuring spaghetti squash. It gets it name from the spaghetti like strands you can get from the flesh (see recipe below). One of the most mild (almost bland) flavored siblings in the squash family it makes a great pasta substitute for your favorite sauce or just eat with salt and pepper and a little oil or butter. It is a great alternative to carbohydrate dense and nutrient poor spaghetti. Just think of it as 'super spaghetti'. At 50–55 degrees its will keep for several months, absent of a cold room or root cellar it will stay fresh on your counter for several weeks.

Recipe of the Week

Cooking Spaghetti Squash

1. Preheat the oven to 375°
2. Use a skewer to poke 10-15 holes in the squash
3. Place in a shallow pan and bake for one hour
4. Allow to cool enough to handle, then slice the squash in half
5. Scoop out the seeds and loose flesh around the seeds and discard
6. Using a a large fork, gently scrape the flesh out into spaghetti like strands

Vegan Moroccan-Spiced Spaghetti Squash

- 1 (3 1/2- to 4-pound) spaghetti squash
- 5 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne
- 1 1/2 teaspoons sea salt (or to taste)
- 3 tablespoons golden raisins
- Half of a 15-oz can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro

Use the method above for preparing the squash.

While the squash cooks, heat the oil in a small saucepan over medium heat. Add the garlic and cook for 1-2 minutes. Stir in spices, salt, raisins, and chickpeas and remove from heat.

When the squash is done, toss the squash with the spiced oil mixture and cilantro. Serve warm, over couscous or sautéed winter greens (kale, collards chard etc.) if you like.