

ROXBURY FARM

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september 17, 2012 - pickup week # 15

www.roxburyfarm.com

Letter from a farmer

I admit, some weeks it is difficult to pick an interesting theme to write about in the newsletter. This was one of those weeks until just moments ago Jean-Paul asked for a ride down to a tractor that was parked next to the cow pasture. The cows came running over and then protested loudly when I drove away. This is not because they like me in particular; it was the truck I was driving. This reminded me of a Radiolab podcast I listened to this week about zoo animals and brain function.

Our cows were excited by my truck because this truck or Dave's truck (both Ford Rangers) bring them spent brewery grains a couple of times a week. They love their beer treats and come running from all corners of the pasture for this stuff. They don't get excited if we drive up in the Jeep. Yesterday, the cows' previous owner, Elaine Swiler, came to visit. She raised our mother cows from calves and sold them to us two years ago. The older cows, Velvet, Aggie, and Spot, remembered her and came over for handful of corn. When the cows or sheep see us in the golf cart they know they are probably getting moved to a new pasture of fresh grass. They line up at the fence and wait for us to open it.

Our cows and sheep are herd animals and if you watch you will see a very strict herd hierarchy. There is an order to their movements and who gets to eat and drink first. Velvet is the boss cow and she gets the most room at the hay feeder or beer treat containers. If other cows don't get out of her way she moves them with a powerful shove with her head & neck. Most of the time the other cows clear out of her way when they see her coming. Nevertheless cows like to pair up with another animal and it is important that a herd always has an equal number of animals so no one is left out.

The steers are in a separate pasture with the rams and male lambs. They have formed a different kind of herd. The steers have adopted the rams as part of their 'herd'. If the steers move on from the shade tree out to pasture they call for the rams to come with them and won't move until the rams are nearby. The steers are out of sorts for a number of days when we take two steers to the butcher. They stand at the fence nearest to the road where we drive away and moo. They look for the missing steers and it takes a few days for them to calm down and settle into a new herd formation. It is difficult to take an animal to the butcher and watching the animals left behind makes it more so.

When the cows give birth to their calves, you are lucky to catch the cows in their greeting of a newly born calf. Usually the mother cow goes to a far corner of the pasture to have her calf. The other cows leave her alone. Once the calf is on its feet, the rest of the herd comes to greet it. They circle around the calf and gently lick and smell it while softly lowing. It is quite an amazing site. *(con't on p. 2)*



Harvesting in the early morning mist.



The cows and steers eating in the barn during the winter.

(letter con't) When all the cows have calved we move them out to the summer pasture. The cows have a central shade area with their water trough. If the paddock of grass is quite far from this area one cow will stay with the calves while the others go graze. Or she will walk behind the calves who take much longer to move around on their gangly legs while the other cows move quickly to their paddock.

When the cows come back to the water area they each have a distinct call to communicate with their calf. Along with smell this is how they find each other. To our ears it is difficult to hear any difference but the cows and calves know.

Once the calves are steadier on their feet they move out to pasture with their mothers to learn to graze. They will graze a bit right away but it takes awhile for their rumen (the stomach that can digest grass and hay) to develop. By watching their mothers they learn what plants to eat and what plants to ignore.

All of this echoes the ideas in the Radiolab podcast I listened to this week. The hosts of the show were talking about different issues of animal welfare in zoos. One section of the show they were discussing how to design a "good" cage for monkeys. Dr. Elizabeth Gould, a professor from Princeton University, talked about her research on marmoset monkeys. She had three different cages, one just cement walls and bars, and two that were more similar to what a monkey would find in the wild: trees, grass, food and toy choices, one just had more variety than the other. She put monkeys in all three cages. Then she took a few monkeys from each cage and compared their brain structure. (Why they couldn't figure this out while keeping the monkeys alive I am not sure, but that is another issue.) The monkeys in cages that looked more like their natural habitat had 20% to 40% more connections in their brains than the monkeys in the cement cage. She then took a few monkeys from the cement cage and put them in better cages. Then she looked at those monkeys' brains and their brains had begun to make more connections after just four weeks. (They didn't talk about what would happen if you put monkeys from a good cage to a bad cage. Which as far as livestock go is an interesting question for me). The scientists believe that monkeys that had more brain connections were experiencing more of their world, were more connected to their world, and therefore "happier" animals -which makes sense to me.

What does this have to do with livestock? I compare our cows and the lives they live to the feedlots I saw as a kid driving across eastern Colorado. There the cows stand on piles of manure and mud, nothing green in site. They are fed some brown food a few times a day and otherwise stand around staring at the dirt. There are no options for what food to eat, what pasture to go to, no real herd structure with calves, young cows, and mother animals. There is no lying in the shade after a morning graze to chew their cud. They are hamburger with hooves and

COMING NEXT WEEK (OUR BEST GUESS):

sweet corn, green beans, red savoy cabbage, spinach, broccoli, salad mix, chard, tomatoes, Carmen peppers, winter squash, garlic, leeks, and parsley.

FRUIT SHARE: apples or pears

BEEF SHARE: The first installment of the beef share will be delivered to your CSA site this week. Look for the coolers labeled "Beef Shares" and take one bag for each share you purchased. Please check your name off on the Beef Share Sign in sheet.

CHICKEN SHARE: There will be no chicken shares this week. The delivery will be made up at the end of the season. Look for an email from Mike and Shelly about the chicken shares.

Sept 25 — Sept 28: weekly

Oct 2 — Oct 5: weekly and bi-weekly

Oct 9 — Oct 12: weekly and monthly

Oct 16 — Oct 19: weekly and bi-weekly

are treated as such. I wonder how their brains look compared to a cow from a pastured herd? Which cow is more connected to their world and which cow is "happier"? What does it do to a farmer and farm workers who care for cows in those mile upon mile long feedlots? What does it do to the people who eat this beef? What happens when most people in a society don't even consider these questions?

As a farmer, I find my quality of life, my connection to my world, is improved by being able to watch our cows be cows. While I am a vegetarian and the butchering aspect of raising animals is difficult, I am glad we can offer an alternative to the feedlot system. For a cow, quality of life is different, it finds it in spacious and sense stimulating environments, and kinship with other cows. Each steak or roast purchased from our freezers is one less that needs to come from a feedlot. While it might sound morbid, your purchase supports the life of 14 happy cows and their calves.

~Jody



Swiss Chard Pesto

1 bunch Swiss chard, stems removed and coarsely chopped
 1 handful cilantro, coarsely chopped
 1 jalapeno, coarsely chopped
 2 cloves garlic
 1/4 cup pepitas, toasted
 1/2 cup olive oil
 1/2 lime, juice
 salt and freshly pepper to taste

Puree everything in a food processor. Serve on tacos, enchiladas, or quesadillas.

from <http://www.closetcooking.com/2012/02/swiss-chard-pesto.html?m=0>



WINTER SHARES

We have more winter shares available for members who love their root veggies. The winter share will consist of three deliveries of 30 lbs of storage vegetables for a total of 90 lbs. The deliveries will be the week of December 3, January 7, and February 4 at your regular pick up location. The boxes will include potatoes, carrots, beets, cabbage, onions, parsnips, winter squash, and celeriac.

The cost of a winter share is \$100 for the three deliveries.

To order a winter share go to www.roxburyfarm.com click on Our Products and [Winter Shares](#) or contact the farm at info@roxburyfarm.com or 518-758-8558

GARLIC PLANTING WORKDAY: Join us on Saturday, Oct. 6 for the garlic planting workday. This is a great activity for people of all ages. The workday starts at 10:00 am and goes to around 2:00 pm. We share a potluck lunch so please bring a dish to share with five people. Also please bring your plate and silverware, sunscreen, and a water bottle. Come for an hour, the potluck, or the whole day.

SHARE SCHEDULE: The vegetable share delivery will take place weekly until the week of November 12. Then there will be the optional Winter Share once a month the week of Dec. 3, Jan. 7, and Feb. 4.

Chard and Cheddar Sandwiches

1 bunch of chard chopped finely (or broccoli rabe)
 2 Tbs. olive oil
 1/3 cup finely minced spring onion
 2 Tbs. balsamic vinegar
 salt to taste
 8 Oz sharp cheddar cheese, sliced
 10 slices of sourdough bread
 Dijon mustard
 mayonnaise

Heat a large skillet medium high and begin cooking the chard in olive oil. Prepare the onions and mix in a small bowl with vinegar and a pinch of salt. Toast the bread slices in an oven at 375 so that they are all done simultaneously. Lay out the bread on a large surface and coat half the slices with a thin layer of mustard and half with a thin layer of mayonnaise. Layer cheddar onto the mayonnaise-covered slices. Spoon a thin layer of the onion mixture onto the mustard slices. Remove the cooked chard from the heat and spoon a generous layer onto the cheese covered slices. Carefully assemble pairs of the slices of bread and serve immediately.

from <http://www.hiddenvilla.org/about-us/news-and-blog/eblog/entry/csa-recipe-chard-and-cheddar-sandwiches>

Refrigerator Dilly Beans

1 pint of green beans washed but not topped

Brine:

2 cloves of garlic coarsely chopped

½ cup cider vinegar

½ cup water

2 t salt

3 T minced fresh dill

black pepper

Prepare the brine in a mixing bowl mixing thoroughly.

Pack the beans vertically into a pint

mason jar. Pour brine over the beans until the brine is

slightly below the rim of the jar. Cap

and refrigerate for at least two days before enjoying fresh as an appetizer or with sandwiches.

Will last up to a month in the fridge.

From: <http://www.hiddenvilla.org/about-us/news-and-blog/eblog/entry/csa-recipe-refrigerator-dilly-beans>



The sky over the farm as we start our day.

Perfect Roasted Beets with Citrus Segments

4 medium beets (1¼ lb.), trimmed and scrubbed

2 medium oranges

1 Tbs. sherry vinegar

2 Tbs. lemon juice

½ tsp. salt

2 Tbs. olive oil

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Wrap each unpeeled beet individually in foil. Place on baking sheet, and roast 40 minutes, or until beets are tender enough to be pierced with knife. Cool until easy to handle.

2. Grate ½ tsp. zest from 1 orange; set zest aside. Trim ends away from both oranges, stand fruit upright, and remove peel and pith with knife. Hold fruit over bowl (to catch juice), and cut segments from membranes. Cut each segment in half, and place in separate bowl.

3. Whisk together 2 Tbs. orange juice (in bowl), vinegar, orange zest, lemon juice, and salt. Gradually whisk in oil.

4. Peel beets by rubbing off skin under cold running water. Cut beets into 1-inch pieces, and add to bowl with orange segments. Top with vinaigrette, and toss well. Chill several hours, or up to 2 days.

Recipe by CSA member Ilana Eck, author of The Hip Hostess Blog, www.hiphostessblog.com

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To listen to the Radiolab podcast click here: <http://www.radiolab.org/2007/jun/04/inside-out-cage/>

To read an article about Dr. Gould's research click here: http://seedmagazine.com/content/article/the_reinvention_of_the_self/