



Mysteries are for Summer Reading

By Rachel Maczis

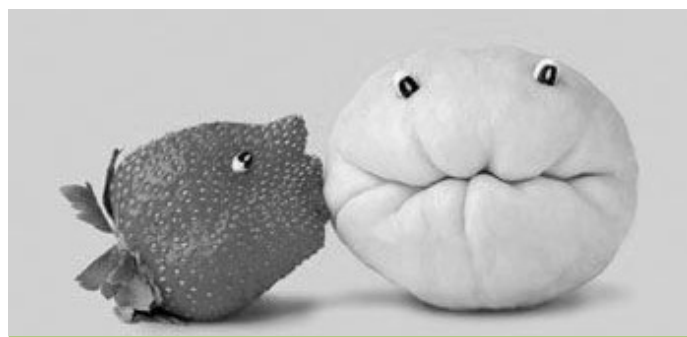
Week of July 21, 2008

A few weeks ago, Kim wrote about what it was like to experience life on a farm for the first time and how she was spending her summer as a farm hand. This week, it's my turn! My name is Rachel, but I'm sometimes known as Pigpen Junior on days when I'm hardly recognizable through several layers of dirt. This is my second summer of working on the farm and, although I have a permanent and rather unattractive layer of dirt under my nails, I love my job. Playing a role in the production of local, organic produce is something of which I am very proud. Working outside all day, drinking vast amounts of water, and eating the foods that I've helped to grow has made me feel stronger and healthier than I ever have during my sedentary winter months. Clearly, however, the benefits of organic farming extend past those who are directly involved in the cultivation of the vegetables and the day to day care of the chickens. One such benefit is the consumers' knowledge of where and how their food is grown. After work a few days ago, I went to Food Lion to find something for dinner (farm hands cannot survive on a diet of squash and potatoes alone). As I walked up and down the aisles, it occurred to me that grocery stores are full of mysteries. What is so dark and secretive about a brightly lit store with name-tagged employees and thousands of neatly packaged products, you ask? Every food product, from the meat to the lemons, has a past. Who seeded the squash? Who canned those mandarin oranges? What kind of pesticidal residue is lurking on the tomatoes? Without a fair amount of research and a maddening number of phone calls, I will likely never know.

On a lighter note, however, the vegetables that CSA members pick up each week have no secrets. Anything that members consume was seeded, weeded, watered, picked, washed, packed, and loaded onto the truck by only a handful of people. Members can actually talk to the farmer and Bivalve is close enough to visit in an afternoon. Our modern society has strayed from this concept and

subsequently relinquished the privilege of eating fresh foods while supporting local farmers. Before working on an organic farm, I rarely questioned the origins of my meals. Now, however, I am of the opinion that food consumption, as one of the most fundamental aspects of life, must be given more in-depth consideration. It is not just about the food pyramid anymore; the proper servings of fruits and vegetables can be found locally or can be bought after they are shipped across the country in a spider web of plastic. The difference between grocery store lettuce and that which is cut from our garden is eye-opening, to say the least. The experience of working on the farm has taught me not only how to grow and harvest crops, but also the difference between being an educated consumer and being blind to where and how my food is grown.

In a few weeks, I will take my place in Blacksburg as a student at Virginia Tech, where I have already scouted out a farmers' market. I will be taking my newfound knowledge with me and adhering to Gandhi's remarks by being the change I wish to see in the world. If it is possible to eat locally grown foods and support an area's farmers, why waste time in the plastic, pre-packaged realm of the grocery store?



Editor's Note: Notices, blurbs, jokes, and other material for the newsletter should be sent to me at sheltonlankford@mac.com no later than Sunday morning. Don't wait, send it in when you think about it. Recipes are always welcome.

Recipe of the week (From www.angelicorganics.com)

Sweet Zucchini Crumble

Silky smooth baked zucchini is the surprising filling in this sweet dessert. Like the best apple crumble, this dessert has a tender, lemony-sweet, spiced filling just waiting to be discovered beneath its irresistible, crunchy crust. Don't count on having leftovers.

Serves 6 to 8

4 1/2 cups flour

3 cups sugar, divided

1/2 teaspoon salt

1 1/2 cups shortening, softened, or butter, cold

6-8 cups thinly sliced zucchini

(about 4 large zucchini)

2/3 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice

(about 3 lemons)

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1/4 teaspoon ground or freshly grated nutmeg

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F.
2. Stir the flour, 2 cups of the sugar, and salt in a large bowl until well combined. Add the shortening or butter and cut it into the flour with a pastry blender or your fingertips until the mixture looks like coarse oatmeal.
3. Pour half of the mixture into a 9x13-inch cake pan. Using your fingers or a rubber spatula, press the mixture evenly into the bottom of the pan. Bake for 10 minutes. Remove the pan from the oven and set it aside.
4. Combine the zucchini and lemon juice in a large pot over high heat and cook until zucchini is tender, 8 to 10 minutes. Stir in the remaining 1 cup of sugar, cinnamon, and nutmeg. Simmer for 1 minute more. Stir in 1/2 cup of the reserved flour mixture and continue to cook, stirring constantly, until mixture thickens. Remove the pot from the heat to cool for 10 minutes.
5. Pour the zucchini mixture over the baked crust and sprinkle with the remaining flour mixture. Return the pan to the oven and bake until it is lightly browned and bubbly, 40 to 45 minutes.

The Green Book Club

When: Saturday, July 26th, 6:00 PM

Where: Chrys and John Egan (210 Glen Ave, Salisbury, 410-726-5995, cnegan@salisbury.edu)

Subject: Potential risks and benefits of genetically modified (GM) crops, including those containing genes from organisms that would not be able to mate in nature.

More information: LESSON website under Activities: Book Club at <http://www.livingontheveg.org/>

Note on the Share Bin

We like to leave a "share bin" at each distribution point for you to exchange vegetables.

If there is anything in your share you do not want, you can leave it for others to take. You don't always have to put something in to take something out. You just have to play nicely with others.

Sometimes, when we first start picking a crop, there is not enough for everyone. Often, the same thing happens at the finish line. We will stock the share bin with these crops and/or we will sell them at markets.

In This Week's Share

Green or Wax Beans

Tomatoes

Cucumbers

Squash/Zucchini

Potatoes

Sweet Corn*

* Maybe, maybe not!