

Smile While You Work!

As I walked along a remote 14-mile railroad track that stretches across the Sand Lake - Seven Beavers Peat Preserve, it suddenly dawned on me that I had a big smile on my face. I had to stop and ponder why. Smiling while I hike is not uncommon. I find myself deeply content and happy when I'm in the woods; always, there are sights or wildlife that captivate me. Even the challenges that push my body, a tough slog of a hike, or the mental endurance, the clouds of mosquitos and biting flies, are something that I find reward, happiness and smiles in, through the physical act of perseverance. Normally I know exactly what I am smiling about. But as I walked the tracks and caught myself in the midst of a huge grin, I had to ask myself why. I had been lost in my own thoughts, engaged in scenarios around scaling our maple syrup enterprise, a topic that while desired, also triggers stress trying to pencil out the financial plan and time. And the hike itself was not a particularly friendly walk, the out of service tracks have become difficult to manage, the RR bed nearing 8" below the ties, the shoulders angled with sharp rock, require a sustained awkward and exhausting gait not normal to any human, short or tall. Don't get me wrong. It is actually one of my favorite hikes, done annually for my off-farm MDA gypsy moth work, due to its rugged beauty and unique plant life and views, not to mention the moose and robust swamp deer so common to this remote preserve. But in that moment, it was clear that neither my thoughts or the view were my inspiration. As I stopped to think about the smile, to look and listen to that which my spirit was absorbing without my knowledge, I heard the songs of my prairie pothole youth, where mucking in the wetlands in the count and identification of birds was my hobby, my life. I knew it was the bird calls that instinctively put the smile on my face, the melodious cacophony of the many songs filling the air, but in particular, the high-pitched twill of the red-winged blackbird, common to the wetlands, their twill amplified by the depths of water. Despite the questions my commitment to the moth survey has raised over the years, depleting time from my professional Holistic Management work and our farm livelihood goals, the reward it brings is not to be underestimated. Despite my moth work, in ways, holding me back, it so too, is my salvation.



Know Your Farmers! Cree & Jason Bradley, Joe Holtz, Ruby Mountain, Gunnison & the Chickens!

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Travel northeast on Hwy 61 past Two Harbors to Hwy 3 (just past Betty's Pies).

Turn left on Hwy 3. Travel 8 miles to the farm at address #2955 (farm) and #2995 (house).



Mint Juleps



1 cups water 1 cups white sugar
1/4 cup bruised, chopped mint
1 6 fluid oz Kentucky bourbon
mint leaves or springs for garnish
Combine water, sugar, chopped
mint leaves in saucepan. Bring to
boil until sugar is completely
dissolved. Allow syrup to cool.
Pour syrup through strainer to
remove mint. Fill four cups with
crushed ice, pour 2 ounces
bourbon, 1/8 cup mint syrup in
each (adjust for sweetness).
Top with a mint leaf or sprig.



Harvest Week 2 - What's In Your Basket!

Please be sure to wash your produce before enjoying it. Thanks!

- Salad Greens: Gourmet Saland Blend, a mix of Oakleaf, Ruby Red, Black Seeded Simpson, Red Romaine, Paris Island, Lolla Rossa, Tango, and Red Salad Bowl.
- Strawberries: From Kunnari's River Acres Farm, Gilbert MN.
- Onions: Green-top onions (use bulb and especially the stems!).
- Radish: Mix of Cherry Belle (rounder) and French Breakfast.
- Mint: Distributed before 4-lined bugs cause leaf black spot.
- Chinese Cabbage: Mei Qing (chop and use stalks and greens, fresh or cooked).
- Kale: Mix of Lacianato and Red Russian Kale.

Photo: Pretty pinks and reds of the radishes grace the crates this week.



Notes from Jason and Cree...



Photo: A wonderful CSA member, Lisa Forsell, who puts in time at the farm well beyond any working farm share hours, volunteered this Friday to help with the harvest. Lisa grew up on a farm and enjoys working on any farm. Her help is a gift. Not only are our conversations deeply enjoyable and fun, Cree also learns a lot from Lisa who is a canner extraordinaire! Finally, we always reflect on the help (any of our working farm share help) with great fondness at precisely times like this...it's 10:30 pm, we just finished packing crates, are finally eating dinner, and are still writing the newsletter, doing eggs, and labeling syrup for tomorrow's farmers market. We've got hours to go, but far less hours because of the help! Thank you Lisa for your help today. As Cree slowly hobbled around from a rough day of work on Thursday, Lisa's great smile and fantastic attitude was just the ticket for a really enjoyable harvest.

For the consumer of a traditional Midwestern diet, the early summer crops of a farm that is built on cold spring clay along the cool north shore of Minnesota, can at times, challenge the cravings, preparation skills, and interests of the eater. Kale has in recent years become trendy, but for many, it's still a relatively unknown food. The Mesclun salad greens of last week have a “weird” spicy kick. Mint is a little different, not something most buy at the grocery store despite the masses who drink mint tea and enjoy mint chewing gum. Mei Quing, what is that? And soon, the harvest will bring the mysterious kohlrabi.

To be completely honest, our Bradley and Holtz families of Minnesota and North Dakota upbringing, with diets that lacked a certain diversity, were reluctant to eat these very foods for quite a few years of our early farming tenure. While a lack of time to explore recipes or be creative was a good excuse for a year or two, the actual result for an embarrassing half-decade came down to habit. We didn't form good habits to try new foods, and it simply took us awhile, despite the fact that we grew the crops and had members who adored them, to find our own way with them.

Then one day, this all changed. A bunch of kale looked particularly good and the stalks of a Chinese cabbage were juicy and interesting. The craving occurred. A simple sauté with a little oil and spice of either, or the

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Photos: The bean and tomato crops look amazing this season.
Despite the cooler weather, these true summer crops are thriving and are surprisingly ahead of many of our typically earlier crops like cucumbers and peas.



Notes from Jason and Cree...

addition of greens to our sauces, soups, eggs, or grilled cheeses produced what has become household favorites, making us feel foolish for the years we went without. It is our hope that if you find yourself in our early boots with a lack of food adventurism, push yourself outside of comfort and give these crops a try. You might be so happy you did!

On this note of trying something new, Dan Cruikshank, long-time CSA member and owner of Cedar Coffee and Spokengear Cyclery in Two Harbors, made Cree a most amazing and needed “CSA Smoothie” after last weeks farmers market using a decent bunch of the kale, about 10 strawberries, a couple ounces of apple juice, some of our maple syrup, and a large scoop of ice. Keeping it simple, he grabbed a bunch of kale in one hand and just snapped off the main stems with the other (and put the rest of the kale with ribs in the blender). The rest went in after. Never has Cree had such an amazing drink. It was sweet, smooth, simple, healthy, and most importantly, it was really delicious. No idea what to do with kale or Chinese cabbage. Dan says put it in a blender, “[i]t's all good!”

Note on Smoothie: I tried a kale smoothie ala Dan with my blender today to see if a home model could work the same magic as his commercial model at Cedar Coffee. The only difference was the process - I had to do each ingredient at a time in order to not “bog down” the blender. Once I figured that out though, no biggie! The end result was excellent!



Roasted Radishes and Balsamic Vinegar

One bunch of radishes with tops (about 10 radishes) 2 Tablespoons olive oil
2 teaspoons balsamic vinegar 1/2 teaspoon sea salt or kosher salt black pepper to taste
Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Wash radishes, removes roots and stems. Blot dry. Cut radishes in half, or keep them whole (your choice). In bowl, combine other ingredients. Whisk together. Toss in radishes and greens, coat evenly. Spread radishes and greens on pan or baking dish. Bake about 10 minutes or until greens are crispy. Remove greens, continue roasting the radishes for another 5 minutes or until tender.

Crunchy Strawberry Pecan Salad with Strawberry Mint Dressing

Dressing: 8 ounces hulled strawberries 1 small shallot, peeled and quartered 6 – 7 fresh mint leaves
1/4 cup honey 1/4 cup white wine vinegar 2 Tablespoons lemon juice 1/4 cup vegetable oil
Salad: salad greens pecans feta or goat cheese green onions sliced strawberries
Place all dressing ingredients, except oil, in blender and process until completely smooth. With the motor running, slowly drizzle in oil until you have a nice, emulsified dressing. Store vinaigrette in jar with a tight lid for up to 3 days in fridge. Shake well before using. Drizzle dressing over fresh salad greens, topped with crunchy pecans, salty feta or goat cheese, chopped green onions with tops, and sliced strawberries.