

Otter Hook Farms

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Traditional Family Farming



Week of September 22, 2009, Harvest Week 16

This week's share includes: Potatoes, Garlic, Winter Squash, Arugula and Basil

Next week should have: Potatoes, Winter Squash, Cabbage, Mustard Greens, Arugula

Arugula Pesto Wheat Berries

3 cups cooked wheat berries*

3 medium garlic cloves

2/3 cup pine nuts (or sliced almonds), toasted (divided)

3 cups loosely packed arugula leaves

1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan

2 big pinches salt

1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

1/3 cup olive oil

1/3 cup black Kalamata olives, chopped

4 - 6 ounces seitan, (optional), chopped and pan-fried into crispy bits in a bit of oil

a bit of shaved Parmesan as garnish

Place the wheat berries in a large mixing bowl and set them aside so they can come up to room temperature if you've had them in the refrigerator.

In the meantime, make the arugula pesto by combining the garlic, 1/2 cup of the pine nuts, most of the arugula, Parmesan, salt, and lemon juice in a food processor.

Pulse a few times, and then begin to drizzle the olive oil into the mixture while continuing to pulse until the pesto is smooth. Taste, and adjust if needed with more salt or lemon juice.

Pour about half of the pesto over the wheat berries, add the seitan if you are using it, the reserved arugula, and about 1/4-1/2 cup of hot water (or reserved water from cooking the wheat berries). Toss until everything is well-coated. Add more pesto a bit at a time until the wheat berries are dressed to your liking.

Arrange on a platter and top with the olives, remaining pine nuts, and a bit of shaved Parmesan.

**To cook wheat berries: Combine 2 cups wheat berries, 6 cups water, and 2 teaspoons salt in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Bring to a boil, lower the heat, and simmer, covered, until plump and chewy (and a few of the berries split open), about an hour or so. The berries will stay al dente, and the only way to be sure they're done is to taste a few. Drain and set aside.*

Serves 6 as a side, less as a main.

Welcome to autumn! We're amazed at the speed of the transition – after our three week summer the leaves have already begun to change and some in the local area have even seen light frost! I'm reading [Depletion and Abundance](#) right now by Sharon Astyk, a Schoharie County writer and homesteader. Just last night I read a section where she talks about how when you live an agricultural life, you have to think in circular time, which is different from how we as a culture have learned to think about time over the last 100 years. Basically, what she means by circular time is thinking about the here and now – the basic chores you have to do today – and balancing that with thinking about the next season and the season after that. What needs to be done now so that we will have food for the winter? If a time were to come that we could not go to the grocery store for our food, could we eat? The answer for most of us is no. I have to admit, we are still adjusting to thinking in this circular fashion. We have a goal to feed ourselves everything we need for an entire year. Of course there are things like spices, citrus fruits, tea and coffee that we can't grow in New York. They aren't necessities, but they are nice to have, so maybe you go a little off from an all-local diet, but these items can be purchased conscientiously, as well. Really, feeding ourselves all year will be more of a goal for 2010-2011 – we'll need to build a root cellar and more storage for vegetables and grains, build our soil fertility to harvest better produce that will have better storability, plus we'll need fencing and housing for more animals to supply us with milk, eggs and meat. What I'm finding to be a challenge is thinking about all the things that need to be done and assigning them time slots. Certain things are easy. Apples are in season. You pick lots of them – some for fresh eating now, some to store, some to make applesauce that will be canned and eaten after the storage apples aren't nice for eating any more. That keeps you with fruit – if planned correctly – until spring brings strawberries, blackcaps, raspberries, blueberries, peaches, etc. When those items are in season, you do the same – eat your fill of fresh, freeze some fresh and can jams to eat during the rest of the year. We are trying to start so many projects that the list seems daunting at times. But – we keep in mind that we want to concentrate on one thing at a time and do it well, while still laying the groundwork for other projects to come, such as preparing soil for Permaculture, putting in fence, clearing the fields, adding rock powders and lime to both the gardens and the fields. Our main concentration will be the vegetables and the CSA until that part becomes easy. Then we will turn our energies to grains or cattle or hogs – whatever we determine the next project should be – and do that well too, while still working on the next project. It's a constant state of planning one thing while doing something else. There is little (if any) instant gratification in this agrarian lifestyle, but, as they say, good things come to those who wait. We are sad to see the growing season drawing to a close. It's been a crazy year – one eighty year old farmer told Chris it's the worst growing season he ever remembers seeing. But we look forward with hope and happy anticipation to the coming seasons, and the planning and new growth they will bring.

This week's share continues to be small, as we continue to assess damage from the season's terrible weather. We are hoping to finish harvesting all the winter squash and potatoes this week. The fall beets and spinach have failed to germinate, so we think we got a bad batch of seeds. The turnips are coming on beautifully, and will be ready for the second week of October or so.