



The Market Corner

Newsletter of the Berkeley Farmers' Markets

Winter 2006



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Efren Avalos: A Year in the Life of a Small-Scale Organic Farmer

by Rosalie Zdzienicka Fanshel,
Berkeley Farmers' Markets Operations Manager

Efren Avalos of Avalos Organic Farm is one of the smiling faces you see at the market even in the heart of winter. He has been farming his whole life. He grew up farming with his parents in Los Cruces in the State of Michoacan, Mexico, before coming to California at the age of 17. He then spent twelve years as a farm worker for a large strawberry company before beginning his own business. He has been farming his four organic acres of mixed vegetables in Hollister, San Benito County, for eight years. At 38, Efren is one of our youngest farmers in the market, yet he has over twenty years of farming experience!

In a recent conversation Efren explained to me the work cycle of a year on his farm. Efren runs his whole farming operation himself, with only a little seasonal help from his brother and nephew, so summer finds him in the field from 6:30 am to 9:00pm. Now we are entering winter, and the shorter, wetter days mean Efren is only able to work a few hours per day. Efren says he gets restless in the winter. "I don't like to stay inside," he explains, "Even when it is raining and too wet to work in the soil, I go out and walk around in my fields."

Wintertime may mean less fieldwork, but it is the time of year when Efren plans his next year's season. Efren does not have his own green house on his small farm, so he works with a nearby organic nursery company that starts his tomato, pepper, and other summer crops for him. Efren compiles a list in December for the company, who starts the plants in January, to be ready for planting in the ground in late March. In the winter Efren also orders all the seeds he sows directly and mends and buys all his farm equipment.

Winter in Hollister can last through April, when the ground still occasionally freezes. Efren explains that he typically gets all his tomato and pepper plants in the ground by early April, even though there is still a risk of freeze. "If I don't take risks, I won't get anything!" Efren cheerfully explains. Efren's tomatoes and peppers are beloved favorites of Berkeley Farmers' Markets customers. Every year Efren



Efren Avalos of Avalos Organic Farm

hones in on what varieties of vegetables work best for his farm. "There is no better education than what I can learn on a farm," Efren says. Each year is a new lesson, but Efren has also become an expert on his weather and land, including which crops grow well in the winter. He grows fabulous broccoli, cauliflower, and dandelion greens among other winter vegetables. In the winter plants grow very slowly, but they develop a special sweetness.

Efren says that for a year round vegetable farmer, summer is when you earn the most money and you have to make that income last all year. The irony is that "in the summer I make money but have no time to spend it; in the winter I have the time, but am not making very much money!" Despite the slower sales, you will still find Efren Avalos attending the Berkeley Farmers' Markets all winter long, rain or shine. Efren only sells his produce through farmers' markets; he does not use a wholesale distributor. Efren's other two farmers' markets are small and only operate during peak season, so the Berkeley Farmers' Markets are really the bulk and stability of his farm's income. Efren expresses his appreciation for Berkeley customers. "The Berkeley community is so nice and are really educated about organics. At my other

markets people don't know about organic farming. I've had the same customers for years in Berkeley and look forward to seeing them every week. They are friends now and always ask about my farm and family."

Look for Efen and his children every Saturday and every other Tuesday at the Berkeley Farmers' Markets.



Eating Your Local Food All Year 'Round!

It's wintertime at the Berkeley Farmers' Markets. Even as we feel a shiver while shopping at the markets, we can think about how lucky we are to have FRESH and LOCAL produce throughout the whole year here in the Bay Area. In many parts of the county, winter means sad, limp produce traveling thousands of miles from California or south of the Equator. Historically, winter meant eating canned and frozen goods with hardly a fresh vegetable for months. Here in the Bay Area we could eat hard Chilean tomatoes and shriveled Argentinean green beans- or we can come to the Farmers' Markets and enjoy the dozens of varieties of vegetables and fruits that our local farmers bring through the cold winter months. Winter grown vegetables have a sweetness that summer veggies just don't get, and are chock full of the nutrients we need to keep our immune systems strong through the flu season. Local author and chef Jessica Prentice says the following about eating seasonal, local food, even in the winter: "There are many reasons to celebrate and enjoy winter produce. They taste wonderful...They are nutritious and make your diet more biodiverse and interesting. They are affordable. (I get a lot of food value for my dollar with winter produce.) And buying such produce from local farmers helps them to farm year-round (or at least for a longer season), maintaining the integrated, small-scale farming systems and stable work environments that are about feeding people and sustaining community rather than just making a buck."*

Our year-round vendors at the Berkeley Farmers' Markets provide you with the healthiest and best tasting food every week of the year: in turn they depend upon your support even during the rainy months. It is through the mutual enthusiasm of our farmers and customers that we are able to have such lively markets all year 'round, rain or shine!

*Prentice, Jessica. *Full Moon Feast: Food and the Hunger For Connection*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2006.

Hello from the new Program Manager!

Hello everyone! My name is Ben Feldman and I am the new Program Manager for the Berkeley Farmers' Markets. I am thrilled to be returning to California after spending the last year living, working, and gardening in England. Prior to leaving for England I spent two years at the University of California, Riverside where I received a Master's Degree in Environmental Science with a focus on issues related to policy and agriculture.

Having worked with the Pacific Coast Farmers' Market Association and as a vendor at farmers' markets before that, I am passionate about and experienced in the area farmers' markets. The Berkeley Farmers' Markets provide a level of quality that few other markets can match, making them an exciting and vibrant community to be joining. As the new Program Manager I expect to maintain the high level of integrity and quality that the Berkeley Farmers' Markets are known for.

The upcoming season should be an exciting one for the Berkeley Farmers' Markets, especially with the Tuesday market turning twenty years old. I look forward to a challenging and rewarding first year.

See you out at the markets!

Ben Feldman
Program Manager
Berkeley Farmers' Markets

A Shopping List of Winter Specialities

Greens: kale, collards, chard, spinach, dandelion, cabbage, bok choy, broccoli raab, mustard, and other Asian greens

Roots: potatoes, celery root, turnips, carrots, beets, rutabaga, sweet potatoes, daikon, parsnips, radishes

Salad greens: lettuces, arugula, cress, escarole, raddichio, frisee

Citrus: mandarins, grapefruit, tangerines, oranges and blood oranges, pomelo, lemons, limes

Wild Mushrooms: chanterelle, matsutake, maitake, porcini, etc.

Winter Squash: kabocha, butternut, delicata, hubbard, kuri, pumpkin, Long Island cheese, etc.

Broccoli and Cauliflower

Persimmons

Celery

Leeks

Avocados

Kiwis

Apples



In Loving Memory of Laura Jane Trent of Tip Top Farm 1968 - 2006

Laura Trent sold her wonderful produce in our markets since 2000. She specialized in French plums, okra, and unusual varieties of vegetables and stone fruit, particularly Middle Eastern produce. As a small-scale female farmer, she empowered other women to become farmers by training apprentices at Tip Top. Laura took her life on September 28th, 2006. Her memory lives on for all of us in the Berkeley Farmers' Market community.

Berkeley Farmers' Markets



Tuesdays 2 pm - 7 pm
Derby Street at Martin Luther
King, Jr. Way

Thursdays 3 pm - 7 pm
Shattuck Avenue at Rose Street

Saturdays 10 am - 3 pm
Center Street at Martin Luther
King, Jr. Way

all year round, rain or shine

Greens Two Ways

by Mary Vance, Certified Nutrition Consultant and Associate Publisher of the Ecology Center's **Terrain Magazine**.

Use:

- Any variety kale (Russian, purple, dinosaur), Swiss chard, collards, mustard greens, spinach, beet greens, dandelion greens, turnip greens, etc.
- Fresh crushed garlic
- Sea salt
- Olive or coconut oil
- Vegetable or chicken broth
- Sesame oil for drizzling



Stir-fried:

Wash greens and chop; remove stalks (unless using swiss chard: Dice stalks, add to salted pot of boiling water. Boil 5 minutes, or till tender; set aside to toss into stir-fry). Heat 1 tbsp olive or coconut oil in skillet with 2-3 cloves crushed garlic. Add onions, shallots or leeks if desired. Heat for a few minutes, adding vegetable or chicken broth as needed to prevent sticking. Add greens and seasoning (sea salt or seasoned sea salt blend). Stir-fry until wilted and tender, adding broth if skillet becomes dry. Drizzle a teaspoon or so sesame oil over cooked greens. Serve hot. Keeps well in fridge and is also good cold.

Boiled:

Bring 4-6 cups water to boil in dutch oven (large stew pot). Add chopped greens and boil until bright green and tender, about 4 minutes. Drain. Mix the following: 1 tablespoon olive oil, 1 tablespoon sesame oil, 1 teaspoon sea salt, and 3 cloves crushed or minced garlic. Pour over greens, toss, taste to correct seasoning. Great piping hot or cold.

GREENS are a super-food! They add more nutritional value in the form of vitamins and minerals than any other food. KALE belongs to the *brassica* family (same family as cabbage) and is available year-round. It is rich in vitamins A, K, and C, some B vitamins and fiber, and it has potent anti-cancer properties. CHARD belongs to the same family as spinach and beets and has long, crunchy multi-colored stalks that can also be eaten. Like kale, chard possesses the super-food award. It is high in vitamins K (one cup has over 300% of the US Recommended Daily Allowance!), A, C, and minerals such as potassium, iron, magnesium, and manganese. One

cup of greens contains about 35 calories. It packs quite a punch for little calories!

The garlic in this recipe is also a nutritional workhorse: it has anti-bacterial, anti-parasitic and anti-viral properties and may help reduce cholesterol and blood pressure.

Coconut oil is the perfect oil for high temperature cooking, as it is a very stable plant-based saturated fat. It is high in lauric acid, which boosts metabolism and thyroid function, and it also has anti-bacterial and anti-viral properties. Olive oil (use extra virgin) is a mono-unsaturated fat good for medium-temperature cooking, and used therapeutically, it is good for the liver and gall bladder. It also helps to remove cholesterol deposits.

Sources: www.whfoods.com, and Bauman, Ed: *The Medicinal Value of Foods*.

Basic Roasted Roots

by Berkeley Farmers' Markets' own Rosalie

Use:

- 8 cups of mixed roots of your choice, cut into half-inch cubes: Possibilities include potatoes, onions, turnips, rutabagas, sweet potatoes, parsnips, carrots, beets, radishes, and leeks (wash carefully and use entire leek)
- Approximately 1/4 cup of olive oil
- A mix of fresh green herbs of your choice: use a handful of parsley or dill, or a small handful of tarragon, thyme, oregano, marjoram, or savory
- Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 375 - 400 degrees. Toss all ingredients together in a 9" x 12" casserole pan. Bake for approximately forty-five minutes to an hour, stirring occasionally with a spatula, until vegetables are soft and sizzling. For a moister, quicker baking roast, cover the pan with tin foil. Remove foil for last ten minutes of baking. For a crispy roast, add a little more oil to recipe and cook uncovered for a longer period of time.

