



ECOLOGY CENTER FARMERS' MARKETS

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La Tercera and Tara Firma: Ecology Center Visits Two Women-Owned Farms

*by Katie Michel, Farmers' Market
Operations Manager*

The most recent Census of Agriculture, conducted by the USDA in 2007 and released in 2009, revealed many trends that are encouraging for sustainable agriculture advocates. The data shows that the amount of acreage under organic production continues to grow, and that the number of small farms in the United States is rising. Strikingly, in 2007, more than 30% of U.S. farm operators were women, a 19% increase from when the census was last conducted in 2002. The number of farms overall increased by only 7% during this same period. The majority of women-run operations are small and diversified, and women are more likely to raise livestock than their male counterparts. In celebration of national Food Day on October 24th, Ecology

Center staff and members had a chance to visit two perfect examples of this growing number of women-run farms: La Tercera Farm, owned by Annabelle Lenderink, and Tara Firma Farms, owned by Tara Smith.

La Tercera Farm

"Musque de Provence, Triamble, Sucrine du Berry, Cource Olive, Galeux d'Eysines..." Annabelle rattles off names of squash varieties while pointing them out in a bountiful farm stand display. As the exotic names suggest, Annabelle doesn't grow your average vegetables. With a penchant for unusual French and Italian heirlooms, Annabelle's fields are full of Pan di Zuccherio radicchio instead of lettuce, Haricot Vert instead of green beans, and Piment d'Espelette instead of bell peppers. With a love of cooking and travel, she is inclined to explore new foods and seek out varieties that are special to a particular place. Expat

sometimes come to Annabelle's stand at the farmers' market with seeds brought back from abroad, and ask her to grow vegetables that they miss from home and can't find here in the United States.

Annabelle herself comes from an international family. Her mother is British and her

father is Dutch. Neither parent has a background in farming, though her father did grow up living on a tobacco plantation in Sumatra. Annabelle was born in Curacao, a Caribbean island where her father worked initially in the Dutch navy, and later as the head of a company providing industrial gasses for the oil refining industry. The third daughter born in their family, Annabelle's parents called her "La Tercera," a moniker that later became the name of her farm. While growing up, Annabelle spent summers in Curacao, and attended boarding school in Holland during the school year. She eventually moved to the United States to attend Tulane University in New Orleans, where she earned a B.A. in History.

It wasn't until after graduating from Tulane that Annabelle cultivated an interest in food and farming. She took a few courses at a culinary school, and landed a job cooking at a restaurant in the French Quarter. Working in the kitchen piqued Annabelle's curiosity not just about the flavors and uses of various ingredients, but also about where all of those ingredients were coming from. Over time, she became more interested in organics and in growing food herself. Though she had never imagined living outside of a city, after taking a few cross-country road trips with her musician boyfriend, she was won over by the beauty of rural places and the bounty of farm country.



La Tercera's Galeux d'Eysines Squash

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In 1989 Annabelle moved to Bolinas, CA and got a job as an apprentice at Gospel Flat Farm. Though this was her first experience working in agriculture, Annabelle took fast to the trade. Within a few years, she was co-running the farm with owner Don Murch, building valuable skills in vegetable growing and marketing.

In 1995, Annabelle leased a small parcel in Bolinas and founded La Tercera. Unable to support herself on income from La Tercera, she accepted a full-time position as the Sales Manager at nearby Star Route Farm, a job she continues to this day. A fluent Spanish speaker, Annabelle befriended many of the field workers at Star Route and learned that some of them were interested in earning additional income. She decided to hire those who were interested to help her in the evenings at La Tercera. The hard work of Annabelle's crew has contributed immensely to the continued success and expansion of her farm.

Over the past sixteen years, Annabelle's "side project" has grown from under an acre to just over five acres, split between

two sites. Currently, Annabelle leases two and a half acres in Bolinas, where she grows cool weather crops like herbs, nettles, escarole, puntarelle, and other chicories. She also leases three acres at the Dolcini Ranch near Petaluma, where she grows warmer weather crops like tomatoes, peppers, winter squash, haricot vert, and shelling beans.

La Tercera is truly a labor of love for Annabelle. Five days a week, after a full day at Star Route, Annabelle and her crew work another two hours in the fields at La Tercera. They also work half days on Saturday, and full days on Sunday. Though her labor needs fluctuate, she generally employs about 16 part-time workers throughout her growing season, which runs from July to December. Annabelle is proud to pay her field workers \$11 an hour, above the \$10.22 average farmworker wage reported in the results of the USDA's Farm Labor Survey in 2010. La Tercera rarely turns a profit, which makes Annabelle's commitment to paying fair wages even more commendable.

Since the beginning, Annabelle has marketed La Tercera's unique vegetables at the Downtown Berkeley Farmers' Market, where she is beloved by chefs and customers. She also sells at the Ferry Plaza Farmers' Market on Tuesdays. Referencing Bob Cannard, a farmer well known for providing produce to Chez Panisse, Annabelle says half-jokingly, "I hope that someday, somebody

will buy me a farm. I hope that some restaurant will say, 'We want you to be our Bob Cannard.'" Given Annabelle's tenacity, good humor, curiosity, and attention to quality, I couldn't imagine a more deserving farmer to witness this type of good fortune.

Find La Tercera every Saturday at the Downtown Berkeley Farmers' Market through December.

Tara Firma Farm

Seeing Tara Firma Farm, you'd be surprised to hear that this will only be Tara Smith's third winter in farming. With developed infrastructure, green fields full of animals, and even a profitable fall quarter, it is clear that Tara Smith has worked fast to build her dream farm.

Just five years ago, Tara was at the peak of her career in business, working as the Senior Sales Leader at LTC Financial Partners, a long-term care insurance agency founded by her husband, Craig Smith. Then Tara read *The Omnivore's Dilemma*. Like many readers of Michael Pollan's incendiary book, Tara's trust in the industrial food system was rattled. She was shocked to learn that many of the foods she and her family had trustingly consumed were in fact toxic — laced with pesticides and other chemicals, and causing widespread environmental damage.

The Omnivore's Dilemma galvanized many consumers into choosing organic and buying grass-fed beef, but Tara took it one step further. In 2009 she left the insurance industry and founded Tara Firma Farm with the goal of



Baby chicks at Tara Firma Farm

working with land and animals to produce what she calls “real food.”

Tara is refreshingly unabashed about revealing her inexperience with farming. That’s not to say that she hasn’t done her homework. She says, “I read all of Joel Salatin’s books, and I copied him.” By reading widely and building a relationship with renowned “grass farmer” Joel Salatin, Tara has rapidly educated herself on farm practices, equipment, and techniques. She has also been able to employ a talented staff to help her run her mixed vegetable and livestock operation, marketing primarily through a Community Supported Agriculture Program. This past season, Tara Firma also sold their pastured beef, pork, and chicken at the Ecology Center’s new Albany Farmers’ Market.

The main focus at Tara Firma is building a healthy pasture and encouraging the return of perennial grasses to their 57-acre ranch through well-managed, rotational grazing. Their herd of Angus cattle is moved strategically to graze on a hillside. Once the cows are moved to a new



A curious piglet at Tara Firma Farm

PUMPKIN SOUP

Recipe from Nancy Schimmel, Farmers’ Market customer

Ingredients:

- 1 medium pumpkin or squash (Kabocha and Galeux d’Eysines work well)
- 2 cups soy milk (available from Hodo Soy at all 3 Berkeley Markets)
- 1-2 Tbsp broth powder (vegetarian or chicken, or try using one of the meat stocks available from The Fifth Quarter at the Downtown Berkeley Market)
- 1/4 tsp allspice (or mix cinnamon with a little clove and nutmeg)
- 1/4 tsp coriander, 1/4 tsp cumin, 1/8 tsp turmeric
- salt and pepper to taste

Directions:

1. Slice, seed, steam, and peel the squash or pumpkin (with kabocha, you only need to peel off the bumpy parts of the skin, unless you want the bright orange color untinged by green). Save the steaming water.
2. Use a blender to mix the steamed squash with soymilk, adding the steaming water (or meat stock) to get the right thickness of soup. Blend or stir in the spices. Heat but do not boil the soup, then serve.

plot, chickens are brought in using chicken tractors to eat and fertilize the land where the cows have been. In just two and a half years, this system has resulted in a pasture composed of 30-50% perennial grasses, Tara says. Perennial grasses help to control erosion, build biodiversity, and provide a healthy diet for cows.

Like a true farmer, Tara has been slowly adapting Joel Salatin’s model to meet the specific needs of her operation. She was excited to show us the farm’s new “chicken pads,” which they have designed to replace the “chicken tractors” popularized by Salatin. The chicken pads look something like mobile coops. Using a feather net, the chickens are encouraged to graze on one side of the coop at a time.

The advantage here is that instead of moving the entire chicken tractor to get the chickens onto new pasture, a farmer simply has to move the net to encourage chickens to graze in a new general area.

Tara is committed to restoring ecological balance on her ranch, producing healthy food, bringing the community together through tours and farm celebrations, and providing good jobs for people in an industry that helps the planet. What more would you want to see in a new business?

Visit www.TaraFirmaFarms.com to learn more about their CSA program or to join one of their weekly farm tours.

SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Barhi Dates** from *Flying Disc Ranch*, possibly the softest and most decadent of all date varieties
2. **Braeburn Apples** from *Billy Bob Orchards*, the perfect snacking apple
3. **Walnuts** from *Full Belly Farm* and *Kaki Farm*, and **Almonds** from *Riverdog Farm* and *Massa Organics*
4. Don't lament the end of stone fruit for too long. Fall is the time to enjoy **Kiwifruit** from *Four Sisters Farm* and *Brokaw Nursery*, **Pomegranates** from *Lone Oak Ranch*, and sugary **Hachiya Persimmons** from *Guru Ram Das Orchards*.
5. **Blue Hubbard Squash**. Known by some as a "vegetarian turkey," this squash is big enough to stuff and serve to a group in place of a bird.

Become a member of the Ecology Center!

The Ecology Center Farmers' Market is a program of the Ecology Center, a community-based nonprofit dedicated to sustainable urban living. The Ecology Center relies on the support of our members. Become a member today! Visit ecologycenter.org or call 510-548-2220 x 235



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MARKET HOURS

South Berkeley Market: Tuesdays 2-6pm
Derby Street at Martin Luther King, Jr. Way

Albany Market: Wednesdays 3-7pm
Open seasonally from May to October
Solano Avenue at San Pablo Avenue

North Berkeley Market: Thursdays 3-7pm
Shattuck Avenue at Rose Street

Downtown Berkeley Market: Saturdays 10-3pm
Center Street at Martin Luther King, Jr. Way

Holiday Schedule:

The markets will be **closed** on Saturday, December 24; Tuesday, December 27; Thursday, December, 29; and Saturday, December 31.

Berkeley Markets are year round, rain or shine. Albany Market runs May to October. EBT, WIC & Senior FMNP accepted at all four markets. WIC Fruit & Vegetable Checks accepted on Tuesdays only. Wheelchair accessible.

FREQUENT SHOPPER PROGRAM: Ask us about it!
Win an organic tote bag full of produce, t-shirts, pint glasses, and more!

UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENTS

3 Saturdays, December 3, 10 & 17
20th Annual Holiday Crafts Fair,
from 10:00am - 4:00pm
in Civic Center Park

Local craftspeople & artisans selling a wonderful variety of beautiful & practical handcrafted gifts: ceramics, fine art, jewelry, cards, clothes, tote bags, body products, toys, and more. Next to the Downtown Berkeley Farmers' Market, one block from Downtown Berkeley BART. Free admission!

For event details, visit www.ecologycenter.org/farmersmarkets/events