

# Pinehold Gardens *Field Notes*

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## In This Week's Box

From our hoophouses:

- Tomatoes: slicers & grape
- From the drift free fields:
- Potatoes, Peter Wilcox
  - Bright Lights Swiss Chard
  - Radishes
  - Escarole

## In Next Week's Box?

From our hoophouses:

- Tomatoes: slicers
- Basil

From the drift free fields:

- Kohlrabi
- Kale
- Beans?

From Simons Gardens

- Corn

## HERBICIDE DRIFT UPDATE

We received a letter from Wisconsin Adjusting Services who is working on behalf of our neighbor's insurance company. Their reply was "based on the documentation you have provided we are unable to consider your demand." I was expecting this response but phrases like "documentation for the produce they have allegedly disposed of" or needing our last seven years of tax returns "to support your allegation of loss of income" is irksome. They could have left out the words allegedly and allegation. The letter continues on speaking to us as if we are corn and soybean farmers as they want the yearly yield of our crops and copies of all contracts we have for the sale of our produce. We do not have a contract to sell corn to a grain elevator. We do not have crop insurance that lists the yield. We sell real food to directly people. I feel that it is going to be a long haul trying to get them to understand that our CSA business model does not depend on yields and costs per item and that the crops that we cannot include in the CSA boxes

are in the fields. They will be coming to inspect our fields and take photos. I hope that they are prepared to wade through waist high fields of weeds, and now mud, as our main spring/summer field has a couple dozen 220-foot-long beds filled with 20 different crops and our vine crop field has a dozen and half, 220-foot-long beds filled with zucchini, summer squash, cucumbers, winter squash, cantaloupes and watermelon. DATCP, the state agency that did took the samples of our crops has pictures, maps, and each crop's location. Maybe they can just use that information or maybe I will have to explain that that crop is fennel. It has flowers, which the beneficial insects love by the way, because it has bolted, i.e. gone to seed.

## A DAY IN THE LIFE

Sigh..... I need to quit sighing or I will deflate. See above Herbicide Update for the reasons for the sigh.

But life has many regular moments, which is comforting. Our Tuesday/Wednesday CSA harvest and pick days, while not as busy still has the same dedicated crew showing up every week.

And we are taking a break away from the farm on Sundays which helps.

## BOX NOTES

Bright Lights Swiss chard is the variety that we have been growing for many years. It has a traditional earthy chard taste, unlike the light green variety that was in your box two weeks ago which was tender and had more of a spinach taste.

Escarole, while it looks like green leaf lettuce, is a leafy member of the chicory family. But unlike other chicories, such as radicchio or endive, it is only slightly bitter. It can be used in salad or



**NATURE VS NATURE** The beautiful tomato hornworm can do significant damage to a tomato crop, but not this 3-inch one. It will soon be preyed upon by baby wasps (wasp larvae) after they emerge from eggs attached to the caterpillar.

cooked.

The purple skinned, yellow fleshed Peter Wilcox potato is an all purpose potato, firm, but not waxy. It can be steamed, roasted or baked.

This is the last delivery of grape tomatoes. If you have a home garden and want to grow a prolific grape tomato, try Ruby Crush. It is a determinate variety, meaning that it is short in stature and bears its fruit in a short time frame. Also the fruit is firm and doesn't crack easily, quite uncommon for a cherry-type tomato.

## FIELD NOTES

In anticipation of a wet harvest Tuesday, crew leader and employee Becky, along with myself and David labored on Labor Day and harvested the chard and escarole. It was a sunny, enjoyable day.

Right after the drift event we planted Romano beans in what we thought was an area of the field that was drift free. They came up twisted and deformed, so to be safe we tilled them under, and

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planted some yellow and green beans in a different part of the field, almost too late in the season to do so. Although the daylight hours are much shorter, they should be maturing in the next week or two. We lost our first three plantings of beans in the eastern drifted field.

David has been planting cover crop in the bare fields to increase the organic matter in the soil which will help with rain absorption and to keep the soil buggers happy.

## Food Tips: Escarole

by Jeff Siuta



### The Basics:

Escarole is a member of the chickory family. It has broad, slightly ruffled leaves and an open, flattened head. It has a slightly bitter flavor when used uncooked. It is very popular in Italian cookery

(especially in soups), and, when cooked it has a mild flavor.

### Preparation:

- Discard any discolored or extremely dark leaves.
- Cut off a thin slice from the stem end.
- Using a sharp paring knife, cut out the cone-shaped core from the stem end (it's quite bitter).
- Separate the leaves. Use small ones whole, and chop others.
- Wash thoroughly in a large amount of cold water.

Growing up with Italian grandparents on one side of the family, we saw escarole on the table on fairly frequently. It is one of the staples of *cucina povera* – literally “poor cuisine” or cuisine of the poor – and there was always a row of it growing in Grandpa’s garden.

## Escarole Salad

### Ingredients:

- 1 head tender escarole
- 8 plum tomatoes
- Small red onion, thinly sliced
- 8 oz. feta cheese, cubed
- 16 pitted black olives (Kalamata work best here)
- A few sprigs of flat-leaf Italian parsley, finely chopped
- 1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

### Directions:

- Assemble the salad. Tear the escarole into bite-size pieces and put into a large salad bowl. Add the tomatoes, onion, feta, olives and parsley. Toss lightly to combine.
- Just before serving, whisk the oil, lemon juice, salt and pepper together in a measuring cup or small bowl until thickened. Pour it over the salad. (Some Dijon mustard will help keep it from separating.)
- Toss the salad gently. Serves 6

## Escarole and White Bean Soup

By Biada De Laurentiis From Member Rita Collen

### Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped
- 1 pound escarole, chopped
- 4 cups chicken or vegetable stock
- 2 cups (or 1 15-ounce can) cannellini beans, cooked (or other white bean)
- 1-ounce chunk of Parmesan cheese
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

### Directions:

- Heat the olive oil in a medium-size pot over medium heat.
- Add the garlic and saute until fragrant, stirring constantly. Add the escarole and saute until wilted, about 3 minutes.
- Add the stock, beans, and Parmesan cheese. Simmer until the beans are heated through, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

## Escarole Soup with Chicken

From Member Jeff Siuta

### Ingredients:

- 1 chicken cut into 8 pieces, or 4-6 breasts
- 2 large carrots, diced
- 2 large stalks celery, diced
- 1 large onion, diced
- 1 large bunch escarole, sliced crosswise into 1/2 inch ribbons
- 1/2 cup chopped, fresh, flat-leaf Italian parsley
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Grated Romano cheese for serving.

### Directions:

- Place chicken and 6-8 cups of water in a large pot and bring to a boil (add the giblets and skin for a richer soup)
- Add the carrots, celery and onion. Simmer for for 1 hour.
- Remove the chicken, leaving the stock cooking at low heat. Separate the meat and return to the pot.
- Add the escarole and parsley and cook for 15 minutes.
- Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Serve with grated Romano cheese on top.

### Jeff's Notes:

*You may speed up the process by eliminating the chicken and simply using two quarts of commercial chicken stock. Bring it to a boil in the pot, and then proceed with the recipe from where you add the vegetables. For a vegetarian option, you may use No-Chicken Stock available at most major grocery stores (Imagine is a brand that I've used successfully).*

*Consider adding small pasta to the soup to add some bulk to it. Some good varieties are tubetti, pastina, acini di pepe, etc.*

*My grandma would add tiny Italian meatballs (about 3/4 inches in diameter) to the soup for Sunday dinner. It's essentially a riff on classic Italian Wedding Soup.*

# Swiss Chard Stem Relish

From Root to Leaf Cookbook (Submitted By Member Jan Smith)

## Ingredients

- 2 cups diced Swiss chard stems
  - 1 cup red wine
  - 1/2 cup red wine vinegar
  - 1/2 cup sugar
  - 1 teaspoon kosher salt
  - 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- Combine all the ingredients in a medium sauce pan. Bring to a simmer over medium heat. Cook until the stems are tender, 8 to 10 minutes.
- Remove the stems with a slotted spoon and reduce the liquid by half, about five minutes. Let the stems and liquid cool separately and then combine.
- Served chilled or at room temperature. Store covered and refrigerated up to four weeks. Serve it with cheese, game birds or charcuterie. You can also use this same recipe for beet stems.



# Quick Radish Sandwich

## Ingredients:

- Sliced radishes Slices of a crusty bread
- Butter, chevre or other light spreadable cheese
- Sprinkle of salt
- Chopped herbs such as tarragon or mint (optional)
- Seasonal fruit Coffee
- Add the time to enjoy it

Spread the butter or cheese on the slice of baguette and layer radish slices with a sprinkle of salt. Place on the plate with seasonal fruit. Pour a nice strong cup of coffee, use cream if you must. Watch the morning develop and forget about everything that has to get done for just a few moments.

# Quick Chard

From Member Jeff Siuta

This is our go-to recipe for making chard as a side dish. It's quick, tasty and attractive. Oh, and dark green leafy greens are really healthy, too.

## Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 small onion (sweet, red or yellow), sliced
- 1 bunch of chard
- 1/4 cup raisins
- 2 tablespoons pine nuts
- Salt and pepper, to taste

## Directions:

- Using a sharp paring knife, cut out the center stem from the chard leaves. Slice the stems about 1/4-inch thick on an angle. Slice the leaves in half from top to bottom, then crosswise into 1/2-inch ribbons.
- Heat the oil in a large skillet. Add the onions and chard stems; season with salt and pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, until onions begin to soften, but not brown, about 5 minutes.
- Add the raisins, and continue to sauté for another 2-3 minutes until the raisins begin to soften.
- Add the pine nuts, toss to combine with the onions and chard stems.
- Add the chard leaves. Toss continuously until the leaves wilt slightly and brighten in color. Remove from the heat, adjust seasonings, and serve.

Makes 2-3 servings.

## Jeff's Notes:

*This dish can be made with other greens, as well. Substitute kale or spinach for the chard, but leave out the stems from the kale (compost them!).*

*Substitute for the raisins, too. Try Craisins or other dried berries such as dried cherries. I've also used slices of firm stone fruit such as nectarines or plums with good results. Add fresh fruit at the end with the chard leaves rather than in the middle of the recipe as you would with dried fruit.*

*Substitute for the pine nuts. Try walnuts, pecans or pistachios. Avoid peanuts; they're the wrong flavor profile in this recipe, in my opinion.*

## Next Week

Read a little bit about Jeff and Mary Siuta, the authors of so many of our recipes, and what is their interest in cooking and how these two retired teachers have stepped out of one classroom and into another.