

## A Sense of Place- Chaffin Family Orchards - Summer

Saturday afternoons in the summer have an special peace at the farm. It is the beginning of our two-day break from the early morning bustle of farmer's markets. Everyone arrives from their respective markets in their own time. There are treasures to unpack, sweet strawberries, ripe tomatoes, crisp lettuce, unlike any from the store, fresh sourdough, and raw cheeses straight from the farm. Some of these items have been traded for and others purchased, yet all have a story behind them. We share these stories during our unpacking as well as wonderful customer testimonials and newsy bits from other farmers. "Lisa Carle made a demi glace from the chicken stock, she said it was out of this world. She wants us to try her goat cheese". "Mr. Brown said he has been cutting up chickens for years and never has he seen any in better shape". "I sold eggs to a vegan", boasts Maggie, I know it will make her feel better. Our energy is bolstered and we begin to discuss which farm chores may need attention this evening.

On the farm in summer, afternoons are for the indoor "work" of planning and strategizing, and resting. Early mornings and late evenings are the times for physical labor, the cooler portions of the day. We visit and sit and read and recover from our respective mornings.

Saturday mornings are the busiest of the summer. Everyone begins to prepare before the sun can aid us and is in the fields as the first light begins to glow in the orchards. Hand color picking of apricots, peaches, nectarines, and plums is accomplished quickly. Taking the ripest and most perfect fruits, leaving those not quite ready for another picking. Each tree is picked three or four times in a season. The wooden crates of fruits are gently loaded on a 1964 Ford flatbed truck and off they rumble to the loading area. The pickers continue on, searching for the best fruits for load two as we distribute the fruits among the market trucks. Already on board are the loaded freezers of grass fed meats, coolers of fresh eggs, and cases of olive oil. Signs have been refreshed, flyers copied, all in readiness for the arrival of the centerpiece; fresh picked stone fruits. Aware that being late to the market means hand carrying in all of your wares, we waste no time. As soon as the fruits are loaded we are off at a gentle but steady pace so as not to bruise the fruit.

All morning at the market we share the fruits of our labor with interested customers and other vendors. The fruit is sweet and heavy with juice, promising fabulous taste. By the time we pull away from the market we have put in a mere eight hours. Just eight more before we call it a day. So we enjoy our few hours in the afternoon. Anticipating the next two easier days.

After a break, we head out for another Saturday afternoon pleasure, our visit to the cows. Lugs of overripe fruit that did not make it through the day are loaded onto the truck and off we head to the pasture. The cows hear us coming and begin to run. They love these tasty fruit treats. They pick each peach up and roll it over their tongues, sucking out the juice until the pit falls to the ground, they then swallow and search out another piece of fruit. We watch the cows for a while as they slurp the fruit under the shade of our 100 year old olive trees. Sprinklers spin in a nearby orchard row cooling things off for everyone. The cows will enjoy their afternoon in the orchards until the cool of the evening when they will head out to the hillsides to graze dry annual grasses, thus balancing their own rations. After a bit we head back to the house to begin preparing dinner.

## **The Meal**

Summer's evening meal happens prior to summer's evening chores. Those cooler hours just prior to sunset are saved for tasks not suitable for the heat of the day. So the meal is not too heavy or warm. The season's first beef, fattened on spring's sweet annual grasses and aged 30 days is in our freezers and ready to enjoy. A hot evening is perfect for a corned beef. Accompanied by sweet corn with fresh raw butter and sea salt, halves of ripe tomato, and yellow watermelon. A tart/sweet lemonade quenches the thirst. We finish with a peach crisp and iced cream. The later saved for consumption when the evening's work is finished. This is a meal that is only at it's best on a market day in the summer. It is also a meal that is prepared in advance except for a few quick cuts with the knife.

## **The Menu**

Grass Fed and Finished Corned Beef  
Freshly Picked Sweet Corn  
Raw Summer Butter  
Hand Harvested Brittany Sea Salt  
Fully Ripe, Just Harvested Tomato  
Hearty Room Temperature Mayonnaise  
Chilled Yellow Watermelon  
Iced Lemonade  
Peach Crisp  
Vanilla Bean Iced Cream

## **The Strategy**

*For The Beef-*

About a week in advance extract some whey for curing the beef. Obtain 2 quarts good quality organic yogurt. Line a strainer with cheesecloth and set over a bowl. The whey will run into the bowl and the milk solids will stay in the strainer. After the initial dripping is done, tie up the cheese cloth to a wooden spoon and continue to suspend this little sack over the bowl until the drips stop. The bag contains a cream cheese that you can refrigerate and enjoy later. The liquid in the bowl is whey. Place it in a glass jar, covering well, it will keep refrigerated for up to 6 months. Three days prior to the meal obtain a two-pound grass fed and finished beef brisket that has been frozen at least two weeks and thawed. Mix together in a bowl, 2 Tablespoons sea salt, 1 Tablespoon mustard seeds, 4-5 crumbled bay leaves, 1 tablespoon crushed juniper berries, and 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes. Rub the seasonings mixture into the brisket, coating on all sides. Place the brisket in a covered container that it just fits into. Mix ½ cup whey with 1 cup spring water and pour over the brisket. Cover and marinate at room temperature for two days, turning frequently. At the end of the second day, transfer to the refrigerator to chill. Remove just before the meal and slice across the grain. Place on a serving platter with a Dijon mustard at the side.

### *For the Crisp*

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Peel and slice one freshly picked peach for each person being served. Mix with a pinch each of cinnamon and stevia per peach. Pour into a baking dish rubbed with butter. For the topping, blend 2 Tablespoons rolled oats, 1 tsp wheat flour, ¼ tsp cinnamon and 1 tsp raw sugar for each person being served. Cut in 2-tbsp cold butter per person until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Just before sitting down to dinner sprinkle topping on the peaches and pop, uncovered, into the oven. Set timer for 30 minutes. Remove when golden brown and bubbly. Let rest, serve warm with vanilla bean iced cream.

### *For the Tomatoes*

Mayonnaise to go on tomatoes needs a rich, salty flavor to compliment the tomato. It also should be room temperature to allow it to cling to the equally room temperature fresh tomatoes. Making the mayonnaise just prior to the meal will accomplish this task. Use a room temperature, farm fresh egg. Place the egg in small food processor or blender and beat well. Add two tablespoons of raw, unfiltered, apple cider vinegar, 1 1/2 teaspoon sea salt, 1 tsp dry mustard, 1 tsp white pepper, and a dash of powdered stevia. Blend together well. In a measuring cup, combine ½ cup late harvest mission olive oil with ½ cup sesame oil. With the processor running, very slowly drip the oil into the machine until a thick mayonnaise is formed and no more oil can be incorporated. Set the mayonnaise on the table in a serving dish with a spoon for lolling. Select heavy, yet firm, evenly ripe tomatoes. Larger size is preferred. With a serrated knife, slice the tomatoes in half about the waist. Arrange on a platter and set aside.

### *For the Corn*

Heat a large pot of water on an outdoor flame, if possible, to avoid heating the house. While water is heating, shuck the corn by removing the outside leaves and silks. Trim ends if desired. When water comes to a boil, adjust the flame to medium and add the corn. Return to a boil and allow to boil gently for a few minutes until corn is tender to the touch and color has deepened very slightly. Remove from the water and place on a platter. Serve with raw summer butter, mellower in flavor than spring's, and sea salt to taste. Hand Harvested Sea Salt lacks the bite of regular salt, thus pairing beautifully with the richness of the corn.

### *For the Melon*

Select a firm, yellow watermelon that smells of summer. Place in the refrigerator upon returning home so as to chill before the meal. Slice in generous wedges, plate and set on the table.

### *For the Lemonade*

For each person at the table squeeze the contents of one lemon into a 16-ounce glass. Roll the lemon on the counter top to loosen juices before squeezing. Add water and sugar or stevia to taste and ice to chill.

### **The Experience**

As we gather at the table for an evening meal, the satisfaction of a day of hard work brings us closer. The flavors of summer are expressed in the cool beef, warm corn, and fresh tomatoes. Watermelon only sweetens the experience. This lighter meal prepares us to head out and finish the animal chores in the cool of the evening. After dark, we gather again for the peaches with crispy topping, iced cream beginning to melt as it is served. We will not miss summers long hours and heat but there is not another season with an equal bounty of fresh foods.