

Journey School Food Community CSA

Week 7: January 6, 2007

Happy New Year! We hope the last two weeks were especially good for you and your family no matter how you spent it. We spent considerable time building a new house. No, not for ourselves, rather a house for fifty of our best friends – our chickens. And I do mean *Journey School Food Community* chickens. By investing in your food with Journey School you are investing in the lives of 50 chickens that produce our eggs. Think of it as an “adopt a chicken” program and your dividends are a weekly egg share. Anyway, in the afternoon of New Years Day the Morrison, Valencia, and Mathias families gathered together and participated in the Journey School catch and release program. It was quite the afternoon and now the chickens have a new home at the Worm Farm on 115th street. As many of you know, we will be leasing about 4 acres from The Worm Guy with the intent to raise a few pigs, turkeys, chickens for meat and eggs, as well as grow vegetables, a large pumpkin patch, and a corn labyrinth.

The land has been pasture for more than 40 years. Before the original farm was subdivided the “chicken pasture” was cut for hay to feed the horses that worked the farm. Journey School’s intent is to pasture pigs and chickens in a fashion that will initially till and rake the soil so that little to no petroleum will be burned rototilling the garden. Once enough space has been cultivated, the animals will be rotated around the remaining area keeping the grass, weeds, and pests at low levels. This method of land preparation also reduces the amount of fertilizer we need to buy and apply and will reduce weeding this summer. Pigs have a plow on the front end - their nose actually consists of a cartilage disk that is designed for rooting in the earth. Pigs will actually eat the grass and the grass roots along with bugs, and worms if managed to do so. A tractor would just mix up the soil and grass roots. Pigs have a manure spreader on the other end. -the pigs will turn the grass and grass roots into manure. Additionally, we will feed the pigs grain and vegetable waste and that too will become manure and build the soil strength. Best of all, at the end of the year, our pigs will become our food. If you might be interested in buying half a pig let us know. I’m still working on logistics, but will probably have 6 half pigs up for adoption later this spring. It takes about 7 months to grow a pig to butcher size.

The chicken house is a basic structure 4 feet high and 8 feet on a side with nesting boxes on one inside wall and roosts filling the rest. It rests on skids so that we can push it around the pasture. In addition to the house they have an outdoor feeding station - a covered place outdoors where their food and water is located. Having the food and water outside insures that the birds get at least a little exercise, and keeps the house cleaner. The covering protects them from rain, sun, and raptors and is also on skids for frequent moves. Electrified poultry netting that protects the chickens from ground predators and helps me pasture the chickens where we need chicken work done surrounds the house and feeding station. The chickens are provided about 5,000 square feet of pasture inside the fence to free range, find bugs, seeds, grass, and play chicken games. When the pigs are done with the pasture, the chickens will be moved in to scratch and peck out the weed seeds and gently rake the ground.

We are excited about the new possibilities for exercising permaculture design concepts to create sustainable relationships in our farming ventures.

We intended to have frozen blueberries combined with the pancake mix in the share this week, but as the best laid plans go all our berries are in the freezer at the Harbor Merc. in Burton and they're closed till Tuesday. We've substituted dried Asian pears, but they don't go as well with the pancakes.

In Journey School Pancake Mix this week, we've used two noteworthy ingredients: Buckwheat flour and Rapadura sugar. Below are passages from the Rapunzel company website for information on this special process of extracting "sugar" from sugar cane. Following is just a small slice of the information available on the www.whfoods.com website about Buckwheat. Enjoy!

Rapadura Sugar

"Rapadura captures the sweet essence of sugar cane-organically. Harvested in Brazil and through the Hand in Hand™ fair trade program, Rapadura is an unrefined sugar prized for its unique caramel flavor and fine grain texture. This deliciously pure sugar retains a beautiful golden color and offers unmatched nutritional value because-unlike other sugars-it is not separated from the molasses stream during squeeze-dried processing. You can truly taste the difference of Rapadura whole organic sugar." www.rapunzel.com

Buckwheat

"While many people think that buckwheat is a cereal grain, it is actually a fruit seed that is related to rhubarb and sorrel making it a suitable substitute for grains for people who are sensitive to wheat or other grains that contain protein glutens. Buckwheat flowers are very fragrant and are attractive to bees that use them to produce a special, strongly flavored, dark honey. Diets that contain buckwheat have been linked to lowered risk of developing high cholesterol and high blood pressure. The Yi people of China consume a diet high in buckwheat (100 grams per day, about 3.5 ounces). When researchers tested blood lipids of 805 Yi Chinese, they found that buckwheat intake was associated with lower total serum cholesterol, lower low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL—the form linked to cardiovascular disease), and a high ratio of HDL (health-promoting cholesterol) to total cholesterol.

Buckwheat's beneficial effects are due in part to its rich supply of flavonoids, particularly rutin. Flavonoids are phytonutrients that protect against disease by extending the action of vitamin C and acting as antioxidants. Buckwheat's lipid-lowering activity is largely due to rutin and other flavonoid compounds. These compounds help maintain blood flow, keep platelets from clotting excessively (platelets are compounds in blood that, when triggered, clump together, thus preventing excessive blood loss, and protect LDL from free radical oxidation into potentially harmful cholesterol oxides. All these actions help to protect against heart disease.

Buckwheat also contains almost 86 milligrams of magnesium in a one-cup serving. Magnesium relaxes blood vessels, improving blood flow and nutrient delivery while lowering blood pressure—the perfect combination for a healthy cardiovascular system." www.whfoods.com