

Laguna Farm CSA

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From Farmer Scott

Last Friday's rain was looking like it might bring the water levels up into the barn, but it turned out to be a moderate flood. We were up late moving things like the PortaPotty out of the "float-away zone," when the rains tapered off, and my favorite unisys.com 24-hour-loop weather satellite picture showed the change. I set the alarm for 4 AM, and took a look to confirm where the water had risen, before falling into a deep sleep.

The positive side of the yearly floods is the soil left behind. I often refer to the soils here as "Pre-Azwan Dam Nile soils." These, of course, were rich flood plain soils in the Fertile Crescent of ancient Egypt, and they fed those civilizations for thousands of years. It is the many present-day dams that prevent the natural refertilization of those soils, along with chemical farming, that have radically changed what was relatively sustainable for so long. Hope you are well.

In your box today:

From the high ground and soggy fields of the farm, our "beyond organic" salad mix, kale, beets, Delicata squash, parsley or cilantro; also yellow onions from Hollister, potatoes from Madera, and Mandarin oranges from the Sierra foothills.

Beets get their color from betacyanin, a pigment that shows promise as a cancer fighter. Another phytonutrient in beets, betaine, supports detoxification in the liver, intestines and blood, and can guard against the damaging effects of alcohol. Eat a 1/2 cup serving to benefit from the high folic acid, iron and potassium content. Store the greens and roots separately for longer keeping. Steam beets or wrap them in foil and bake at 400 degrees for an hour.

Why does organic food cost more than conventional?

There are a bushel of reasons. Using no pesticides means more hand-weeding. It also means farmers run a higher risk of losing all or part of a year's crop. In terms of fertilization, conventional farmers can use such things as sewage sludge (which is cheap to buy) and chemical fertilizers (cheap to buy and cheap to transport). While conventional farmers often use every acre to grow the crops that fetch the highest prices, organic farmers use crop rotation to keep their soil healthy, and plant cover crops that are plowed under to improve the soil's nutrition for the long term, as well as providing hedgerows and habitat plants instead of crops in some locations.

Also, conventionally grown food includes invisible costs, including a higher incidence of some cancers and other diseases in farm workers and their children, and contamination of water supplies. Large corporate farms can make money on high volume and low prices, but those low prices have pushed millions of family farms into bankruptcy. Four million farmers have disappeared in the last 40 years, according to researchers.

Chef Alice Waters of Chez Panisse justified one farm's \$3.00 organic peaches to the New York Times. "Maybe they'll make \$5,000 more a year," she said. "Well, hooray. We're not making millionaires here. We're supporting sustainable agriculture."