



# THE RED HILL ROOT



The Seasonal Weekly Newsletter for Members of the Red Hill Farm CSA, Aston, PA

Volume V, Number 1

15 Feb 2008

## Farm and Member News



**Annual Members' Meeting**—By now you should have received your mailing about our annual members' meeting on **24<sup>th</sup> February**. (If you didn't get the mailing, you can contact Amy at 610-558-6799 or [ajohnson@osfphila.org](mailto:ajohnson@osfphila.org).)



**It starts at 1:00 pm** and will be held (as usual) **in the Copper Beech Room at Our Lady of Angels Convent** (the main building—"the castle," as Neumann students call it!). You can

**park in the parking lot just across Convent Road from the main entrance to the Convent.** ([photo credit](#))

**Dues have risen slightly** this year (to \$700) because our expenses are higher. Please remember that we can only handle checks or cash! At the meeting, we'll go over Farm work shares (you can apply for one at the meeting), off-Farm products (see the description included in your mailing), our Silent Auction/Square Dance fundraiser (to be held at the Media Community Center on May 3<sup>rd</sup>), and other Farm news of various sorts. You'll be able to ask questions, make comments, sign up for off-Farm products (bring an extra check or cash to pay for them that day), and meet old friends and make new ones! **Please bring your own mug for hot tea or cider, and please bring a baked good or snack to share with fellow "Rooters"!!**



Anon., *Three Men*, from *Horae*, Paris, 1497

**We need volunteers to pick up the corn shares** each week from Amos Beiler's farm, probably starting mid-July. If you can chip in a little time, please call our off-Farm coordinator, Mariann Rybarczyk at 610-558-0291 or email [drybar2703@aol.com](mailto:drybar2703@aol.com). Thanks very much!!!

**Square Dance/Silent Auction—Save the Date!!**—Our primary fundraiser will be **Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> May** this year, at the **Media Community Center**. Save the date! The auction comprises goods and services provided by you, our members, and sometimes by community businesses. Think about what you could contribute to benefit Red Hill Farm—in past years, folks have donated homemade food, craft items, handmade clothing, knitted goods, works of art, vacation time, lessons, massages, gift certificates, magazine subscriptions, birding expeditions (with accomplished birders), a farmhouse dinner, and much more! So put on your thinking caps and get ready to roll! If you have questions, contact Amy at 610-558-6799 or email at [ajohnson@osfphila.org](mailto:ajohnson@osfphila.org).

**PASA Conference**—Some of our folks are attending the 2008 Annual Conference of the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture, including Amy and Chris, Mimi Hall, and Nancy and Bob Bernhardt (while there may be others, that's all I've heard about!). The range of sessions is incredible, with topics to interest everyone from the casual gardener, to the nutritionist, the food politician, the environmentalist, and the professional farmer. For the complete conference brochure, click [here](#) and then click on "download brochure." Keynote speakers include **Diane Wilson**, an environmental activist working to clean up pollution in Texas' coastal waters and author of *An Unreasonable Woman: A True Story of Shrimpers, Politicos, Polluters and the Fight for Seadrift, Texas* (Chelsea Green, 2005)—see [here](#) for an interview with Wilson; and **Mark McAfee**, founder of Organic Pastures Dairy, California's first raw-milk dairy, one committed to "stress-free lives" for cattle. (Of course, Pennsylvania is another of the largest raw-milk producing states, so McAfee's ideas are of great interest here—to hear him, check out this [You-Tube video](#).)

**PASA CDs and DVDs**—Allison Shauger, Educational Outreach Director for PASA, notes that almost all of the sessions at the annual conference are recorded on CD or DVD by Cocalico Audio. If you see something on the program that you'd like to hear in its entirety, you can order direct from Cocalico at 717-336-4179. As well, an order form in PDF format should be available at PASA's



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website shortly after the end of the conference. For the PASA website, click [here](#).



***Indian Orchards***—Nancy and Bob Bernhardt have been busy, busy, busy, not just with PASA but also with a birding expedition to Mexico. Exciting! But over at the Orchard, they still have *scrumptious fall/winter apples* and *preserves*, and if there's enough of a demand, they'll make some *cider* too. Questions? Call 610-565-8387. (At left, *Picking Apples*, from *Horae*, Paris, 1506)



***Volunteer Opportunities at PASA Southeast***—Marilyn Anthony, Southeast Regional Director for PASA, notes that the group is forming a Membership Advisory Committee to enhance membership in our region and help with upcoming "Buy Fresh, Buy Local" and "fun-raising" events! They're looking for someone to volunteer their services to support these membership, fundraising, and outreach activities. The term of service is one year and requires attendance (in person or by phone) at a minimum of two meetings annually; as well, volunteers will keep PASA informed of activities in our county and represent PASA values locally. They have several really fun events planned

for later 2008, including a grass-fed beef cook-off, a Bike Fresh/Bike Local ride, a celebration of local farms at Longwood Gardens, and Down to Earth (a handmade craft/local food event in West Chester). For more information, email Marilyn at [marilyn@pasafarming.org](mailto:marilyn@pasafarming.org), or call her at 610-442-2865 or 610-458-5700, ext. 305.



***PASA Southeast also invites you to attend a PASA Field Day, "Managing Farmers Markets,"*** on Saturday, the Ides of March (15<sup>th</sup> March!). Registration starts at 8:30 am, and presentations run from 9:00 to noon, followed by



lunch and discussion from 12 to 1:00. Cost is \$10 for PASA members & \$20 for non-members. For more info, contact Marilyn Anthony (as directly above).

## Healthy Milk? Good News and Bad

PASA and many Pennsylvania consumers are thrilled that *the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture has withdrawn its proposed ban on labeling milk as free of genetically modified growth hormones, rBST/rBGH*. That gives us the ability to continue making choices concerning the healthfulness of our dairy products. See [here](#) for a newspaper article concerning the decision, and [here](#) for PASA's discussion of the issues.

However, vis-à-vis your overall health, several recent studies (and even some older ones, like T. Colin Campbell's *The China Study*, [here](#)) link components of milk with a variety of cancers. *I rely here on the excellent research of my friend Bix, aka The Fanatic Cook* (see [here](#) for her blog). For suggestive connections between casein (the protein in milk) and *liver cancer*, see [here](#). Admittedly the study was done on rats, but rats are said to be excellent models for human nutritional studies. The less casein these rats ate (resulting in a lower-protein diet) the more their aflatoxin-induced liver cancer slowed or regressed. In fact, at the end of the two-year study, ***100% of the low-protein (low-casein) rats were alive and flourishing, while all the rats in the high-protein/high-casein group had died. Whew!*** "Got non-dairy milk?"

Dairy foods also have been linked with prostate cancer (see [here](#)), though the causal mechanism isn't fully understood. Despite the fact that vitamin D, a component of milk, is believed to protect against prostate cancer, it now appears that (for various reasons) high calcium amounts in dairy products may inhibit the effect of vitamin D in the body. (See [here](#) for the original study linked to Bix's blog.) While I have neither the expertise nor space here to explain the complexities of this, Bix sums it up succinctly: ***"[T]here was a 4-and-a-half times greater probability that a high calcium consumer would experience metastatic and fatal prostate cancer than a low calcium consumer."*** (See [here](#).)

***There may be extenuating circumstances.*** We don't know if the studies used organic milk from grass-fed cows, nor if the milk was raw (though I suspect the studies' casein did not come from such healthfully produced milk). We don't know if other animals' milk might have less effect on us. But we also don't know if these possibly mitigating factors actually make any difference. ***We just don't know.*** (Bix also has thoughtful posts on meat and cancer, [here](#) and [here](#).)

## Iniquity, Unbridled Capitalism, and the Degradation of the Human Spirit

I don't usually use strong words like iniquity, evil, or sin. But on last night's news (Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> Feb), I learned of a meat recall that is deeply disturbing on so many levels that it seems to warrant such terminology. Perhaps you saw it. *I speak of the recall of over 143,000,000 pounds of beef by the Chino, California firm, Westland/Hallmark Meat Company. This is the largest recall of meat in history. And the meat was targeted for federally funded school programs and fast-food restaurants. On CNN this morning, the commentator remarked that much of this beef has already been eaten by schoolchildren (over 30,000,000 pounds).* (See [this article](#) and related videos.) That's level one of "deeply disturbing."

The meat was recalled due to the possibility that "downer cows"—that is, cows with "mad cow disease" or BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy, a central nervous system disorder that keeps cows from walking)—made it into the food chain. That's level two of "deeply disturbing." On a CNN report this morning, Dr. Kenneth Peterson of the USDA reassured us (???) that *"The food supply in the U.S. is, and I think will remain, the safest in the U.S."* (No, that's not a typo—see [here](#).) That's disturbing level three—smart fellas protecting us.

The deepest, most disturbing level of this story is how it came to light. *No one volunteered to recall the meat. It only happened after a Humane Society undercover video was made public on YouTube. This is the fruit of treating animals as "production units," rather than as animals who are part of God's creation.* The video shows (to my mind) evil, iniquitous torture of dairy cows, who, having "outlived their useful lives" as "production units" for milk, were sent to slaughter. *So much for assuming that eating dairy products protects animals from inhumane treatment.* For whatever reason, a number of these poor cows couldn't stand up to walk into the slaughterhouse. If a cow can't walk in, it cannot be included in the slaughter, and it ceases to be profitable for its owner. So the cows were poked and beaten with electric prods; they were pulled from trucks with chains around their legs; they were "waterboarded"; some of them had their extremities and heads run over with forklift trucks; they were blinded with sticks like Samson.

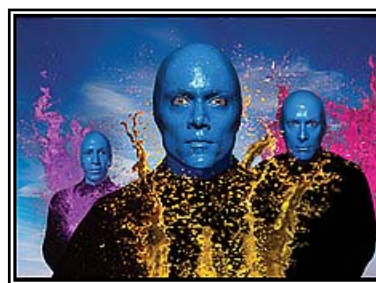
*Now, our Sisters of St. Francis believe in the Cosmic Christ—that is, that the Second Person of the Trinity is*

*not only Jesus but all of Creation. If that is true, then watching these videos made me feel like I was watching the torture and Crucifixion of the Cosmic Christ.* (I hope that's not blasphemous.) The videos are [here](#) and [here](#). (For animals as "production units," see Pollan, [here](#).)

As I looked at these videos and wept, I could not believe the level to which the human spirit can sink when capitalist greed is involved. People often use the term "animalistic" or "bestial" to describe a low state of being. I've always found it a misnomer, because willful humans attain levels of degradation that no animal is capable of reaching—evil is not in their nature. At first I thought how evil these men with the forklifts are. Then I read, on food attorney *Bill Marler's blog (thanks Bix!)*, that *the two people who were fired when the videos went public were not heads of the company, but two undocumented immigrants (with families) who were told to do this work (making the cows stand up) or lose their jobs/be deported.* For Marler, see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). As Marler wryly notes, *"We are not...going to see Westland/Hallmark President Steve Mendell being taken away in handcuffs. No, neither Mendell nor any other Westland/Hallmark corporate officials being 'frog-marched' past the media."* *So where lies the sin?* The animal handlers? Their bosses? The American consumers who demand a cheap and constant meat supply? I only know that the sin lies not with the cows. *What would Jesus or St. Francis do?*

## "Face It": Focus the Nation

Neumann's President, *Rosalie Mirenda*, and *Professor Elaine Grose* of Neumann College, head of the *Care of Creation Committee* under the aegis of the *Neumann Institute for Franciscan Studies*, promoted a campaign to focus Americans' attention on global-warming problems.



Elaine sent along a link to a really exciting, educational video called *"Face It,"* about what we can do to stop global warming. It begins with a routine by today's amazing performance artists, *Blue Man Group*, and continues with incredibly informative discussion of very specific measures we can take. To view it, see [here](#) and click on "Face It Webcast" on the left of screen. (Blue Man Group photograph courtesy of Blue Man Group: see [here](#))

## Spring is Springing!

Lots of the most well known February holidays are behind us already. Early February is rife with agriculturally significant holidays and Church holy days. *Imbolc*, on 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> February, marks the *beginning of spring* in the Celtic (lunar) calendar and is regarded as the time that ewes



begin to lactate as the days lengthen (Imbolc falls halfway between Winter Solstice and the Spring Equinox). As the traditional start of spring, it's also a time for weather forecasting. This is probably why *Groundhog*

*Day* falls now—this year, *Punxsutawney Phil*, “*the Prognosticator of All Prognosticators*” (see left) did indeed see his shadow on 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb, meaning we will have *six more weeks of winter*—feels like it at this writing!). (For a video of Phil, see [here](#).) Interestingly, in ancient Ireland, the “hag goddess” Cailleach foretold the weather similarly: Imbolc was the day she gathered her firewood for the rest of the winter. If she wanted a long winter, she made the sun shine on Imbolc so she could see to gather lots of wood. And that's why folks both ancient and modern, if they want spring in a hurry, hope for a cloudy Imbolc or Groundhog Day! (For more, see [here](#).)

1<sup>st</sup> February is also *Candlemas Day* in the Church, as well as the *Feast Day of St. Brigid* of Kildare, an early Irish saint and founder of a double abbey (one for men, one for women) at Kildare (or *Cill-Dara*, “church of the oak”). She also founded a school of art, one of the finest scriptoria of the day (see [here](#)). For an earlier *Red Hill Root* article on Candlemas and Brigid, see [here](#). (Picture credit [here](#))



Early February also hosts the celebration of *Carnival* in many Catholic countries, as it is the last chance to feast before *Ash Wednesday*, which was 6<sup>th</sup> February this year. The word “carnival” is derived from *carne vale*, that is, “good-bye to meat.” Especially rich foods are eaten on *Fat Tuesday*, the day before Ash Wednesday, in preparation for the more abstemious Lenten diet so important in the Church. Yet *Father Jude Krill*, OFM,

makes an interesting alternative suggestion—that is, *instead of thinking of Lent only as a time of “giving up” something, we can regard it as a time to “add back” something extra to the life around us*—go out of our way to help someone, offer an extra prayer for those in need, or other similar forms of extra service. Nice idea!

Other countries celebrate the coming of spring in February as well. In Japan, the day *Setsubun*—“season boundary”—marks the end of winter and start of the New Year. This year it's on 4<sup>th</sup> February. The holiday is linked with *edamame* (soy beans), both for their good fortune and good health. (For more info & the photo of a Setsubun shrine, see [here](#).)



Perhaps better known in the U.S. is the *Chinese New Year*, celebrated in 2008 (the *Year of the Rat*) on 7<sup>th</sup>



February, the second new moon after the Winter Solstice. This is the year 4706 in the Chinese calendar, and the holiday is seen as the Day of Three Beginnings—of the new year, the new season, and the new month! It's a time of feasting and giving

traditional gifts. (Picture credit [here](#))

In *Luxembourg*, the end of winter and start of spring is celebrated on *Buergbrennan*, the first Sunday in Lent, when fires are set atop the hills, often in the shape of a cross. This celebrates both the victory of light over darkness as days lengthen, and the physical and spiritual rebirth of spring. For video of Buergbrennan fire, see [here](#).

Of course we all know *Valentine's Day*, 14<sup>th</sup> February. For a lovely website about St. Valentine (about whom little is actually known), see *Saints Preserved*, [here](#). This also is the time of year in which birds of various sorts—but especially blackbirds, crows, and others in that family—undertake their courting rituals, starting a new cycle of avian life. This is discussed in the *Catholic*

*Encyclopaedia* as part of the folklore surrounding St. Valentine (there are three early martyrs associated with this name): “*The popular customs associated with Saint Valentine's Day undoubtedly had their origin in a...belief generally received in England and France during the Middle Ages, that on 14 February, i.e. half way through the second month of the year, the birds began to pair.*” This led Chaucer, for instance, to write in his *Parliament of Fowles* [Fowls] that “*For this was sent on Seynt Valentyne's day, Whan every foul cometh ther to choose his mate.*” ([source](#))



The amazing photograph, above, of *starlings flying in graceful formations, as if dancing*, was published by the BBC news website. It was never clearly understood till now how such large flocks can respond to each other so rapidly as to all turn and swoop together. But recent research suggests that each individual in the flock keeps track of only six other birds, often widely scattered throughout the formation. How amazing and beautiful! (For a wonderful video of this, see [here](#).)

## Meatless Lenten Recipes



All-veggie Soup ([photo credit](#))

I just got two new cookbooks, *Veganomicon* by Isa Chandra Moskowitz & Terry Hope Romero, and Mark Bittman's humongous *How to Cook Everything Vegetarian* (over 2000 recipes—!!!!!!—and he gives vegan alternatives for many of them). Both of the books are great! Between that and internet recipes, we're set! I must say that I've been thinking more along vegan lines myself lately, both for ethical and health reasons. Re health, see for instance, these blogs: [here](#) and [here](#).

### Buckwheat Blini—makes about 36 blini

- ❖ 1½ cups soy or other vegan milk
- ❖ 2 tsp apple cider vinegar
- ❖ ½ cup warm water
- ❖ 1 tbsp sugar
- ❖ one (¼-oz) envelope active dry yeast
- ❖ 1 tbsp ground flaxseeds
- ❖ ½ cup buckwheat flour
- ❖ ½ cup chickpea flour
- ❖ ½ tsp salt
- ❖ 2 tbsp olive oil
- ❖ non-stick cooking spray or olive-oil spray

Add vinegar to soy milk & set aside to curdle. Mix sugar & water in large glass or plastic bowl; add yeast & stir briefly. Set in warm place for yeast to foam up (~3 min). Meanwhile add flaxseeds to soy milk & stir well. Combine remaining ingredients in separate large bowl. Pour in soy milk and mix till smooth. Add this batter to yeast, stir again till smooth, place towel over bowl & set aside in warm place to rise (~1 hr). Preheat large, nonstick skillet over medium. Give the batter a stir (it should be slightly bubbly). Spray hot pan w/ nonstick spray or olive-oil spray. Carefully pour ~1½ tbsp batter into pan to form a blini—you should be able to fit about 5 at once, but don't overcrowd (4 is ok). The tops of the blini should bubble up & set w/in 90 sec (if not, then heat isn't high enough or pan is insufficiently heated). Flip each blini & cook another 90 sec. Both sides should be a dark, flecked golden-brown. If serving immediately, put them on a plate covered w/ foil; if for later, place on baking pan in 200° oven. Serve w/ applesauce, syrup, sauerkraut, whatever!!! (Moskowitz & Romero, *Veganomicon*)

### Chickpeas in Their Own Broth, w/ Crisp Bread

#### Crums—4 servings

- ❖ one 6-inch hunk of French or Italian bread, a couple days old
- ❖ ½ cup olive oil
- ❖ salt & fresh-ground pepper
- ❖ 3 cups cooked chickpeas, w/ ~2 cups of their cooking liquid (chickpeas cooked from scratch)
- ❖ 1 tbsp minced garlic
- ❖ chopped parsley for garnish

Tear up bread & pulse in food processor till shredded, w/ no chunks larger than a pea but most not smaller either. Put all but 2 tbsp olive oil in skillet on medium. Add bread & sprinkling of salt & pepper & cook, shaking pan a bit, till crumbs are nicely browned. Remove from pan & drain. Warm chickpeas in their broth w/ the garlic & sprinkle w/

salt & pepper. Top w/ crumbs, garnish w/ parsley, & serve or store, covered, in fridge for up to 3 days. Gently reheat & garnish just before serving. (Bittman, *How to... Veg*)

## Green-Pea Soup w/ Cheddar-Scallion Panini—serves 4

- ❖ 3 tbsp butter or olive oil
- ❖ 4 scallions, white & green parts separated and each chopped
- ❖ 3 (10-oz) boxes frozen peas
- ❖ 1 can reduced sodium broth (veggie or other)
- ❖ 6 oz shredded sharp white cheddar
- ❖ 8 slices rye sandwich bread
- ❖ salt & pepper
- ❖ 1 tbsp fresh lemon juice



In large saucepan, heat 1 tbsp of butter or oil on medium. Add scallion whites & cook, stirring, till soft (~1-2 min). Add peas, broth, & 3 cups water; bring to boil, then reduce heat to a simmer. Cook ~5 min; set aside. In bowl, toss cheddar w/ scallion greens. Make 4 sandwiches w/ cheddar mix & bread. In large skillet, heat 1 tbsp butter or oil on medium-

low. Put sandwiches in skillet & cook till golden, 3-4 min per side, adding remaining butter/oil to skillet to cook the second side. Working in batches, purée soup in blender till smooth (fill blender only halfway to prevent spattering). If necessary, adjust consistency w/ a little water. Season w/ salt, pepper, & lemon juice. Serve each cup of soup w/ one grilled sandwich, cut into 4 pieces (*Everyday Food*, 3/08)

## Pasta w/ Caramelized Onions—about 4 servings

- ❖ 5 or 6 medium to large onions (~2 lbs)
- ❖ 1/3 cup plus 2 tbsp olive oil
- ❖ salt & fresh-ground pepper
- ❖ 1 lb long pasta [I like angel hair!]
- ❖ fresh grated Parmesan cheese [see following recipe for a vegan alternative]

Thinly slice onions (a mandoline makes this SOOO easy!). Put them in large, dry skillet over medium-low & cover. Check & stir every 5 min. The onions will 1<sup>st</sup> give up liquid, then dry out; after 20-30 min, when they start to brown & stick to pan, remove cover. Add 1/3 cup oil & salt/pepper, & turn up heat to medium. Meanwhile bring large pot of salted water to boil. Continue cooking onions. If you want a more savory taste, you can add 2 tbsp capers or chopped pitted kalamata olives (or both) during this

part of the onion-cooking. The onions should cook another 10-20 min, till uniformly brown & soft, almost pasty. Cook pasta till tender but not mushy. Taste onions & adjust seasoning. Drain pasta, reserving a cup of cooking water. In warm bowl, toss pasta & onions together, along w/ remaining oil & a little cooking water if necessary to allow the mix to coat pasta evenly. Toss w/ some Parmesan & serve, passing more Parmesan at the table.

Almesan (Vegan Parmesan)—as a fanatical cheese-lover, I never thought I could go totally vegan. But *Ira Josephs*, at *Selene Co-op*, introduced me to *Parma*, a ready-made “sort-of Parmesan cheese” that actually is delicious and doesn’t use any weird processed soy foods (see [here](#)). So if you don’t want to be bothered to make your own, just buy some *Parma* at Selene. But here’s a recipe too.

- ❖ ¼ cup slivered almonds
- ❖ 1 tbsp sesame seeds, toasted
- ❖ 1/8 to ¼ tsp salt, to taste
- ❖ ¼ tsp lemon zest

Combine all ingredients into a blender & pulse until everything turns into tiny crumbs. Bingo! You’re done! (*Veganomicon*)

## *The Swan*

By Mary Oliver

“Did you too see it, drifting, all night, on the black river?  
 Did you see it in the morning, rising into the silvery air—  
 An armful of white blossoms,  
 A perfect commotion of silk and linen as it leaned  
 into the bondage of its wings; a snowbank, a bank of lilies,  
 Biting the air with its black beak?  
 Did you hear it, fluting and whistling  
 A shrill dark music—like the rain pelting the trees—like a  
 waterfall  
 Knifing down the black ledges?  
 And did you see it, finally, just under the clouds—  
 A white cross  
 Streaming across the sky, its feet  
 Like black leaves, its wings  
 Like the stretching light of the river?  
 And did you feel it, in your heart, how it pertained to  
 everything?  
 And have you too finally figured out what beauty is for?  
 And have you changed your life?”

Dedicated to the abused dairy cows at Westland/Hallmark, and also, in hopes for possible enlightenment, to all those who caused them to be abused.