

Meanwhile Back at the Farm...July 12, 2001

Howdy Folks,

Well its official. It couldn't have happened to a more deserving dot.com. WebVan is dead, bankrupt, kaput! Boy did they ever burn through a lot of other people's money on their brief meteoric run through the economic universe. Something like half a billion dollars gone up in smoke.

WebVan did a lot of damage to CSA's all over the country wherever they offered their service. But more than the direct diversion of business they have permanently, it seems, tweaked the public's expectation of CSA's and other food providers. People expect to get on the phone, give their credit card number and like magic, have food appear at their door. They also expect not to be charged for the service either! Well it seems pretty obvious that something like this couldn't work in the long run. After all if grocery companies could make a profit delivering their own food, don't you think they'd do it?

We have suffered tremendously due to the change in the market's expectations. We are still dealing with it even with the Death of WebVan. I have already started receiving calls in the wake of WebVan's demise asking if we'd do home delivery. A local hospital's nutritionist called me this morning almost begging me to start up this service. People don't seem to get it. Free home delivery didn't work for WebVan. It's not likely to work for anyone else either. I have heard of other CSA's doing home delivery but they charge a lot more than we do to make that happen. I suppose we could consider doing it and charging more as an option but I don't like the idea. Call me a stick in the mud. Somehow doing home delivery increases isolation and reduces community, something we don't need in Community Supported Agriculture in my opinion.

But my opinion is not always right. I know its shocking but sometimes your farmer doesn't get it right. Maybe it will be necessary to look at the home delivery thing and figure out a way that would work for our size operation and the kinds of customers we have. Of the 45 people who signed up with us in the Spring for a 6 week trial, only 6 renewed and the almost universal reason was that it wasn't convenient to drive out of their normal routine to get our produce. Perhaps WebVan was on the right track but going about it the wrong way. One CSA I know in Southern California does door to door delivery and has over 1000 members. I would appreciate feedback on this from you folks.

This week we picked two nice full boxes of sweet peppers on our first harvest. We always pick them on the small side for the first couple of harvests because the poor plants really struggle with these first fruits. It really reduces the stress on the plants to take out a lot of the early fruit so

the energy can continue to go into growth rather than reproduction.

I spied a lot of little cucumbers this week on some of the vines over at Matadero. I wouldn't doubt that we'll have our first small harvest of them next week. Squash is still slow to produce we aren't seeing more than one fruit on every other plant or so right now rather than multiple fruits per plant which is what we expect when they are really happy.

This week we did a first picking of the Purple Ruffles basil. It isn't as strong as the Genovese Basil but it is very nice and so colorful. I really enjoyed making pesto last week from the green basil. The first picking is always a little mild compared to later pickings but it still carried a nice punch.

We are planting more beds this Saturday over at Pescadero. Probably about 8 beds. This will give us some nice greens and salad in the next 6 weeks or so, which we normally wouldn't even consider for months. We'll be planting our first broccoli seedlings for fall harvest there too. I'm going to like having the coastal land to plant on since it gives us a lot of flexibility we normally wouldn't have in the hot season. I'm even going to plant some turnips in the middle of summer, how strange and wonderful.

Santa Clara residents beware! A glassy winged sharpshooter was found in San Jose a few days ago. If they find a few more this will trigger the Ag Commissioner to institute FORCED pesticide spraying of people's back and front yards within a mile of the discovered pests. New members may not have heard about this before but I have been in the forefront of fighting this INSANE policy of invading private property and spraying neurotoxins in the name of protecting wine industry profits. The GWSS can carry a disease, which can kill grape vines. The wine industry along with the department of food and ag have cooked up this emergency plan to spray as much of the state as they think necessary just to combat this one bug. No thought has been given to the ecological devastation to birds, pets, beneficial insects, various lizard and toad allies, which already do the majority of the pest control in our yards. When they are killed off by the pesticides, the rebound effect is one big pest population explosion.

The effect on people of the pesticides can be profound. A single exposure to kids at the right age can permanently damage their brains and nervous systems causing them to lose IQ, mental abilities, and develop many neurological problems. Adults can have their immune systems compromised for many years or even permanently. They claim the stuff is safe within 24 hours but the EPA toxicology sheets show that to be a lie and that the toxic

effect is largely undiminished for weeks afterwards. Pets will track it into the house where children pick it up off the floor even if you can keep the kids out of the yard after the spraying. One woman testified at the Santa Cruz hearings of how her daughter began developing breasts and pubic hair at 5 years old when repeatedly exposed to these pesticides sprayed at an adjacent winery.

If there is specific actions to be taken, people to be called or letters to be written I will try to keep you updated. But if you live in Santa Clara county I'd make an appointment with your County supervisor and go in and tell them that you want to make sure that they don't spray people against their will. Already supervisors in Santa Cruz and Sonoma counties have changed the county Ag work plans to allow people to opt out of the forced spraying. Why shouldn't Santa Clara residents have the same rights.

We now have new drop offs in Palo Alto & Menlo Park! Tell your friends.

The Food

Purple Ruffles Basil: This tropical mint is perhaps most people's favorite herb.

Lolla Rossa Lettuce: This lettuce is not known for summer heat tolerance so we are picking it a little early before it gets too bitter.

Baby Carrots: We are having to leave here soon so we are harvesting carrots early. They are nice, crunchy and sweet at this stage.

Frissee: This member of the endive family is bitter when raw. Of course some people love the bitter flavor and use it in salad. I always cook it in some way or use it in soup, which eliminates the bitterness but leaves the wild flavor.

Garlic: More of these pungent bulbs which you can use for pesto.

Summer Squash: Another early but sparse harvest of these fruits

Stir Fry Mix: An experimental spring/summer planting of mustards

Sweet Peppers: The first harvest of many to come.