

Week # 15 Timken Farm Community Supported Agriculture

The \$6 Tomato— by Mark

Timken Farm made a surprise visit to the Vashon Farmers market on Saturday. After selling at the market for two seasons, I thought it would be fun to sell some extra tomatoes and see how things are going with the other farmers and vendors. It wasn't long after the opening bell that I realized that things are changing in the world of food. Throughout the day people would let me or Heather know that they were "shocked" at how expensive our tomatoes were. In the first two years selling at the market I would go home in anguish thinking we were charging too much even after checking our pricing with Thriftway. The code of pricing for farmers selling at the market is what Thriftway is charging for organic produce. We usually identify the Thriftway price and add a premium. I checked before setting our prices on Saturday and found Thriftway selling organic heirloom tomatoes for \$5.99 lb. I settled for \$4.00 lb. Well what happened to the premium idea you might ask? Ahhh...here is where psychology comes into play. A lot of our tomatoes weighed more than a pound so it was probable that someone would place a tomato on the scale it would be a \$6 tomato. Not many people are willing to pay \$6 for a tomato no matter how good it is or who grew it or how local it is. Not many people on Vashon were willing to pay \$4 for a tomato. The pricing of tomatoes at Thriftway is a foreshadowing to me. Higher food costs are coming in sync with higher gas costs. We as Americans have become very comfortable with cheap food. Workers making sweat-shop wages to produce inexpensive brand name clothing are akin to farm laborers in South America growing conventional food being exposed to chemicals and paid meager wages. These conditions do not reflect the true cost and value of the products we consume all too readily and cheaply. Food and the agricultural system has been forgotten because the price of food has been so cheap. It seems we are just now realizing as a nation our addiction to cheap oil. We are also addicted to cheap food. Organic farmers can't price their produce appropriately because the majority of people will not pay the cost for organic food. But conventional food on the other hand, grown in South America, now that is what we are accustomed to. My dear reader things are changing in our world and on this tiny island as well.

Food System Factoid:

- *Barrels of oil the U.S consumes per day: 20 million*
- *Barrels of oil the U.S would have saved in 2006 alone if, starting in 2001, the government had implemented plans to raise fuel economy standards to 40 mpg by 2012: 500,000*
- *Amount consumers would save at the gas pump this year: \$8.7 billion*
- *Tons by which carbon dioxide emissions would be reduced: 34 million*

There may come a day when a \$6 tomato seems pretty cheap, and rightly so!

Squash Bread

1 1/2 cups flour
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
3/4 cup sugar
2 cups finely shredded unpeeled squash
1/4 cup oil
1 egg
1/4 teaspoon lemon juice
1/2 cup walnuts

In a mixing bowl combine flour, cinnamon, baking soda, salt, baking powder, and nutmeg. In another mixing bowl combine sugar, shredded squash, cooking oil, egg, and lemon juice: mix well. Add flour mixture: stir just till combined. Stir in chopped walnuts.

Pour batter into a greased 8X4X2 inch loaf pan. Bake in a 350 degree oven for 1 hour. This bread is great to freeze. After cooling rap in wax paper and put into a freezer zip lock bag.

What's in your box:

Lettuce— Baby Mix (Not Washed!)
Basil— Sweet, mammoth
Carrots— Mookum or Nantes Fancy
Tomatoes— Sun Gold, Stupice, Mortgage Lifter, Oregon Spring, Sweet Million, Yellow Brandywine, Early Girl, Black, Green Zebra, Black Plum, Fantastic.
Parsley
Beans— Indy Gold, Helda, Kentucky Wonder
Squash— Sunburst, Crookneck
Cucumbers— Marketmoore, X— Country in bag (picklers), Lemon
Chard— Argentata, Bright Lights
Apples— Not known
Leeks— Lincoln