OLD SCHOOL
It was a few weeks back that I took a Friday and Monday off for a long weekend of sailboat racing. An old friend and very talented skipper from my previous life had invited me to Newport, RI to join his team for the annual New York Yacht Club Regatta. This year was the 169th event dating the club back to 1844. Busy year was 1844! Friday morning my body clock woke me to my normal early hour. While the rest of the crew dozed in, the skipper, his wife, another early bird and I slipped out for a hot breakfast and to fulfill a short list of last minute chores before our day of play. On that list was to collect a #5 flag (a triangular pendant with the top half black and the bottom half white) from the local chandlery at opening, as prearranged the evening before. In boat races competitors are split into divisions based on handicap ratings, each division is identified by a number shown with a flag that helps you know who your racing, when your start is, who gives rights etc., while out on the water. The keeper of the chandlery was an animated old salt. He seemed to know everything about boating, had traveled the world with the Coast Guard and was generally entertaining. I, being only the tag along on this morning shopping trip, was at liberty to take photos and chat away. One of my shots was a string of colorful flags hanging from the ceiling as a bit of nautical decoration. The typical flags you see hung all in a line flapping from boats and waterside restaurants. These flags at one point were more than decoration, with each meaning a different letter much like our number flag. Before radios and cell phones these flags would be used in line to create messages between boats and were a vital means of communication. As I set myself for this shot he quickly broke in with a story.

“You know, our store here is one of many,” says he. “Every year we gather together and visit trade and boat shows for advertising here in the New England states. A couple years back I was headed into the lobby of a giant convention center where our display took up two floors. From the top floor we had all those flags hanging down to spruce up or spot. I was walking in with Rose the owners wife, an 80 year old lady who had circled the globe on sailboats, when she looked up, stopped short and grabbed my arm.” “Take those down” she says. “I kind’a paused and was a little confused. I asked why? Everything looks great!” She slowly turned her head looked him I the eye and in an even tone said, “do you know what they say?...Take them down, now.”

Sailors have played these games with flags for years. The Naval Academy graduations have yearly events where the young graduates helping decorate some party tent would eventually be ousted by a wiser higher rank before the evening was out. All conspiring parties involved, plastered with naughty grins, knowing that 90% of the crowd had no idea the vulgarity that was the backdrop to all their happy photos. Funny stories yes, but more so it’s these old school life lessons that often interest me. These ancient trades and skills that have little application for the majority in the modern age yet still have meaning and use to some. (Continued on the other side).
The gardens this time of year are exactly the same. 90% of modern society would walk onto our farm and see plants. They couldn’t decipher between a weed and tomato never mind between a ‘Big Boy’ and a ‘Roma.’ Without a label on the bag many of today’s shoppers don’t know what they are buying. And, even if they did, how it would be farmed might still be a mystery. Yet we have dozens of selections all lacing our fields and all with their unique problems. It’s been wet and with wet comes bugs and disease. Our students are hard at it. When they walk up to a row they are looking past the basic and tapping into old school skills. Like Rose, these young farmers are looking over a mosaic of color, reading the plants as they flash up communication to their care givers. More than water and fertilizer, but disease and pest. And of the hundreds of considerations, what diseases and pests? Our plants in an attempt to communicate to us flash up flags like mariners of old hailing for help. It’s not technology that reads these signs, its human faces and hands. At our farm it’s young faces and hands that are being taught the tricks of the old farmer. These are the youth that now carry, seemingly silly, dying knowledge that is also the responsibility for feed the world. By Garth Woodruff.

KITCHEN TIP

Peeling and pressing garlic is a huge waste of time. To use a clove of garlic, set it on a cutting board and smash it with the flat side of a big knife (any chef’s knife will do). The papery skin will come right off, and you can mince it real quick right there in about 10 seconds. Done.

Free Range Eggs Free Range Eggs are available for $3.00 from Redbarn Farm in Buchanan, MI. To order eggs for your next delivery please email <info@augardens.com>

Local Pickup Our normal pick-up location is at our Student Gardens stand nearby Neighbor-to-Neighbor. Local-pick up’s are available on Fridays between 11:00am-2:00pm.

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Recipes

FRIED GREEN BEAN BUNDLES

Ingredients:
- 1 pound fresh green beans
- 1 bunch green onions, cut into strips
- 2 tablespoons House Seasoning, recipe follows
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup buttermilk
- Oil, for frying

Directions:
Bundle about 5 green beans by tying in the center with a green onion strip. Combine house seasoning and flour. Dip green beans in buttermilk and roll into flour mixture. In a deep frying pan or Dutch oven, fry in hot oil until golden brown. Drain on paper towels.

House Seasoning:
- 1 cup salt
- 1/4 cup black pepper
- 1/4 cup garlic powder

Mix ingredients together and store in an airtight container for up to 6 months.


Green(purple) beans- one of only a few varieties of beans that can be eaten fresh. Picked when they are still immature and the inner bean is just beginning to form green beans are a great source of folate, fiber and vitamin K. Enjoy them while they are in the peak of the season when they have the best flavor, are the least expensive, and locally grown varieties are widely available.