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LANDSCAPES FOR A CHANGING WORLD

FEEDING FARMERS WELL & ENJOYING THE FRUITS OF NOW

By NATE DOWNEY

Just had a wonderful surprise visit from my friends Greg and Patty, the owners of Camino de Paz School and Farm. They had to drop something off on their way to dinner, but next thing we knew we were all making dinner right out of the garden. Ironically, I start at their booth every Saturday at the farmers' market. As a member of the Montessori-based school's board, it's the least I can do. Feeding these farmer friends from my own garden was a total treat — I need a happier version of the word “surreal” to describe it ... As soon as we decided on our almost-all-garden dinner plans, they got right on it! Patty made the most deliciously sweet salsa with tomatoes, mint, onions, parsley, and plums (from Tuesday's market). Greg hopped on harvesting kale and the first pumpkin of the season. While getting things going in the kitchen, out of the fridge I grabbed a box of tofu (the only seriously foreign dinner ingredient) and some yummy leftover chive-and-oyster-mushroom dish. By simply slicing the squash and sautéing it in a little oil along with the kale, dinner couldn't have been much more local and quick. (What a fun dinner it was, too ... full of lively, happy, and productive conversation!)

But was it tasty, you ask? Tasty isn't a good enough word for the fantastic fresh flavors that we crave all year long. I think it's the mint that's lingering most. Over an hour later, its tingle soon reminds me of dinner in ALL of its savory essences. Each flavor is NOW popping back out of my taste buds for a triumphant refrain that blares like a tight and proud marching band as the home team scores the winning touchdown, or maybe an “Uncle John's Band” encore circa November 30, 1980, or ... insert your favorite happy song here.

The tune itself is irrelevant; it's a mood we're after here, and it's summed up thusly: These are the moments we really live for. We can say we like the other seasons, and I'm sure we do, but harvest time really, really, really rocks — plain and simple. Please make sure you enjoy it as much as you possibly can this year! (More info about Camino de Paz, an awesome school for girls and boys in middle school can be found at www.caminodepaz.net.)

