

Top pie!

Tablehurst Farm has again won a top prize in the Soil Association Organic Food Award, this time in the Prepared Food category, for their Steak & Kidney pie. Judges' comments included "Exceedingly good, huge chunks of steak and good depth of filling. Very attractive." and "Tasty and tender meat and a light crisp pastry." Judging was by blind tasting based on taste, smell, texture and appearance. The Organic Food Awards have been running for over 20 years and showcase the best in organic food and drink. Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, who presented the awards on behalf of the Soil Association, commented that all the prize



Adele Marshall, Tablehurst's champion pie-maker, with Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall at the Organic Food Awards



winners should consider themselves to be 'World Class', for their really is the 'best of the best' in organic food. All at Tablehurst are absolutely delighted with the Award, seeing it as a testament to the quality of the meat and the expertise of pie maker Adele Marshall. Adele has been baking pies in and around East Grinstead for over 20 years, but only came to Tablehurst this spring, since when increasing numbers of us have been enjoying her ever-expanding range of pies, sausage rolls, quiches and cooked meats. If you haven't yet found out how good the pies are, you don't know what you are missing!

In addition to her award-winning pies, Adele has introduced a range of hot pots, pasties, sausage rolls, casseroles and cooked meats. She will be taking orders this Christmas, but order early as supplies will be limited.

Raphael Rivera and Rachel Hanney

Plaw Hatch Farm News

With the nights drawing closer in and the weather starting to take a noticeable turn we all are also taking a big sigh after the activities over the last Season. It's been an incredibly busy time, mostly with the comings and goings of the numerous students who were all a great help, and now we're back to "normal" with the usual skeleton crew. We had 21 young people coming to stay here through the Summer. We encourage people to come for at least a month so that they can have a full experience as well as being of great benefit to the farm. This can be quite a strain on our resources of accommodation, co-ordination and supervision from the managers, but the enthusiasm and seeing some young people develop in such a short time makes it all worthwhile.

A large number of the students are coming from Waldorf schools in Germany as part of their practical experiences, some more mature WWOOFers from France and USA and we also had 2 more long term college students. Brigitte came in April from 'Warmonderhof', the biodynamic college in Holland, to do her 6 months practical. Her sweet nature meant that she was very welcoming to all the new young people, taking them under her wing; and she was a hit with the cows and picked up the milking quickly, much to Tom's relief. We all miss her dearly and have just named our new Tamworth sow after her. The joke is now what to call the second sow.... Bastien?! Bastien came from France to spend 3 months here working with food production. He is training to be (wait for it...) a supermarket manager. What a great challenge for us! We worked very hard to convert him, with his diabolical command of English that improved slightly over time and his heavy accent that we struggled to understand. He was great to work with, with his dry sense of humour and always accommodating in whatever task he was put to. At his farewell we asked him if he was convinced about Biodynamic/Organic food being the right way forward, his answer was: "eets nice, but, no..." Oh well, you can't win them all but we'd have him back any day. So everyone's gone back to school and college, and now Horst and Tommy rattling around in the suddenly empty student house.

The animals have also kept us on our toes. It's a time of year when you are starting to worry about the grazing that's left, thinking about getting the barns ready and hoping it doesn't rain too much before that. Just as we are waiting for "Celery" and "Dolly" to kick off the Autumn calving we have just weaned off the calves which were born in the Spring. They look in amazing health and have taken a while to adjust to life without Mum so it has been quite noisy around the yard this last week. We allowed the cows to come back to the barn when they liked and you know once they have stopped coming up and are happy staying in the field that the weaning is complete (with some help from 'Ignatia') Sadly it's the time of year to make the decision about saying goodbye to some of our old girls which is hard as you can imagine for Tom.

We also weaned off our lambs a week ago and used a method we devised last year which has been a successful and less painful way of separating the ewes from the lambs. We need to give the ewes about 2 months rest to get back into good condition ready for the tup. Tablehurst have given us one of their "old" Lleyr rams. He's had a number of names: originally when he was at Tablehurst I called him "Gwilym", Tom found that too difficult and called him "Rupert". He now has a nickname "Houdini" with the number of times he has managed to escape from my garden. He has been moved today up to Standen with a couple of Shetland ponies for company until his services are required. He has become a bit "humanised" by so much handling by me, meaning he's friendly and easily managed. It will be interesting to see what nature develops from spending time some with horses....

With the recent introduction of 2 new sows from a farm in Nutley we also have to say a sad farewell to our old girls "Blackie" and "Stripey" who have started showing their age. We are still on the lookout for a suitable friendly boar.

Our egg production is still low, but soon our 2 houses of pullets should start laying. We also just got a new batch of



day old chicks which take a lot of time to nurture, especially with the changeable weather. Our free range 'pet' ducks reared by Manuel are doing amazing and have started to lay. We haven't lost any to road accidents, which is so often the case, they don't seem to have developed this fascination with the grass verge on the road like the others did, so we are relieved. We do have a number of drakes, though so we have to make a decision about them soon. Anyone interested?

Johannes has just finished spreading the "muck" (ie the composted manure) on the fields as this is the best time for the worms to do their amazing work. All the grasses, green manure and cereals have been sown, the prep 500 has been sprayed now its time to let nature slow down and take over.

Susan Cram

A crisis in our Co-op?

When I and my wife Brigitte came to Tablehurst 16 years ago we came fired up with the idea of a community farm, a form of CSA or Community Supported Agriculture. We had seen a couple of examples in Germany, and as farmers we loved the idea that it is not just the responsibility of the

farmers how land is farmed and either exploited or cared for, but that it is the responsibility of everybody within society. With a community farm that possibility is given to those who want to take on this responsibility. When we started at Tablehurst we were sure there were people out there who cared, and wanted to partake and share in creating a model of how things could be. That proved to be the case.

At that time Tablehurst was in a crisis and although it had been farmed biodynamically for many years it was struggling to survive. This helped spur people on to become involved. Later Plaw Hatch also went through a crisis and the co-op rose to the challenge, raising £80,000 in a matter of weeks to bring it into the co-op, and help guide it to what it has become today.

I and many co-op members feel pleased and proud of how Tablehurst has developed over these years. It really is due to the participation of very many people in a great variety of ways. People who have participated in the Management Group, in organising Open Days and Farm Walks, Barn Dances and Work Days, innumerable customers who have bought the produce and served on the Co-op Committee etc. have all played an important role.

Yet over the last years as the farms have become more successful and there have been no big crises, there is noticeably less participation and involvement of many co-op members. This has shown itself in less people attending the AGM and farm walks etc. and fewer new members joining. The newsletter, which is the main communication channel for the co-op and much appreciated, is one of the essential expenses of the co-op. As there is no fee for the newsletter and no regular subscription for co-op members it will soon become an issue how it should be funded. Should the farms now be paying for it? What is the task of the co-op?

I see many important issues out there. Forest Row has become a Transition Village. There are issues in our society involving food and energy, pollution, education, transport – the list is endless. Can the farms do more to meet any of those needs? Can it do something in a small way to help create a threefold social order? If so, it must be with the help of people who care, want to be involved and are prepared to do so. Has the co-op served its function or are there new tasks to be considered? Do we need or want to change the format of the co-op?

Tablehurst Management Group met recently to discuss this and brought a proposal to the AGM. We believe that it is a kind of crisis for the Co-op and that the co-op members should look at it and see what, if anything should be done. How could this be brought about?

We propose that the membership form a '**Vision Group**' of people who will take personal responsibility for helping us all find renewed ways in which we can continue the work of the co-op and the farms. We suggest that the Vision Group should comprise two members from each of the farms and from the co-op committee, plus a minimum of two other co-op members, with provision to accommodate all co-op members who want to be involved. It should be up to the vision group to select a structure and mode of operation that suits them, with no *a priori* assumptions about who might chair the group or hold particular officer posts. All these people should be prepared to make a personal commitment to consult widely on the future of the co-op, and to work openly and collectively in the interests of the co-op, its members and the farmers and farm staff. Their collective purpose should be to develop a vision for the co-op, together with the process that we need to follow to realise the vision. Although this should be without timescale, it is hoped that the vision group will be able to report periodically on its progress, with a view to bringing firm proposals to the 2011 AGM (or an earlier EGM, if appropriate). We also suggest that all members be asked to contribute a small amount of money to provide some funding for the work of the vision group (so that they can seek information or advice, run consultation meetings, and so forth) and for the continued operation of the co-op committee in the intervening period (principally underwriting production and distribution of the newsletter).

Peter Brown

We need your input!

If you are inspired by this article, want to participate or have ideas you would like to share please contact Neil Ravenscroft at neil@reevesravenscroft.co.uk

Become a Co-op shareholder now!

It only costs £100 to join the 500 or so individuals who collectively (and communally) own Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch Farms. We want the widest possible community involvement, so download the application form from our website now or write to "The Secretary, Tablehurst and Plaw Hatch Community Farm Ltd, Trees, Priory Road, Forest Row, RH18 5HF" for details of how to apply.

Brighton Market



"Can I tempt you with a cheese sample, sir?" The man replies with a shake of his head, mumbling that it's a bit early for cheese. I don't blame him. I'm stamping my feet and hopping up and down to keep warm; I hope it's the cold and not my tap-dancing that's scaring away the customers. It's nine am and the sun is just stretching into this secluded alley that houses the Brighton Farm Market.

The market is full of activity, despite the early Saturday morning. There are a few premature customers wandering in with wheeled shopping baskets. Stall holders are busy setting up for the day, bustling about with boxes and straightening tablecloths. There is a friendly camaraderie shared as we unload and inspect each other's wares. I admire a jumble of colorful squashes on one neighboring table and an enticing array of homemade cakes on another. The produce here encompasses meat, dairy, vegetables, fresh flowers, baked goods, wine...in short, all a person could need.

As the day warms, the flow of customers increases. Plaw Hatch cheese sells itself, and there is a steady queue of people taste-testing. I pour a sample of raw milk for a woman curious to know if the flavour is any different. She sips, smiles wide, and tells me it actually "tastes," as opposed to watery supermarket milk. Another bottle sold. There are two of us here representing the farm, and we are kept busy wrapping cheese, weighing tomatoes and answering the endless questions about biodynamics. There is great interest in why our produce is so vibrant-looking and delicious.

We are accumulating a following of loyal returning customers. This is the real value of the market; it is very gratifying to see the familiar faces, and they represent a bulk of the sales. Slowly but surely, the wheels of cheese on our table shrink in size to a few lingering wedges. By 4 pm we are just about sold out and start packing up. Before we leave, I run over to the cake stall with the last bit of cheese. We do a trade in our respective currencies and I enjoy a scrumptious brownie on the van ride home. Come and visit us Saturdays, 9:30-4:30 at Brighton Farm Market, Diplocks Market, 73 North Road, Brighton. BN1 1YD.

Emily Turner

Can you barbecue?



At Tablehurst we run a number of BBQs through out the year, this is of course over and above our hugely successful Saturday BBQ. We are, however, not able to fulfil all requests as we currently do not have enough volunteers or staff to cope. I am therefore asking if there is any keen BBQers who would like to send me their contact details so that I can build up a group of people that I can turn to for these events. My email address is rwrap@yaho.co.uk or you can reach me in the shop most days.

Many Thanks

Raphael Rivera

Of course you can!



Tablehurst Barn Dance, 25th September



Basil and Pesto

This year I seem to have a forest of basil, it's more than knee-high, and it's heaven to be in the midst of it. I'm working myself through that forest, gradually, and found, that it must be quite true, that basil has got antidepressant properties. Every single time it is so uplifting to be in the midst of it (one of my herb books recommends mixing it with equal parts of lemonbalm, and have it as a tea for that purpose).

So far I found, the basil does need the nuts, to really unfold its flavor. If one uses too little of them, the pesto doesn't taste as good. Originally it's pine nuts, of course, but sunflower seeds work very well, cashew nuts, are wonderful. They are creamy and sweet, pumpkinseeds are good too. I've just started using walnuts too. Today I had the inspiration to add some calendula flowers to the pesto, and I think, it's the best pesto I've ever made.

To be in a forest of Calendula feels just as good as being in a forest of basil. Calendula flowers heal the skin (and much more), but the resin-like substance in the leaves, stems, and the calyx around the flowers is strongly antifungal, it isn't soluble in water, which means, you don't get that effect, if you just drink the tea. Its common name pot marigold is said to derive from the fact, that calendula flowers used to be added to soups.

I usually use everything of the basil, that isn't tough or hard. In my salad packs I make an effort, to add flowers as well because the flowers carry the essence of the plant, color pigments, scent, - so why shouldn't I use them in my pesto.

If you try the basil flowers, you will find that they are even stronger than the leaves. It was very reassuring to read in a herb book, that with basil one uses the whole plant, except for the root.

I think it's quite important, that the basil is dry, when you make pesto, since I had a really bad experience using basil that was wet, the pesto fermented within a short time. The water doesn't mix with the oil, of course.

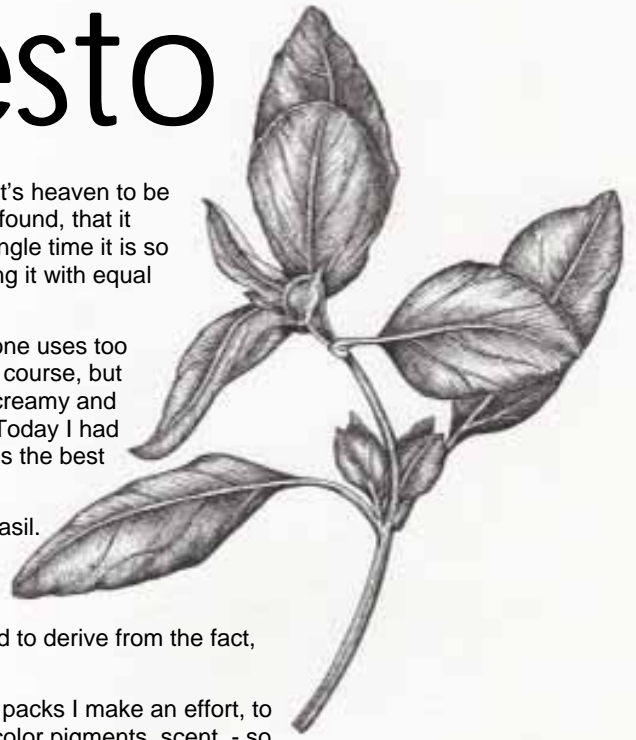
If you just want to preserve your basil, you can preserve it in oil; again, it needs to be dry. Chop it up finely mix with olive oil, and press into a jar, without pockets of air, and cover with at least 1 ½ cm of oil. This will keep for about 3 months, whereas pesto only keeps for about 3 weeks, you can make pesto out of the basil in oil, as you need it, just by adding the nuts, salt and garlic and some grated cheese, if you like.

I've tried drying a small amount of basil, thinking, it won't be very good, because whenever I bought dried basil, it didn't have much taste left. To my surprise, mine turned out to be rather nice so far and full of flavor. I dried it very gently, at 30°C.

Basil (*ocimum basilicum*) is a member of the labiatae family. Every single plant in this family has healing properties. They warm and support the digestion, and/or work on chest, lungs and throat. For example sage, hyssop, thyme, lemon balm, rosemary, summer and winter savory, lavender, marjoram, oregano belong to this family too. The labiatae also have in common that they are the most fantastic bee-plants, the flower completely fitting the bee, and moving with it, the more the flower is visited, the more the nectar flows. All the labiatae develop scent already in the leaves, not just in the flower. The scent comes from essential oils, their seeds are oily too. It's not essential oil though but fatty oil. One can see that on the seed packets, especially of the summer savory, sometimes there are lots of little spots of fat, but it also means, the seed is getting a little old, and won't germinate so well any more.

From a Biodynamic viewpoint, oils relate to warmth, they burn, they are full of energy. Most of the labiatae love sunny warm places to grow and many varieties grow wild in the Mediterranean countries, none of them can be found in the tropics, or the far North, they are plants of the temperate zones.

Many of the labiatae are sacred plants, or are attributed magic and protective properties. A few examples are: Hyssop was the sacred plant of the Hebrews, Basil is a sacred plant in its homeland India, sage and rosemary are burnt to cleanse the atmosphere of a room. They also were used to disinfect the air of rooms in epidemics. Lavender oil, also is a strong disinfectant, a small quantity of it can kill diphtheria, typhus, and other bacteria.



Michael Hall Garden is now taking enrolments for the Biodynamic Agricultural Association Level 3 Diploma in Biodynamic Agriculture accredited by Crossfields Institute/Edexcel. The programme is delivered full time over 2 years. Part time option also available.

Basil really is a light plant. There are about 100 different varieties of it. If you want to grow it, you have to be careful to not cover the seeds with too much soil, because it needs light to germinate. Within a minute of wetting the little black seeds, they turn into a sky-blue color.

In autumn basil always all of a sudden loses its leaves, rather quickly. My feeling is that this also has to do with day length. Even last year, when we had such a lovely, long and warm autumn, the basil lost its leaves at the usual time. The pots of basil, you buy in the supermarket in winter, will have had lots of strong artificial light, because it just doesn't grow without a certain amount of light. That also means that you need to keep your pots of basil in a really sunny place.

Dorothea Leber

Tablehurst Farmers Notebook

Again the effects of the weather have dominated the summer. The weeks and weeks of lovely weather and no rain meant the grass did not grow. We had sufficient to graze, just, but not nearly enough to make into hay and silage for the coming winter. We therefore have to buy in organic hay at very high prices. We are, of course, very unhappy about this, not only because of how it is going to affect the farm finances (about £20,000) but also because a biodynamic farm should not have to buy in feed from elsewhere, and should be growing it on the farm. As this is the second year where we have struggled in this regard, we are cutting down the numbers of cattle and sheep. This will also have its longer term financial consequences but we feel we have no choice.

When we started our harvest the rain came! At last the grass started growing but it made the harvest itself quite tricky. Then, in the middle, our combine harvester broke down. It is an old John Deere combine which I bought in an auction many years ago. Every year we fix it and nurture it but there wasn't a gearbox to be had anywhere! We thought we would have to use contractors to finish the harvest but that is not so easy around here, particularly as our fields are fairly small and we have a range of different crops – we tend to be pushed to the end of their lists. Luckily our John Deere dealer had a second hand combine which he had prepared for somebody else, who had then bought a new one. He was happy to let us use it to finish our harvest, at a modest price per acre, in the hope that we would buy it. So we have completed the harvest, and have decided to buy the combine, which worked very well.

Planning Permission

Yesterday Nic Pople, our architect, and myself attended a planning meeting of Wealden District Council where we could speak for three minutes, each in favour of our planning application for the 'Learning on the Land' building and the livestock buildings. They voted in favour so at last we have the permission for our new project. In order to gain this permission we are required to landscape the area where the pig buildings will be. Soil has to be moved and this will only be possible when the ground is fairly dry and we have the capacity on the farm to do it. We are therefore unsure when exactly we shall be able to start.

Now that planning has been approved for the 'Learning on the Land' building, we shall have to go out there and find the money to realise the project. As we are talking about a million pounds this is something very different to what we have been tackling up until now!

Looking ahead

Tomorrow (25th September) is our Michaelmas Barn Dance, the following weekend BBQ's in the village and so it carries on into the next weeks and months. Exciting but also tiring! As a farm team, when we look back, we are always pleased with what we have achieved but we are still not satisfied, as we are well aware that there is still a great deal of room for improvement. We have the dilemma of too much to manage with our team and of having to continuously prioritise what we think is most important. With that comes the danger that one does not always finish off a job or tidy up properly behind one, which then leaves a mess and an inner frustration. We are working on it!

Peter Brown



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for Tablehurst's
award-winning
produce
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CO-OP AND FARM CONTACTS

| | | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------|--|--------|
| Co-op officers | Oliver Fynes-Clinton (Secretary) | 823966 | Robin Evans (Treasurer) | 850330 |
| Newsletter and general enquiries | Chris Marshall | 822611 | farmco-op@hotmail.co.uk | |
| Plaw Hatch Farm | Shop | 810201 | Old Plaw Hatch Farm, Sharpthorne, West Sussex, RH19 4JL | |
| Tablehurst Farm | Shop | 823173 | Tablehurst Farm, Forest Row, East Sussex, RH18 5DP | |

Forthcoming Events



Our own Film Premiere about growing food around the village has been made by Transition Forest Row funded by Grassroots Grants at Sussex Community Foundation.

It looks at local food production including both Plaw Hatch and Tablehurst farms, Michael Hall garden, allotments, garden share and Ashurst Organics box scheme. It reflects on some of the drivers as to why turning to growing food locally is becoming increasingly important and how other communities can learn from what is happening here. Followed by World Cafe discussions on local food.

7th October, 8pm
Forest Row Village Hall

Herb walk

7th October

with Ben Fairlight

"Autumn Healing from the Fields"

To book call 01342 825649 or email madeleine_grove@hotmail.com

£20 half day, £35 full day

Growing food locally

A better world for bees



Short talks about bees and how we can all help them given by Tom Ventham and members of the Natural Beekeeping Trust.

8th October, 8pm,
Forest Row Village Hall

Michael Hall Garden events



Sat 9th October 2.00pm - 3.00pm

Garden walk
"Winter salads, green manure and mulches"

Sat 13th November 2.00pm - 5.00pm

Compost making

£15 per person

Sat 11th December 2.00pm - 3.00pm

Garden walk

"Frost"

Dorothea.leber@michaelhall.co.uk or call 825604 for more information and booking

Tablehurst tasting evening



Join us to celebrate our success in the organic food awards. Try pies, pasties and other delights from our award-winning pie chef, Adele Marshall, and apples and juice from Stein's orchard.

Tablehurst Farm Shop
Thursday 21st October from 5pm.

Can you barbecue?
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