

the

Coop

all the news that's fit to eat

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE DIXON CO-OPERATIVE MARKET

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Talon de Gato Farm Thrives in Embudo Valley

by Emily Bregel

Tearing inch by inch through a tangle of thorny wild rose bushes and New Mexico locust trees, Adam Mackie and Steve Jenison found themselves bruised and bloodied as they sought to tame their newly purchased farmland.

During those weeks of labor in the late 1990s, the long-time couple and aspiring farmers became familiar with punishing thorns known as the “claw of the cat” as they worked their way through the brush.

That was the beginning of the aptly named Talon de Gato Farm, one of a number of Embudo Valley farms that supply fresh, locally grown food to the Dixon Cooperative Market.

Mackie and Jenison, both retired doctors, were living in Santa Fe when they bought their five acres in Apodaca in 1995. At the time, the soil was hard-packed from years of cattle grazing and the fields were full of 4-foot tall alfalfa.

Today, the farmland, which slopes gently from the Apodaca irrigation ditch down to the Embudo River, is brimming with rhubarb plants, leeks, onions, carrots, cucumbers, arugula, lettuce and vibrant green pepper plants, including the firecracker-hot Bulgarian carrot pepper.

Farmers like Mackie and Jenison are among the state’s “unsung

heroes” whose work keeps alive the traditional acequia water-sharing system of Northern New Mexico, said Estevan Arellano, of Embudo. Four years ago he founded an annual event called the *Celebrando los Acequias*, which recognizes the vital role of local farmers, the acequia system and the mayordomos, or ditch masters, who help manage and distribute the water flowing through the irrigation ditches.

At this year’s *Celebrando*, Mackie and Jenison were honored with the Farmers of the Year award for their commitment to keeping Embudo Valley farmland under cultivation, thereby preserving the local traditions at risk of being lost to housing development and neglect, Arellano said.

In the Embudo Valley, 10 acequias, or water ditches, draw water from the Rio Embudo. Of the 700 acres of farmable land along the Rio Embudo, less than half is being

cultivated, Arellano said.

Customers can help support the acequia system by supporting the farmers, which includes buying local food at the Dixon Cooperative Market, Arellano said.

“The only way to preserve the acequia system is if the farmers can make a living,” he said.

In the cooler months on Talon de Gato Farm, asparagus grows both wild along the ditch and in neatly cultivated beds. Spinach, another cold-weather hardy plant, thrives in the farm’s bowl-shaped landscape, where chilly air will settle down and bring killing frosts even in early summer, Mackie said. Three years ago, the overnight temperature on June 18 plummeted to 18 degrees Fahrenheit, he said.

“That is a fatal frost,” he said.

As one of the Dixon Market Cooperative’s steadfast suppliers of local food, the farmers of Talon de

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Yes, you can can. Read about the workshop this month on the next page!

Eating In the Summer Heat

by Gaywynn Cooper

The Food Initiative and the Dixon Market want to thank all the people who came out for the first community potluck and participated by bringing a dish they like to enjoy in the summer heat. We thought others might get inspiration from these ideas. How about a cold soup for starters, Gazpacho with Shrimp or a Black Bean and Avocado dip on your favorite chip or cracker? Either of these could also become a meal in and of themselves.

Salads were by far the summer choice of the group. They ran the gambit; Spinach Salad, Macaroni Salad, Taco Salad, Beet and Quinoa Salad, Speckled Rice Salad, Kasha Citrus Salad, and a Quinoa Salad with Dried fruit, Nuts and Jalapeno. Several of these salads are great for diabetics, people choosing to eat vegan, or are limited to a gluten-free diet.

As Judy Pearson-Wright commented, "I didn't expect to find any other dishes I could eat but the one I brought."

The evening ended with fresh Rhubarb Crisp, Watermelon Ice and Almond Crescent, a cookie that literally melted in your mouth. There are more theme oriented community potlucks to come. Watch for the dates and join in the fun. We are so lucky in the Dixon area that people still know how to cook and have not succumbed to picking up their potluck dishes at a fast food eating establishment.

Recipes for dishes at the potluck are available at the Dixon Cooperative Market.

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Gato view their partnership with the Dixon Cooperative Market more as an important community contribution than as a money-maker.

"The profit margin that any local farmer is going to realize from taking any given item to the Co-op is much lower than taking it to the Santa Fe Farmers' Market," said Jenison, who is also vice president of the co-op's board of directors. "In part, the farmers are doing it in order to support the greater good. ... Dixon farmers want to provide food to people in Dixon."

Today, more shoppers seem to appreciate the benefits, both in taste and nutrition, of eating local food, identifiable by a green label at the Dixon Cooperative Market, Jenison said.

But still too many local residents are accustomed to the dull taste of grocery store-chain vegetables, Mackie said. They have yet to experience the burst of flavor that comes from a vegetable plucked straight from the field, at its peak moment of ripeness, Mackie said.

"The difference is that food at the grocery store, so-called fresh vegetables actually taste like mildew. At least, they've lost the sharp edge of flavor and sugars that they had when they were harvested," he said. A freshly picked stalk of asparagus tastes sweet, like peas, he said. Cucumbers and carrots burst with robust and complex flavor when just plucked from the fields.

"Basically, whatever is at its peak just tastes fabulous," Mackie said.

Talon de Gato Farm also sells its produce at the Dixon Farmers' Market, held each Wednesday in front of the Dixon Cooperative Market, and at the Saturday Santa Fe Farmers' Market.

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**The Co-Op is open
Monday-Friday
9am - 7pm
Saturday and Sunday
9am - 6pm
505.579.9625**

**CAN ALL YOU CAN CAN
A Canning Workshop**

by Susan P. Lewis

Canning, preserving, fermenting, pickling, root cellars, winter storage, “putting food by”. How many ways have we created to preserve food, to have enough to eat through the winter months? What did we do as a people when we were just living on the land? Before buying food at the local General Store, grocery markets, tiendas, and supermarkets?

Come learn about preserving the bounty from harvest time through canning. Find out canning tips, techniques and information to keep your food available through the colder part of the year. Join Maggie Greenwald on Saturday, August 20th at the Community Center as she presents this Canning Workshop to understand how and why canning is a great choice for storing your most treasured fruits and vegetables to enjoy on a frosty day. Maggie Greenwald is a local Dixonite and has a background in nutrition and cooking. Please join us as we get ready for the canning season. We look forward to seeing you there.

AUGUST CALENDAR:

Sunday, August 7th

Co-Op Members Day

Take 10% off EVERYTHING in the Dixon Co-Op Market for Co-Op Members. Come and shop your heart out. Stock up on all your favorites and save, save, save!!

Wednesdays: Dixon Farmers Market 4-7pm

Join us out in front of the Co-Op each Wednesday throughout the month to see what our local Farmers have available to add to your plate. Enjoy nutritious and delicious produce, eggs and herbal offerings from their fields to your kitchen and homestead.

Saturday, August 20th, 10am-12pm “Can All You Can Can”

What a great opportunity to learn Water Bath Canning right in time for the upcoming canning season. Come learn canning techniques, insider’s tips, and take home canning recipes to whip up in your own kitchen. This workshop will be presented by Maggie Greenwald at the Community Center. See the article at left for more information.

August 26th-28th, FIESTAS DE SANTA ROSA

Join in the festivities of this annual Dixon event! There will be the crowning of a Queen and King on Friday night; the Parade at 12:00pm on Sunday; enjoy the music, dancing, food and booths throughout the weekend. And look for the Co-Op Booth. We’ll see you there.

Los Coyotes at Fiestas de Santa Rosa last year



YOU SAY TOMAYTO, I SAY TAMAHTO

Susan P. Lewis

The tomato. It lands on our plates as sauces, tossed into salads, mixed as the main ingredient in salsas – and a hundred other different uses. The tomato is the world’s most popular fruit. And yes, botanically speaking, it is a fruit not a vegetable. A fruit being the edible part of the plant that contains the seeds. And the tomato is one of them!

Where did this amazing fruit come from? Some say its roots go back to 700 A.D. to the land of the Incas – Peru – where there are still tomatoes in the wild. There is also evidence that shows it appearing in Central America around that time. Then with the Spaniards coming into Mexico, it began its European journey first in Spain. The French called it “pomme d’amour” – the “apple of love” - and the Germans referred to them as “the apple of paradise.”

When I attended a workshop back in September of last year with Mayan delegates from the Qachuu Aloom Farmer’s Association in Guatemala (presented here in Dixon at the Embudo Mission), they mentioned there were originally hundreds of varieties of tomatoes in their country. Now, a handful of species remain.

What do tomatoes contain that are good for your body? Tomatoes are rich in vitamins A and C. They also contain fiber, potassium, calcium and iron and are loaded with lycopene. Lycopene is the most powerful antioxidant in the carotenoid family and, with vitamins C and E, protect us from the free radicals that negatively affect many parts of the body. And if you cook your tomatoes, it yields a higher concentration of lycopene than uncooked tomatoes. For those of you counting calories, an average size tomato is only about 35 calories. Easy on the body.

There are about 10,000 varieties of tomatoes. We’ve all seen some of them in all different shapes and sizes and colors – red, golden, yellow, striped and heirloom. Many grown in Dixon come with great names like Brandywines, Green Zebras, Cherokee Purples, Striped Germans. The great names also go with great flavors.

Stop by the Dixon Coop to see what we have to add to your plate. And try the recipe below. It’s easy and delicious. Enjoy!!

This is easy. Trust me.

- 1 Can Black Beans
- 1 Medium Tomato
- 1 Avocado
- 2 - 3 Cloves of Garlic
- 1 bunch of Cilantro
- 1 Lemon or Lime

Tomato-Black Bean Dip

- 1.) Drain the can of black beans.
- 2.) Dice the tomato.
- 3.) Dice the avocado.
- 4.) Dice garlic.
- 5.) Dice the cilantro and use as much as you’d like, to taste.
- 6.) Juice of ½ lemon or lime, to taste.
- 7.) Mix all the ingredients into a bowl and let sit for a few hours in the fridge to allow the flavors to marinate.
- 8.) Enjoy with crackers; or on a warm tortilla. For added enjoyment, pile on a tortilla and melt a little cheese on top!

Recently, a friend added some green onions (scallions) and orange pieces to the recipe. Feel free to experiment and enjoy this delicious combination.



ZUCCHINI PIZZA BITES

reprinted from the Glycemic Index Cookbook

- 1/3 cup salsa
- ¼ lb chorizo sausage (or any variety of spicy sausage)
- 2 small zucchini, trimmed and cut diagonally into ¼ inch slices
- 6 tablespoons shredded reduced-fat mozzarella cheese

1. Preheat oven to 400°. Place salsa in fine sieve and press out excess moisture; set aside to drain. Remove sausage from casing, crumble into small skillet. Cook and stir over medium heat 5 minutes or until cooked through, drain fat.

2. Place zucchini on baking sheet. Spoon 1 teaspoon drained salsa on each zucchini slice. Top with chorizo, dividing evenly among zucchini slices. Sprinkle cheese over chorizo

3. Bake 10 minutes or until cheese is lightly browned. Serve immediately. Makes six servings.