

BEET GREEN PASTA

1/4 cup Currants
1 to 2 bunches Beet Greens
1 small bunch Fresh Mint
1 medium Red Onion
1 to 2 cloves Garlic
1 Bay Leaf
1/4 cup Olive Oil
1/2 pound Dried Pasta, such as rotini, penne, bowties
Salt and Pepper

1. Cover the currants with boilign water, let them soak for 15 minutes, and drain them. While they are soaking, wash the beet greens, strip the leaves from the stems, and cut the leaves into chiffonade. Chop the stems into 2-inch lengths. Stem the mint, wash the leaves and chop into a chiffonade.
2. Put on a pot of salted water for the pasta. Peel the onions and the garlic and chop them both fine. Sauté them with the bay leaf over medium heat in 1/8 cup of olive oil for about 5 minutes or until they are translucent. Add the beet leaves and stems and the currants and cook 5 minutes more, covered. Meanwhile, when the water has come to a boil, add the pasta. Uncover the beet greens, season wtih salt and pepper, and add the mint leaves. When the pasta is cooked, drain it and toss well with the sauce, moistening it with a ladle of the pasta water and the rest of the olive oil. Serve immediately.
(For a slightly more piquant dish, add a splash of vinegar and a pinch of cayenne pepper.)

first thing in the morning when the udder is very full. (There seems to be more milk in the morning, probably because hormone levels are highest at night—it works the same way with humans.) The calf then spends the day with the cow, nursing and grazing their fill.

For instance, it is unheard of in this country to keep the calf with the mother after birth. On dairies, where every drop of milk counts, the babies are separated at birth to be bottle fed. The mother never sees the baby, and so associates the person doing the milking with the milk production. Then, in order to keep up production, the cows must be milked two, or even three times a day.

In our situation (and in other countries) we don't want to have the extra job of bottle feeding, nor do we want the responsibility of being home at exactly the right time to milk two or three times a day. Instead, we will leave the calves with the mothers for several months. The calves nurse at specific times during the day, so if we work our schedule around the calves, we can milk before the calf gets there to empty the udder. There is still plenty for the calf, because in a two-gallon udder, we can take 1/2 to 3/4 gallon and still have enough to fill up the baby. Then, if we want to go out to a movie or sleep in, all we lose is our own milk. The bovines are content!

My apologies if you're not interested in cows, but this is an exciting addition to our family—and our farm. It's amazing how much fertilizer the two ladies produce every day!



WHISTLING TRAIN Farmletter

SPRING WEEK 8 • MAY 23, 2006

27112 78th Avenue South • Kent, Washington 98032
253.859.5197

shelley@whistlingtrainfarm.com
www.whistlingtrainfarm.com

THE CATTLE ARE LOWING—

our newest additions, that is. It's true. After waiting for over thirty years, I finally have a milk cow of my own. We ended up getting two, serindipitously. Beauty is an 8-year old Dexter cow with a heifer (girl) calf named Grace. Grace will be returning to Monroe in July, but she's with her mom until then. Three-year old Skunky (so named by her previous owner because she is colored like a skunk, not because of her smell) is half Holstein, and half British White, an old English beef breed. She has a bull (boy) calf that we will end up raising for beef. The Dexter breed is an old Irish breed of cow that is small and dual-purpose, being kept on homesteads for the production of beefy, sturdy calves and cows that produce a moderate amount of milk—some-where in the neighborhood of one to three gallons a day, average. Our neighbor, Maria (of T&M Berries next door) and I have gone in on the cow endeavor together, in an effort to supply our families with milk. I regret to add that we will not have additional milk for other families, as these cows are not huge producers, and we don't want to be a dairy. We want to hand-milk and get just enough.

Sometimes when one has a dream that one carries around in one's head and heart for a great length of time, the fantasy is better than the reality. It's easy to build up the dream to such a level that the reality just can't compete. I have to say, though, that so far I am in love! The reality is so much more satisfying than the fantasy! I love grooming them, smelling them, nuzzling the flank when I milk. I even love the cramps in my hands and arms from using milking muscles that have never been used. And we haven't even learned how to squirt out enough milk to be usable yet!

Maria, our intern, has been very helpful with the cows. On her family farm in Peru they keep oxen for working the land, and they have a milk cow. She showed me how to milk, and is full of good husbandry information that we don't have here. Since the advent of large-scale dairies in the 1940's, the family milk-cow is a rarity. Most people don't know how to keep a cow any longer. She says that on their farm, the separate the calf from the mother at night, then milk

THIS WEEK'S MENU:

Spinach
Pepper Cress
Baby Carrots
Swiss Chard
Green Garlic
Lettuce

Recipes on the back!

COMING SOON:

Baby Carrots
Radishes
Peas