

Nourish Ourselves Nourish Our Community March 26, 2009

Not only is nature buzzing with the promise of spring (thank goodness), there is a growing buzz within our community regarding the potential implications of bill HR 875. Some of you may have received an email with the subject line: Monsanto Outlaw Organic Farming. The widely circulated email states that HR 875, which addresses food safety issues, would also outlaw or inhibit organic farming. The email provided stimulating kitchen conversation as we prepared for tonight's meal. As I sat down this morning to put the newsletter together I was confronted with a deluge of emails on this topic. Rather than type out this meal's recipes I was compelled to research the bill and its actual implications. My investigation, which included a review of the actual bill and several other reputable sources, led me to believe that the email is somewhat misguided.

We can all agree that our national food safety program needs a great deal of intervention and we must all remain attentive to the governmental processes involved in bringing about such changes. As I understand it, bill HR 875 addresses issues within the FDA, not the USDA (the government organization that oversees the laws about 'organic' foods). The bill proposes creating a separate organization within the FDA whose sole function would be to oversee and govern the safety of our food. This aspect of the FDA has been grossly under funded and largely ignored for the past eight years. It also looks at the safety standards of foods brought into the US from other countries—not something we're excited about but a topic that needs to be addressed.

There are some concerning things within the text of HR 875. The open ended and vague language attempts to apply a blanket set of food safety rules to food producers of all sizes—measures easily absorbed by a huge agribusiness could financially cripple a small time food producer. This is a big deal for our local producers and something we should be contacting our congressmen about. As we monitor this situation and educate and insert ourselves in the policies of food safety, we must continue to ask questions, seek out explanations, and share the information we gather. As a concerned community we have a greater chance of having our voices heard—just think of Horton Hears a Who. There are many resources on line to look at but we must remember that just because something is printed on the internet does not make it a fact. Blogs and websites are a great place to start our inquiries. I look at a few daily that address food policies and find them to be trustworthy resources.

For starters please take a look at the actual text of the bill:
<http://www.govtrack.us/congress/billtext.xpd?bill=111-875>

Two worthwhile articles discussing HR 875:

<http://civileats.com/2009/03/24/stop-the-hysteria-a-closer-look-at-hr-875/#more-2744>

<http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/food/foodsafety/background-on-h-r-875/?searchterm=bill%20HR%20875>

Due to the extremely cold weather we experienced in December the availability of local produce this spring is severely curtailed. If we were truly eating only locally grown food this would be a very challenging season. Fortunately we have access to Lopez eggs and beef to round out an otherwise lean menu.

We wish to welcome and thank Blake Johnston and Julie Bottjen of Lopez Community CSA who supplied us with copious quantities of farm fresh eggs. For more information about their CSA see this week's article in the Islander's Weekly or contact them directly at lopezcsa@yahoo.com. We would also like to thank Jones Family Farms for tonight's stir fry beef. The leeks and cabbage came from Horse Drawn Farm. The Heller family provided fresh greens grown in their hoop houses and many thanks to Todd Kegerreis for more of his glorious garlic.

Thanks again to the enthusiastic and tireless kitchen goddesses Wendy Westervelt, Deborah Bonville, Nancy Rankin, and Munirah McGovern. Their delightful companionship in the kitchen is only exceeded by their reverence for the beautiful food with which we work. Kudos to the many volunteers who donate countless conscientious hours to ensure the success of each Evening Meal.

We appreciate your contribution. Take time to celebrate one another and enjoy your meal.

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Egg Fried Brown Rice

Serves 4 to 6

6 cups cold cooked brown rice-med or long grain
1 Tbsp tamari or soy sauce
1 Tbsp molasses
1 Tbsp apple juice or cider
1 Tbsp Chicaoji sauce or other hot sauce
1 Tbsp rice wine vinegar
3 Tbsp vegetable oil
2 garlic cloves, minced
2 eggs, beaten lightly
1 to 2 cups assorted lightly cooked vegetables (larger veg cut into small dice): peas, asian greens, carrots, corn, mushrooms, cabbage
6 green onions, thinly sliced

Combine tamari, molasses, apple juice, Chicaoji, rice wine vinegar, and set aside. Heat a wok or skillet over med high heat until hot; about 2 minutes. Add 2 tsp of oil, swirl to coat pan, and pour in eggs. When eggs begin to set, stir gently to break into pieces, cook fully but do not brown, and remove from pan. Return pan to burner over high heat until hot. Add remaining oil, swirl to coat pan, add garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add cold rice and sauce mixture, stirring constantly to break up any rice clumps and to evenly distribute sauce, about 3 minutes. Add eggs, assorted cooked vegetables, and green onions, stirring constantly, until heated through, about 1 more minute.

Chinese Cabbage and Mushroom Soup

Serves 8

5 cups unfiltered apple juice or cider
1 cup lemon juice
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup tamari
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup rice wine vinegar
2 Tbsp chopped garlic
2 Tbsp chopped ginger
Chicaoji or hot sauce to taste
1 leek, thinly sliced
1 carrot, thinly sliced
4 cups thinly sliced cabbage
2 cups roughly chopped assorted mushrooms
Oil for sautéing

In a heavy bottomed soup pot, sauté chopped garlic and ginger until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add chopped mushrooms and sauté until softened, about 3 minutes. Add remaining vegetables and sauté until wilted, about 4 more minutes. Add the broth components—apple juice through vinegar on the ingredient list. Bring to a gentle simmer and cook until vegetables lose their raw bite. Taste for addition of hot sauce or more tamari. Serve hot.

Hazelnut Crescent Cookies

Makes about 2 dozen cookies

1 cup unsalted butter, at room temperature
1 cup sugar
1 Tbsp vanilla
2 egg
 $3\frac{3}{4}$ cups flour
 $\frac{1}{2}$ # ground toasted hazelnuts

**Orange and/or lemon zest would be a delicious addition.*

Preheat oven to 350°. In the bowl of a mixer cream butter and sugar until mixture is light and fluffy. Add egg and vanilla and mix until well blended. Add dry ingredients and mix until combined. On a well-greased cookie sheet for dough into a flattened mound approximately 3 by 13 inches. Bake until golden brown, about 20 minutes. Remove pan from oven and allow cookie log to cool for about 15 minutes. Using a sharp serrated knife, cut cookie log into $\frac{3}{4}$ inch slices. Turn slices on their side, return pan to oven, and bake for about 10 more minutes or until cookies are still moist in the center. Cool and enjoy!

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Please check the website for more recipe information.