

Wandering & Wondering

John Maybury



EAT LOCALLY

The San Francisco Chronicle recently profiled an Oakland woman who rides around on her bike collecting and trading fruits and vegetables from people's backyards. You can read her blog at forageoakland.blogspot.com. I shared this unusual story with Pat Paik, director of the Pacifica Resource Center, and she posted this encouraging response on PacificaRiptide.com. Pat's comments apply not only to her clients but also to some of us who are struggling to make ends meet in this troubled economy:

■ I just read the Forage Oakland blog. It is evident that the foragers know what to do with fresh food if not eaten out of hand immediately, and are motivated to preserve by canning or drying the extra produce. Our clients often are not familiar with fresh vegetables until someone demonstrates what to do with acorn squash, sweet potatoes, etc., and gives them recipes. The Resource Center accepts homegrown produce year-round, usually apples and zucchini, and is happy to get those items.

■ I am excited to be sponsoring a Notre Dame student's project to increase fresh-produce use. She will come to our Family Harvest afternoons to show harvesters what to do with the fresh food they receive. She will hand out samples of food she has prepared ahead of time and give them recipes. In April, she will demonstrate 'growing your own salsa' and give out tomato and pepper plants, and show interested families how to pot up the plants along with cilantro seeds. Many of our customers do not cook from scratch and were never taught how to do so. The Resource Center gave out two crates of sweet potatoes at Thanksgiving, and staff took turns explaining how to cook them: Stick them in the oven the last hour of cooking the turkey, then serve soft with butter, salt, and pepper. Are sweet potatoes or squash exotic? For people accustomed to prepared food, yes. We DO accept fresh produce from the Food Bank. We also DO accept fresh backyard fruits and vegetables as they come from individuals. We accept the new Palmetto Organic grocery store's outdated foods routinely. We just accepted about 20 pounds of ground beef from half a steer

from someone's ranch. We just can't keep perishables in big volumes. The Resource Center supervises and registers families for the monthly Second Harvest Family Harvest at Moose Lodge on the third Wednesday of the month from 4-6 p.m. About 12 Women of the Moose volunteer to unload the Second Harvest food bank truck and arrange the food (fresh, frozen, boxed, and canned) in stations around the room so it is ready for families to come in and select. Some 66 families are registered with us, 60 of them with children under 18 and six single individuals. If people want to pursue this foraging concept further, I suggest they talk to Loretta O'Brien of Pacifica Gardens (Loretta@pacificagardens.org) for a local sounding board. She and I are in conversation about excess Pacifica Gardens produce. (See the following story for information on Pacifica Gardens.)

■ Talk to Susan Takalo, Assistant Program Director, Second Harvest Food Bank in San Carlos, our partner for Family Harvest. Email her at stakalo@shfoodbank.com or call 650-610-0800, extension 412. Susan lives in Pacifica and has the expertise (and enthusiasm) for setting up mobile produce vans and general logistics of moving bulk food around safely and efficiently. I will be glad to participate in the planning but cannot take it on as a Resource Center project because of the intense logistics involved. But the concept is timely, green, and doable by volunteers and a volunteer coordinator.

PACIFICA GARDENS

After a season of rest, the Pacifica Gardens are waking up and need your attention as they begin a new growing cycle. If you have friends and/or family who would like to get involved, invite them to join the Saturday workdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Bring your gloves, hat, drinking water, sunscreen, digging spade, and fork. Visit PacificaGardens.org for an updated schedule of workdays. The gardens are behind the old Linda Mar School at 830 Rosita Road, next door to Shamrock Ranch. If you have the skill and the will, new committees are forming: Adult Education, Workshop Planning & Coordination, Fundraising Event Planning & Coordination, Public Relations for Garden Events & Fundraisers (newsletters & press releases), Volunteer Workday Refreshments Coordinator, Graphic Design (flyers, brochures, other garden publications). Email Loretta O'Brien, Garden Manager: loretta@pacificagardens.org.

FORE PLAY

The news coming out of San Francisco is not good for our Sharp Park Golf Course, which our big-city neighbor to the north still owns and operates. Marisa Lagos and Erin Allday reported March 18 in the Chronicle

"City Insider" that S.F. Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi "may have just unwittingly walked into a snake pitone filled with frogs, too. On Tuesday, he proposed legislation that could bring about the demise of a city golf course — Sharp Park. One of his colleagues, Supervisor Sean Elsbernd, quickly shot back with a competing proposal to make the historic course a protected landmark. Mirkarimi's legislation directs the Recreation and Park Department to develop a plan to restore the area for two threatened species that live on and near the golf course: the red-legged frog and the San Francisco garter snake. The ordinance would also require the city to give the park to the National Park Service or jointly manage it with the Park Service in order to retain, redesign or eliminate the golf course. Suffice to say, there's a lot of opposition to shuttering the course. Golfers don't want to close any courses and have particularly defended scenic Sharp Park. But the Center for Biological Diversity has threatened to sue the city if it doesn't restore the habitat. Mirkarimi insists the legislation doesn't necessarily spell the course's demise, but hinted it may not stay as an 18-hole course."

WILDFLOWER WALKS

Come to one of the Bay Area's premier wildflower spots, Edgewood Natural Preserve, for a free docent-led walk. Walks are every Saturday and Sunday through June 7. They start at 10 a.m. and end at 1 p.m. Edgewood's serpentine grasslands are renowned throughout California for their lush wildflower carpets and rich biodiversity. You might see dozens of species of flowers on a single walk. Expert-guided walks vary according to what's in bloom, covering about three miles, at a moderate pace, with frequent stops.

SWAMI SEZ

"The only difference between a tax man and a taxidermist is that the taxidermist leaves the skin."
(Mark Twain)

SITeseer

- Beware of these bad boys: speedtrap.org
- Help for Alzheimer's, autism, ADD: [Google Superbrain](http://GoogleSuperbrain)
- Yoga
- Local trade & currency: smallisbeautiful.org

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