

AGRARIAN ADVOCATE

CULTIVATING HEALTHY FARMS, FOOD, & COMMUNITIES

Cultivating Change

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY GILBERT MOHTES-CHAN

Andy Mariani never thought he'd need to learn urban farming protocol.

Over the years, the long-time Morgan Hill farmer has learned the “don't crank up your tractor at 6 a.m.” rule to avoid complaints from sleepy-eyed neighbors. He has followed the “don't spray during daylight hours” rule to avoid drift issues with weekday commuter traffic and weekend joggers and bicyclists that pass by his fruit orchard.

“Farming in an urbanized area is hard. It's inherently inoperable,” the 63-year-old Mariani said.

Indeed, times certainly have changed since the years when 25 to 30 ranches surrounded his family farm nestled against the western slope of the Diablo Range. “We're the last of the dirt farmers – the true farmer in our area.”

Today, high school athletic fields, custom-built ranchettes and new subdivisions with \$800,000 stucco homes border Andy's Orchard. The farm has become a lush agricultural island amid the burgeoning suburbia some 15 minutes south of the sprawling Silicon Valley.

Mariani, though, perseveres. He is counting on family tradition, delectable heirloom fruit, and innovative agriculture techniques to keep his seven-employee operation going year round.

His niche is an orchard of 200 to 250 different varieties of fruit, one of the largest private collections of stone fruit on the West Coast. At the same time, Mariani manages a nearby experimental orchard and one of the few Green Gage plum orchards in the West. The Green Gage is a popular dessert plum in Europe.

“You have to think of ways to do things without having much money,” he said. “There's not much acreage here. We have to specialize.”

Like a father boasting about a favorite son, the veteran orchardist and noted fruit expert speaks passionately about his unique and flavor-rich premium and heirloom peaches, apricots, nectarines, plums, cherries and pluots.



His rugged eyes light up when he describes his annual summer artisanal fruit tastings and educational farm tours that have attracted visitors by the busload.

It was 52 years ago when the post-War World II building boom forced Mariani's parents – Joseph and Similia Mariani – to sell their Cupertino farm, located just a stone fruit's throw from today's headquarters of high-tech giant Apple Computer Inc. “In the mid-1950s, there was a lot of development in the Cupertino area. Farmers sold out for \$10,000 an acre.”

The family then purchased 45 acres of rich farmland for apricots and prunes in the southern Santa Clara Valley.

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COMMUNITY ALLIANCE
WITH FAMILY FARMERS

MISSION

CAFF is building a movement of rural and urban people to foster family-scale agriculture that cares for the land, sustains local economies and promotes social justice.

MEMBERSHIP

CAFF is a nonprofit organization that relies on membership dues and donations. Become a member or donate to CAFF online at www.caff.org or by mail.

AGRARIAN ADVOCATE

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36355 Russell Blvd., Davis, CA 95616
PO Box 363, Davis, CA 95617
Phone (530)756-8518 Fax (530)756-7857
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Moving Forward

My first six months as the Executive Director of Community Alliance with Family Farmers have reaffirmed my deep faith in CAFF's vibrant and committed membership. Our membership continues to grow due to the on-the-ground and field-to-market

programs that CAFF operates to strengthen the viability of California family farmers. Additionally, with the increased awareness in the importance of farming among the general populace, our non-farmer membership is blossoming as well.

Just like Andy Mariani, who is profiled in the cover article of this edition of the *Agrarian Advocate*, CAFF is also adapting in order to improve our organizational performance and increase our viability in these uncertain economic times. We are taking a closer look at each of our programs to see how we can extend their reach to have a broader impact on California farming.

Our burgeoning California Farm Education Network, featured on page six, is just one of the innovative ways we are deepening the impact of our successful programs.

We are taking a closer look at each of our programs to see how we can have a broader impact on California farming.

We are also leveraging social media to strengthen our relationship with our communities. "Cotton: Fit for Film" on page four is a great example of how we're tackling new, creative projects while—as always—keeping our focus on the farmer.

And, with Dave Runsten in the role of CAFF's Policy Director, we have been able to step up our policy work. Check out our website at www.caff.org to keep current with our advocacy and policy work. Please sign up there to be added to our policy list serve to keep abreast of the issues affecting family farmers in California and to learn what you can do to make a difference.

Over the next six months, I look forward to telling you more about what is new with each of our exciting programs. 🌱

Diane Del Signore

Diane Del Signore
Executive President



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

CAFF works with many farms, individuals, businesses, and organizations to highlight the role of family farms in caring for the land and providing local and sustainably-grown food and fiber. Making a Difference profiles one of our allies in this effort.

Focus on the Davis Food Co-op

BY GILBERT MOHTES-CHAN

When it comes to buying fresh and selling local, the Davis Food Co-op is well ahead of the times. For nearly four decades, the shopper-owned and operated grocery store has subscribed to the philosophy of offering locally grown produce and food products to its customers.

“Co-op shoppers like to know they are helping the local grower. The quality of the food is better. The local growers get a better price for their product and we also get a better price for our product. It’s a win-win situation,” said Becky Santos, the co-operative’s bulk buyer.

For the past two years, CAFF’s Growers Collaborative has played its part in the co-op’s local grower program, providing the store with aromatic wildflower honey from Yolo County’s picturesque Capay Valley. This spring, GC helped farmers expand their presence in the co-op’s popular produce department, supplying a bounty of locally grown mushrooms, broccoli, mandarins, tangerines, kiwi and navel oranges, dried kiwi and dried strawberries.

“It’s going to be a great opportunity for us,” co-op produce manager Elizabeth Davidson said about working with the collaborative. “We got a great deal on broccoli when no other local farm had it.”

Rory O’Dwyer, Operations Manager at the Growers Collaborative concurred. “The co-op already sources a lot of their products directly from farmers. We’re able to help them broaden that selection.”

The Davis Food Co-op began in 1972 as a small buying club. Four years later, the co-op opened its first store, offering local farmers a new outlet to sell their fresh produce. Today, the co-op is a full-service grocery store with nearly 10,000 local household members.

While the store’s membership has grown enormously since the salad days, the co-op has kept an unwavering commitment to a buy fresh, buy local philosophy. The store markets itself as the community’s leading source of locally produced food products coming from within 100 miles of the university-oriented city. Davidson said the store benefits greatly from its location in the agriculture-rich Central Valley and the diversity of locally grown produce. Local produce is popular for a variety of consumers, especially those with special diets that rely heavily on in-season fruits and vegetables.

“Sometimes people with health challenges look for local (produce). Some people are retired farmers and they want to support local farms,” Davidson said.

The bulk department, which features more than 800 items ranging from fragrant spices to dried organic black beans, plans to place “local” tags on items such as the Capay Valley honey. The bulk aisle currently features locally grown rice, nuts and raisins, as well as coffee beans supplied by local coffee roasting companies.

“We are trying to highlight our local things better,” Santos said. “We’re in the process of creating new bulk bin labels.”

Santos said the arrangement to buy honey from Growers Collaborative came at an opportune time a couple of years ago.

“I was looking around for something local,” Santos said. “If they (growers) have something that we can work into a bulk bin, I will try my hardest to fit it in.”



Cotton: Fit for Film

BY GILBERT MOHTES-CHAN



It's on YouTube, Facebook and the CAFF web site. Perhaps, the silver screen could be next for the recently released Sustainable Cotton Project video, "Cleaner Cotton: A Good Fit for Our Environment."

Produced by Marcia Gibbs, Program Director of CAFF's Sustainable Cotton Project, and videographer Liam Creighton, this six-minute video showcases the innovative practices used by cotton growers participating in SCP's BASIC, or Biological Agricultural Systems in Cotton, project.

The project's goals are to reduce or eliminate the use of the most harmful farm chemicals on cotton crops and encourage major apparel companies to use the Cleaner Cotton BASIC growers produce.

"California cotton is among the highest quality in the world," marketing consultant and assistant professor of fashion design Lynda Grose said in the video. "BASIC is the most effective tool that we have in California to reduce chemical use in cotton."

The powerful video focuses on the city of Firebaugh,

a small Central Valley farming community along the San Joaquin River, about 40 miles west of Fresno. It features insightful and heartfelt interviews with local residents, cotton growers, a doctor, and researchers involved in the project.

Creighton and his production partner spent three days in Firebaugh last spring shooting footage of cotton fields and conducting interviews. After two weeks of editing, the video was ready for release.

Previews of the film shown to suppliers, growers and retailers have generated exceptionally strong early reviews. Major retail companies such as Levi Strauss & Co., Gap Inc., the North Face and Pottery Barn have expressed an interest in the cotton grown by the program.

To view the video, or to get more information on the Sustainable Cotton Project, please visit our website: www.sustainablecotton.org and see the About Us page. The video can also be found on the CAFF website: www.caff.org. 🌱



BIOLOGICAL FARMING

CAFF promotes a whole systems approach to farming that is flexible, maintains long-term profitability and protects water, soil and air resources. Our programs include the Sustainable Cotton Project, Environmentally Responsible Tree Crops, Farmscaping/Hedgerows, and Almond Pest Management Alliance.

What's Bugging Farmers?

Q & A with an Entomologist

BY GILBERT MOHTES-CHAN

For years, Walt Bentley has traveled up and down California's Central Valley, helping growers deal with crop-damaging bugs in their fruit and nut orchards.

The veteran entomologist is a member of the University of California's statewide Integrated Pest Management program, working with a team of advisors based out of the UC Kearney Agricultural Center in Parlier, Fresno County.

With expertise in almonds, pistachios, walnuts, peaches, plums and grapes, Bentley promotes environmentally responsible pest management practices. For over a decade, he has collaborated with the Community Alliance with Family Farmers on a variety of projects, including the Biologically Integrated Orchard Systems program.

Bentley offered some insights about pest management trends and issues following this spring's annual Nickels Field Day in Colusa County.

Question: What are some of the trends in monitoring for pests in almond orchards?

Answer: We're trying to get reliable information with faster monitoring methods. I see that being done with the spider mite sampling program. Initially we were going on whether or not the leaf had mites on it irrespective of the number. Now we're trying to do a quick five-minute search by walking quickly through the orchard instead of following the standard established quota of evaluating 10 trees, 10 leaves per tree. We are re-emphasizing dormant spur sampling for mites and scale and mummy counting for navel orangeworms. These pests drive much of the insecticide use in almonds.

Q: Are there concerns about the pest management field today?

A: The big problem right now is there are not enough advisors working with farmers. There are very few (farmers) that want to take the time to actually do that kind of sampling. You need somebody with expertise to look at the crop and provide information. Most farmers may not have adequate knowledge of arthropod biology, although they do have some good knowledge on when to time sprays. That's our big weakness right now, not putting enough pest control advisors (PCAs) in the field.

Q: Why aren't there enough PCAs?

A: First, it is hard work. But it can be very rewarding. UC Davis has dropped its program for training advisors. UC Riverside has as well. There is only one integrated pest management degree program on the West Coast with a land grant university and that's at Washington State University. The California State Universities such as Fresno and Chico also are training advisors.

Q: What can be done to help with orchard monitoring?

A: This is where we need to bring in young students – whether they're in junior college or college – to work summers and learn. This should be done as an internship with some of the major distributors and independent advisor companies. You bring those people in during the summer to provide sampling information. I think this would be a win-win situation for the interns and the professional. Actually, I would like to be able to develop financial sponsorships for such interns.

Q: What are you trying to teach growers?

A: Fewer and fewer growers are actually living on the farm. You almost have to live on the farm to actually do this. I am trying to teach farmers to ask questions of their advisors. They may not know the sampling methods, but they can ask what type of sampling he or she is doing. There is also a lot of written information about monitoring that farmers can learn from. Then they can say this tool is available, this trap is available and why aren't you as a PCA using it? They can ask their PCA why are you utilizing that particular trap? We (UC Cooperative Extension) still have a close working relationship with the PCAs. I am hoping we can learn their needs and help develop ways of making their job easier. 🌱



photograph by Carlo Fanti

A Teaching Network

BY ILDI CARLISLE-CUMMINS



I always feel a little flutter in my chest when I hear the school bus brakes exhale at the farm gate and I watch the puff of dust settle as the yellow doors creak open. Even after running countless field trips on Central Coast farms, the parade of kids that tumbles out of the bus seems impossibly long—and the children, herded into a wriggling circle, are full of wild energy.

The kids stare at me impatiently, eager to get out into the fields, as I remind them: “This farm field trip is like a carefully choreographed dance.”

It’s an unlikely simile, but apt. Farm educators everywhere painstakingly plan field trips down to the last detail: orchestrating hands-on educational activities (this includes ensuring the plant parts costume has all six parts!); setting and communicating schedules with teachers and transportation departments; and, of course, managing groups on the farm.

Farm field trips will always involve an element of apprehension, but there are some techniques, lessons, and plans that make everything progress a little more easily. Yet farm educators spend precious time inventing programs independently of one another.

That’s why this year CAFF is working to establish a new California Farm Education Network (CFEN) to serve farm educators. CFEN builds upon Jane Pinckney’s UC Davis master’s thesis on farm education, as well as a conference she coordinated in November 2008, which brought 80 farm educators together for the first time.

To evaluate and develop the idea of a farm education

network, CAFF worked with Pinckney to host follow-up meetings with California farmers and educators. Meeting attendees shared a number of concerns: they were each developing their own curricula, feeling isolated and unaware of resources, and did not have a good understanding of related regulations and insurance requirements. Most importantly, they were enthusiastic about forming a network for learning and sharing.

CFEN will provide meaningful connections between farm educators and agricultural learning centers. Over the course of the next few years, CAFF hopes to:

- Attract new members to the forum.
- Provide a statewide online networking forum, blog, and resource page.
- Publish a how-to manual of best farm education practices.
- Provide one-on-one technical assistance to farms running educational programs.
- Host an annual conference.

With these tools at their fingertips, farm educators will be able to spend less time dashing off paperwork or patching together lessons, and more time enjoying the excitement of farm field trips.

I can’t promise we’ll entirely quell that wave of panic that sets in when the kids pull up, but when it comes to 60 ebullient schoolchildren, a little flutter of nerves is only to be expected, right?

For more information about CFEN, please contact Ildi Carlisle-Cummins at ildi@caff.org.



COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEMS

CAFF connects consumers to food producers by providing information, access and education through its Buy Fresh Buy Local, Farm to School, Farm to Institution programs, and the Growers Collaborative.

Profile on

Carol Presley, CAFF Board Member

In January 2009, Carol Presley became president of CAFF's board of directors. She succeeds Judith Redmond, who has served as CAFF's Board President for six years. We are tremendously grateful to Judith for her many years of leadership, and are pleased that she will continue to serve on the board, focusing her efforts on CAFF's strategic planning implementation and policy work. Carol's term extends through 2011 and we congratulate her on her new role with the CAFF board!

Carol Presley readily admits to disguising pureed vegetables in the baked goods she makes for her preteen son. "It can be a real challenge to encourage children to eat healthily," she said, when school, social, and some home environments leave "a lot of room for poor nutrition and poor food choices."

So it's no surprise that Presley is enthusiastic about CAFF's comprehensive Farm to School education program and its ability to impact the health of schoolchildren and their families. But she's an equally avid cheerleader for the Buy Fresh Buy Local campaign and its regional Local Food Guides, which she has helped to distribute at the Santa Cruz County Fair.

"It's a simple publication that people can grab and reference, but it can have a profound influence on the food choices they make," Presley said.

While she was growing up, Presley explained, "There was always a strong regard for growing and preparing

food and for making the most of what came to us." When her father first arrived in California, he worked in the farm fields of California's Central Valley. "We didn't have fancy food but we had good food," remarked Presley.

Presley—who holds a master's degree in environmental science and engineering from Stanford University—is an environmental engineer, working on watershed stewardship issues ranging from multi-objective conservation easements to the design of riparian enhancement projects. She works primarily within the Pajaro River Watershed on the Central Coast, where regulations on the farming community, especially with regards to water quality, are many.

Around six years ago, she worked on a hedgerow installation on Paul Hain's farm in San Benito County. It was during the course of this project that Presley met Sam Earnshaw, CAFF's Central Coast Coordinator. He was the first to introduce her to the work of the organization.

From the start, Presley was impressed with the breadth of CAFF programs. She was impressed, too, with the way that programs, as she put it, "all point back to supporting the farmer in their efforts to grow food for the community."

For Presley, this "comprehensive promotion of the family farmer" was what set CAFF apart from other organizations, and encouraged her to deepen her involvement. In addition, she said, "Promoting sustainable food and farm systems marries two of my life's passions: the environment and cooking fresh food." *continued on page 9*

Gardens by the Numbers

Source: National Gardening Association

43

million is the number of U.S. households expected to plant home and community food gardens in 2009

600

average square footage of a plot

54

percent of gardeners who are women

70

average dollars spent annually on gardens

86

percent of gardens with tomatoes

12

average number of years gardening

5

hours spent gardening each week



The White House Digs In

BY LINDSEY S. BYERS

First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt planted a Victory Garden at the White House during World War II, as did President Woodrow Wilson in World War I. (Wilson also used the White House lawns for grazing sheep!)

Now add to that list First Lady Michelle Obama and Maria Shriver, the First Lady of California. The recently planted White House garden will serve as a food source for the Obamas and the White House, and act as an educa-

tional tool for local elementary school students.

The First Ladies aren't the only ones getting their hands dirty; based on burgeoning seed sales, the National Gardening Association predicts the number of home gardens will grow from 36 million in 2008 to 43 million this year—nearly a 20 percent increase.

With big box stores like Wal-mart and Costco trying to demonstrate their commitment to local sourcing, the increasing popularity of the Buy Local message is indisputable. Why not grow local? There's no place closer than your own yard, porch, rooftop, or community garden. 🌱



Capitol Report

SUMMER 2009

BY PETE PRICE,
CAFF LEGISLATIVE
REPRESENTATIVE

This Capitol Update begins like many recent ones, with news of the state budget deficit and its potential impact on California agriculture. The economic recession has reduced state tax revenues \$15 billion below projections from only four months ago. And on May 19, voters rejected a package of ballot measures proposed by the Governor and legislative leaders that would have increased state revenues by \$5.8 billion by extending a temporary sales tax increase for two more years and borrowing from future state lottery earnings and other state programs. The ballot measures also would have put a cap on state spending and a put more money in the state's "rainy day fund."

In mid-May the Department of Finance released a lengthy set of proposed cuts to state spending to eliminate the budget shortfall. As in prior years, the proposed cuts include eliminating \$34.7 million in reimbursements to local governments for farm land protected under the Williamson Act. In the past, cuts to Williamson Act funding have been part of the budget kabuki: the Governor proposes the cuts to demonstrate the severity of the budget deficit and the agricultural industry and supporters of farmland preservation defeat the proposal in legislative budget hearings. But with the depth of the budget crisis, the threat to the Williamson Act is more real than ever.



photograph by Megan Sabato

Legislation

Notwithstanding the dire budget situation, the Legislature continues to hear a wide variety of bills. Bills CAFF is tracking and working on include:

AB 537 (Arambula) – Increases opportunities for the use of Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) at certified farmers markets (CFMs). Electronic Benefit Transfer is an electronic system that allows a recipient to authorize transfer of their government benefits from a Federal account to a retailer account to pay for products received. Under AB 537, CFMs would not be required to accept EBT, but if a market does not accept EBT by 2012 and an authorized third party offers to provide the services, the market must reasonably accommodate the provider. CAFF negotiated with market managers, EBT advocates and Assemblyman Juan Arambula to craft a proposal that will expand the use of EBT at markets where demand for the service is highest. CAFF supports AB 537.

AB 856 (Caballero) – Strengthens the state's fertilizer law to prevent the manufacture and sale in California of fertilizers fraudulently marketed as organic. AB 856 responds to the scandal that broke in late 2008 regarding the California Department of Food and Agriculture and fertilizer producers found to be substituting cheap synthetic nitrogen for organic nitrogen sources and selling the products at an organic premium.

The bill increases license fees for fertilizer manufacturers, raises inspection requirements at manufacturing plants, increases penalties for violations, and explicitly makes it a violation for an "organic input material" to contain ingredients that do not comply with National Organic Program standards. CAFF made extensive comments on earlier versions of the bill, which have led to a number of changes to improve the bill. CAFF remains neutral on the bill but with further improvements hopes to move to a Support position.

AB 929 (Blakeslee) – Adds needed flexibility to the California Farmland Conservancy Program (CFCP). Under current law the CFCP cannot fund agricultural conservation easements that will "restrict husbandry practices," which includes a broad range of commercial agricultural activities. While the purpose of the law is to protect the farmer's right to farm, it also has had the unintended effect of restricting farmers from placing land into easement if it includes practices, such as erosion control or habitat or riparian protections, that could be seen as conflicting with agricultural use. AB 929 will allow the CFCP to fund agricultural easements if they include practices with multiple benefits, provided the primary purpose remains consistent with agricultural use. CAFF supports AB 929, which will promote, rather than



PUBLIC POLICY

CAFF works with state and federal legislators and government agencies to create policies and practices that promote local food systems, reduce air and water pollution, foster family farming, and preserve farmland. See CAFF's policy positions at www.caff.org.

discourage, environmentally sound farming practices.

SB 416 (Florez) – Prohibits, by 2015, the production of meat or poultry in California that has been treated with antibiotics for nontherapeutic use, and requires schools to make reasonable efforts to purchase meat and poultry products that have not been treated with nontherapeutic antibiotics. The American Medical Association and National Academy of Sciences have called for the ban of nontherapeutic antibiotic use in animals raised for food, based on concerns about the growing resistance to bacteria in both animals and humans. As introduced, the bill bans all antibiotic use in food animals; with the amendment limiting the ban to non-therapeutic use, CAFF supports.

SB 173 (Florez) – Requires every food grower and processor in the state that tests its product for food-borne pathogens or microbes to notify the state within one hour of receiving positive test results. Subjects every food grower and processor whose product is recalled to treble damages for liability, onsite inspection of at least eight days per

month for 12 months, and suspension of activities for up to six months, unless the person adopts a Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point plan. CAFF opposes SB 173, which subjects all farmers to excessive measures instead of focusing regulatory attention on large food processing facilities, where evidence shows the preponderance of the food safety problem resides.

SB 677 (Yee) – Exempts low-income subsistence farmers whose taxable income doesn't exceed \$10,000 per year from having to buy workers' compensation insurance for direct family members, provided only family members work on the farm, the farm has no worker safety violations, and the farmer provides health insurance. SB 677 is a very narrowly drafted measure designed to help primarily Hmong farmers in the Central Valley, who depend on family labor on their farms. CAFF Board Member Richard Molinar, who is a UC Cooperative Extension Farm Advisor, works extensively with Hmong farmers in the Fresno area and helped CAFF develop its Support position on SB 677. 🌱



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In 2007, CAFF members elected Presley to the board. She immediately noticed that both the board and staff of the organization possessed not just technical skills, but also “so much energy to do this good work.” When Judith Redmond stepped down from the board presidency in early 2009, Presley was ready to assume the role.

Bolstering CAFF's fundraising ability and continuing to refine its programs are both high on Presley's agenda as board president. Also of particular interest to Presley is promoting responsibly managed working landscapes. She lauds operations like Joe Morris' T.O. Cattle Company, where their conscientious cattle grazing practices have contributed to the restoration of native perennial grasslands. This is just one example of the many California family farmers and ranchers practicing exemplary environmental stewardship. And, for Presley, “Promoting these ethics and the folks who live them everyday in the production of our food makes me proud and excited to serve on the CAFF board.” 🌱

Carol devised this pasta sauce as a way of making wholesome leafy greens more palatable to her son, Gabe, who shies away from salads. You can also thin this recipe with 1-2 cups of chicken or vegetable broth for a simple soup.

- 1 bunch of leafy greens, such as spinach, kale, or chard (leaves only)*
- 2 T olive oil*
- 2 cloves garlic*
- 1/2 cup heavy whipping cream*
- 1/4 cup grated Parmigiano-Reggiano*
- salt and pepper to taste*

Wash and roughly chop leafy greens. Steam greens until tender. Remove and drain well. Thoroughly puree steamed greens to a smooth consistency with olive oil and garlic in a food processor. Mix in heavy whipping cream and cheese, and toss mixture with hot pasta. Add more grated cheese as desired.

Makes enough sauce for one pound of pasta.

Humboldt Celebrates Food

Imagine a picture-perfect farm on a beautiful late-summer day, white linen-covered tables set with locally grown flowers, hors d'oeuvres and local wines. In Humboldt County, this tranquil setting highlights the annual celebration of local food. Each year, the Community Alliance with Family Farmers works with the county

to proclaim September as Local Food Month.

During the month, CAFF develops and promotes an exciting array of events to celebrate the faces and places that feed us—and indulge in the bounty. Save the date – Sunday, Sept. 13 – for our kickoff Garden Soiree event from 3 to 6 pm in Arcata (farm to be announced). *More information on September's events will be available on the web at www.caff.org/humboldt or (707) 444-3255.* 🌱



save the Date

Sunday September 13th

Taste of Place Garden Soiree

Arcata, CA

one of MANY delicious Local Food Month events in September

www.caff.org/humboldt

North Coast Events

Collaboration is the theme of the North Coast Chapter activities this year! We are working with various local organizations to promote CAFF and address a number of local agricultural issues. This includes partnering with Sonoma County Farm Trails on their Early Bird Breakfast Club programs, which are held the last Friday of each month—visit www.farmtrails.org for more information.

Here's an overview of some of our other partnerships:

- Serving on Sonoma County Water Coalition.
- Working with Slow Food Russian River Convivium and other local groups to address local infrastructure needs such as cold storage and processing.
- Serving on the Food Access Working Group of the Sonoma County Health Action Task Force.

We also participated in the creation of the consensus document for Sonoma and Napa counties regarding the Light Brown Apple Moth situation.

Upcoming activities include:

- July 12: Buy Fresh Buy Local mixer at Peter Lowell's in Sebastopol.
- June 20: Rep. Mike Thompson's 18th Annual Pasta Dinner, celebrating Sonoma County's leadership in environmental stewardship.
- June 21: Food Awareness Benefit and Summer Solstice Celebration at the Sebastopol Community Center.
- June 25 – 28: Sonoma Marin Fair in Petaluma.
- July 28 – Aug 9: Sonoma County Fair in Santa Rosa.
- September 20: We'll be collaborating with Slow Food Russian River and Sonoma County Farm Trails to create a "meal in the field" at Gabriel Farm in Sebastopol. This event will have a tour and u-pick, followed by a meal featuring apples and pears, created by chefs Lowell and Duskie Estes.

For more information about the North Coast chapter please visit www.caff.org/northcoast or contact Wendy Krupnik at wendyk@pon.net or Terry Harrison at terry-car@hughes.net. 🌱



MEMBERSHIP & CHAPTERS

Membership dues and donations are key to CAFF's ability to promote family farms and local food. CAFF chapters are run by volunteers in the Central Coast, Humboldt County, the North Coast and the Northern San Joaquin Valley.

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The area was ideal for stone fruits because of its soil and climate as well as its ample supply of water.

“It was a typical family farm. We worked our tails off.”

Originally, Mariani had different career aspirations. After receiving a political science degree from the University of California, Santa Barbara, and a master’s in public administration from the University of Southern California, Mariani worked a year as assistant city manager for the city of Saratoga. He soon realized he preferred driving tractors to pushing papers.

Mariani returned to the family farm, but was sidetracked for more than 15 years, battling a rare skin disease that doctors predicted could be fatal. He eventually sought treatment in Europe and recovered.

As he regained his energy to help in the family orchard, Mariani became interested in rare fruits and started collecting different fruit trees, even traveling around the world searching for exotic varieties. He started building a niche in artisanal, tree-ripened, fruit full of mouth-watering rich flavor and texture.

Mariani is quick to separate his fruit from those sold in large chain stores. “The supermarket fruit is basically generic.” You won’t find plain red plums or yellow peaches at Andy’s Orchard. “Each variety has a name and a story.”

There’s the Blenheim apricot, a delicate, intensely fragrant fruit. There’s the Baby Crawford, a small variety with a classic peach flavor, named and rescued by Mariani after it was abandoned by University of California researchers.

While most of his cherry crop is shipped to outside markets such as Asia, the other premium fruit is sold in his rustic farm store, through special online orders, and in a handful of upscale markets such as Cosentino’s gourmet market in San Jose, the venerable C.J. Olson Cherries fruit store in Sunnyvale and Sigona’s Farmers Market at the Stanford Shopping Center in Palo Alto. His trees are picked up to six times to ensure the best tree-ripened flavor



for his customers. The white flesh peaches are picked with white cotton gloves to protect the skin of the fruit.

For Mariani, farming and old-fashioned fruit are his life. He shares his knowledge and passion with urbanites enrolled in master gardener classes, high school horticulture students, and online gardening forums. He has written a book on fruit varieties and given countless talks about fruit and fruit culture.

Mariani is the stone fruit expert for the California Rare Fruit Growers organization and a member of the Cherry Advisory Board’s research committee. He has been a member of the Community Alliance with Family Farmers for about five years and worked with CAFF to plant a hedgerow as a natural erosion barrier for his farm.

“It’s a wonderful farm,” said Sam Earnshaw, who coordinates CAFF’s conservation plantings. Earnshaw, Mariani, and staff from both CAFF and Andy’s Orchard worked together to plant the hedgerow, which consisted of 130 different plants representing eight different native species.

“I am always pushing the envelope. I need something (new) to keep my attention,” Mariani said. “I can’t grow broccoli. I want something creative.”

His interest in starting a research and development operation came to fruition a few years ago when hybrid fruit enthusiasts asked him to plant and oversee a small experimental orchard down the road from his farm. Two years ago, an investor asked him to plant a three-acre Green Gage plum and heirloom apricot orchard. The plot is called Bunyard’s Orchard in honor of English fruit authority and grower Edward Bunyard, best known for his 1929 book, *The Anatomy of Dessert*, an account of the rich flavors of choice fruits of that time.

For years, Mariani and his older brother Mitch ran the farm. About five years ago, they split the business and Mariani took over the main part of the family farm operation. With the county zoning the property for future urban development, Mariani wonders about the farm’s future.

“We’re an anomaly here. We’re a dinosaur.” Mariani said. “I would like to stay here as long as I can survive.”

Fruit aficionados, too, are pulling for Andy’s Orchard.

More information about Andy’s Orchard and its annual summer fruit tasting and tour schedule is available at www.andysorchard.com.

WHAT IS A HEDGEROW?

Hedgerows filter runoff, prevent erosion, attract beneficial wildlife and insects, and add aesthetic interest. Over the past twelve years, CAFF has installed over 100 miles of hedgerows on California farms.





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Agrarian Advocate S09

READING ABOUT FOOD

SUGGESTIONS FOR SUMMER READING

- *The Anatomy of Dessert* by Edward Bunyard
- *Edible Schoolyard*, by Alice Waters
- *Eating from America's Farmers' Markets* by Deborah Madison
- *Home Cooking: A Writer in the Kitchen* by Laurie Colwin
- *A Homemade Life: Stories and Recipes from My Kitchen Table* by Molly Wizenberg
- *How to Pick a Peach: The Search for Flavor from Farm to Table* by Russ Parsons
- *Local Flavors: Cooking and Eating from America's Farmers' Markets* by Deborah Madison
- *Plenty: One Man, One Woman, and a Raucous Year of Eating Locally* by Alisa Smith and J.B. MacKinnon
- *A Table in the Tarn: Living, Eating and Cooking in South-west France* by Orlando Murrin
- *Where Shall We Go for Dinner?* by Tamasin Day-Lewis
- *A Year in My Kitchen* by Skye Gyngell