

ROLLING PRAIRIE

notes from rolling prairie farmers alliance



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

EAT FOOD * NOT TOO MUCH
* MOSTLY PLANTS *

* MICHAEL POLLAN, IN
DEFENSE OF FOOD

WEEK OF
MAY 25, 2009

Coming Up

Late May

In late May, we usually have

Asparagus, bokchoi, chard, garlic, green garlic, green onions, herbs, lettuce, mushrooms, rhubarb, snap peas, salad mix, spinach, strawberries



Get the e-Newsletter

It's not too late to sign up for the email version of the Rolling Prairie newsletter. Often the email version contains extended material; this week is a good example. On page two you will find the continuation of the Conway interview, plus a special recipe from one of our subscribers. Send your request using the email address you want the newsletter sent to to sandheron@rollingprairie.net.

Vacation days

Don't forget to notify your site coordinator a few days in advance when you will be taking your two vacation days, so we don't charge you.

Merc: Bob Lominska,
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JCCC: Stu Shafer,
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Harvest America: Paul Conway,
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Local Burger: Paul Johnson,
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MEET YOUR FARMERS: PAUL CONWAY

As part of a series of interviews with the farmers who make up Rolling Prairie Farmers Alliance, this week we present Paul Conway. The interview was done by Stephanie Barrows, site assistant at the Local Burger pickup site.

SB: Tell me about your farm, how it started, and about your background – what influenced you.

PC: Okay. I did not come from a farming background. I had a garden wherever I lived in the world, and I worked on farms, every once in a while.... I did 20 years in the Army... [and] retired in '93. Two years before that, I bought...a really small farm in Lansing, Kansas....

[I] was one of the founding members of Rolling Prairie, when we started in '94. Grew produce [in Lansing] until 1996, when it flooded too much. Moved, found another place further upland, in Leavenworth County, farmed that....

In September, 2006, I went back on active duty...in Iraq for a year. Got

back in December, right before new Year's Day, in 2007. And, I retired again for the second time, out of the Army.... I've been farming ever since.

SB: So, you farm full-time?

PC: Yes.

SB: So, it's been full-time ever since '93, except for the year in Iraq?

PC: Except for my Iraqi vacation.

SB: (laughs) Why did that happen?

PC: I volunteered. But, you're still called up. Everybody that retires out of any of the military branches is still eligible for recall. It's very rare, except for medical, and really high-demand skills....

(Interview continued on next page in email newsletter. See next column for info on how to sign up or access the email version.)



Conway interview (continued)

SB: Wow. What do you do?

PC: I was an infantry officer. I did a lot of logistics.... When I did my year in Iraq, I was...a team chief for a national police transition team – which was an 11-man advisory group...embedded in an Iraqi national police team....

[Now,] I raise produce for both the Leavenworth Farmers' Market and for Rolling Prairie. I was certified organic; I'm not any more, although I haven't changed my farming practices. And, that's the basics....

Intersections

SB: Do you think any of the skills you learned [in the military] carried over to your farming?

PC: Indirectly. Not really. It's a whole different thing, than soldiering. Organization[al].... That's probably it. You do have this military mindset, which is...you do want to show up on time,

make a decision, stick with it. Basic organization.

SB: It seems like you might have to be more flexible with agriculture, 'though.

PC: Well, yeah. With wars, you have to be flexible, too. No plan survives contact with the enemy. With agriculture, no plan survives contact with the weather.

You have to be flexible. And, one of the things with farming, is you really have to have plan Bs and plan Cs. So, you won't try to throw all your eggs in one basket.... Fortunately, in farming, you can usually get stuff in, eventually. Ideally, some weeks have better weather than usual. So, you have to learn to be flexible, and not worry about things you can't control.

Do enough planning, so that you can take advantage of your opportunities.... With a plan, it's a lot easier to change it, than it is if you have nothing. If you

do everything on impulse, it could turn around and...you just don't have any flexibility.

Future horizons

SB: What's your vision for the future?

PC: Keep farming until I'm dead.

SB: Okay. Just yourself?

PC: Old farmers who retire, move to town and die within four years.... They have nothing else to do, any more. They spent their whole lives, basically working.... If you don't have something to keep you going, you just die....

SB: So, do you have anything to add?

PC: Farming is [actually] quite satisfying. It's mentally challenging. Believe it or not. You're always thinking about how you're doing things.... It's not just the same old, read the label, open the box....



A simple recipe for a delicious seasonal treat. You should also try the Rhubarb Cake recipe on p. 32 of Nancy O'Connor's Rolling Prairie Cookbook.

FROM LAWRENCE SUBSCRIBER MIKELL ADAMS

RHUBARB CRISP

4 Cups fresh rhubarb, cut in chunks

1/2 teaspoon salt

1 1/3 - 2 cups sugar (depends on the tartness of the rhubarb)

3/4 cup flour

1 teaspoon cinnamon

1/3 cup butter

light cream or sweetened whipped cream

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Place rhubarb in an ungreased baking dish, 10x6x1 1/2 in. Sprinkle with salt. Mix flour, sugar and cinnamon in bowl, add butter and mix thoroughly, until mixture is crumbly. Sprinkle mixture over rhubarb. Bake 40-50 minutes until golden brown. Serve warm with light cream.