



THE DIRT

JULY 2011

NEWS FROM THE OCCIDENTAL BOHEMIAN FARMERS MARKET

WWW.OCCIDENTALFARMERSMARKET.COM

farmer profile

HANDS FULL Farm

BY SARAH HADLER

HANDS FULL FARM
PO BOX 447
VALLEY FORD, CA 94962
madtothemax@gmail.com

distance from market:
11 MILES

With a big, welcoming smile, Anna Erickson and a handful of dogs and chickens, are waiting for me when I pull up to Hands Full Farm on a sunny June day. The land on which Anna grew up, Erickson Ranch, is home to the very charming Hands Full Farm. The ranch has been in the Erickson family since 1897 when Anna's great-great-grandfather bought the land. There are 350 acres devoted mostly to raising cattle and sheep, and Anna uses a couple of those acres to grow vegetables, fruits and to raise goats and

free-range chickens. Anna has been farming this land for the last three years, after returning from Montana, where she completed school with an art degree and worked on a seasonal farm. She has been challenged by the environment here, and is consistently trying new things to see what works. We stand talking in front of her vibrant flower garden as the chickens, and Stewpot, the rooster, ease around us, pecking and nibbling in the ground. Anna sells her delicious free-range eggs, and various vegetables, including beans, squash, beets, garlic, potatoes, radishes, green onions, and cabbages at the Occidental Bohemian Farmers Market (OBFM) on Friday evenings, 4pm 'til dusk. This is her third season at the OBFM and the only Farmers Market she attends, always delighting us with her presence.

Anna's family has a long history of raising livestock on the ranch, but Anna is trying something different in giving vegetables and fruit a go on this land where it tends to be 10 degrees cooler than just a few miles away. She has 16 chickens, but would like to have more, as she always gets high compliments on the eggs she sells. Raising chickens must run in her blood, I think, as she tells me about her great-grandfather who in the 1950s said, "I will quit before I put my chickens in a barn." We meander through Anna's winter garden, which is now covered with bell beans and oats, and then head over to her greenhouse, which she and a friend built from windows salvaged from the dump and lumber that was laying around. We enter the warm, sunny, windless green house where she grows tomatoes, peppers and all of her starter vegetables. She tells me that she tried growing her tomatoes outside last year, and it was an experiment she won't soon repeat, "My Sun Golds, usually the most delicious tomatoes around, tasted like battery acid!" We visit the



CONTINUED ON REVERSE

**MARKET
CALENDAR**

July 8th

MUSIC
David Hamilton

July 15th

MUSIC
Michel Michelis

July 22nd

MUSIC
Happenstance

August 12th

MUSIC
David Hamilton

August 19th

MUSIC
Mr. December

August 26th

Michel Michelis

September 2nd

Drum Call West

September 9th

Catfish Jack &
Maria Vilaboy

October 28th

7th Annual Harvest
Market Festival



*Thanks to our generous
sponsors, without
whom the Market
could not thrive.*

BLOOM LEVEL

Bohemian Market

goats, who are basking in the sun. There are four does and their offspring; Anna has milked the goats in the past and made cheese but is letting the does give their milk to their babies for now.

We follow Max, Anna's Montana German-shepherd mix, down a gravel road, past a row of fruit trees that her grandmother planted, to her two main garden areas. Anna has planted more fruit trees—apples, plums and peaches—interspersed with rows of vegetables. Anna uses a push roto-tiller to turn the soil and then hand plants the starters. She dry farms certain vegetables and mostly uses drip lines and some soaker hoses for the rest; all the water here comes from the well. Anna's nemeses are the greedy gophers that gobble whole plants, leaving only empty holes and an occasional stalk; last year, they ate her entire potato crop. There are natural predators around, barn owls and hawks, and she also uses traps, but the gophers remain elusively destructive. We munch on some Italian kale leaves, tender and spicy, as we carefully walk through rows of cabbages, chard, sunflowers, onions, lettuce, cucumbers and summer squash. Where we are walking was once the family garden many years ago; Anna has revived it and it makes her grandmother, living in the house nearby, happy to see.

Anna's not exactly sure what the future will bring. She's got some interesting ideas and is dedicated to continuing the family tradition of farming and ranching; she's just not sure if growing vegetables will be it, knowing now that the particular ecosystem in which she lives can be difficult for that purpose. Anna's been making sheep cheese a couple of days a week at Barinaga Ranch in Marshall, and hopes to be selling it soon at her stall. I'm certain that Anna's desire to try new things and think outside the box will work in her favor as she figures out what she wants to do next; she'll also do it with humor and style, two things Anna has plenty of!

YES, I'm pleased to sponsor the Occidental Bohemian Farmers Market. I know my contribution will help support local agriculture and our local economy—and connect our community members to the food they consume.

- \$50 SEED LEVEL
- \$100 BLOOM LEVEL
- \$250 HARVEST LEVEL
- \$ _____

NAME _____

STREET _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

Please make checks payable to Occidental Bohemian Farmers Market, and mail to PO Box 782, Occidental CA 95465. The Occidental Bohemian Farmers Market is a non-profit mutual benefit corporation registered with the State of California and a 501(c)4 registered with the IRS.

**MARKET
VENDORS**

Farmers

- Armstrong Valley Farm
 - Blasi Ranch
 - Bloomfield Bees
 - Bloomfield Farm
 - Bohemian Collective
 - Fifteen Gates Farm
 - First Light Farm
 - French Garden Farm
 - Hands Full Farm
 - La Vida Buena Nursery
 - New Family Farm
 - Owen Family Farm
 - Rainbow's End
 - Sam Kim Mushrooms
 - Singing Frogs
 - Star Mountain Gardens
 - Swallow Valley Farm
 - Twin Peaks Orchard
 - Victorian Farmstead
 - Vine Hill Farm
-

Prepared Foods

- Blossom Organics
 - Capay Olive Oil
 - Casa Labelle Breads
 - Cosmic Cookie Jar
 - Gerard's Paella
 - The Hummus Guy
 - Kashaya's Pizza
 - Lata's Indian Cuisine
 - Mia's Bakery
 - Mommy's Yammy's
 - Paul's Smoked Salmon
 - Salt Side Down
 - Chocolates
 - Valley Ford Cheese
 - Wild Rose Ranch
-

Crafters

Varies

Services

Relax Systems Massage

Community

- KOWS
- Master Gardeners
- Salmon Creek Watershed

*Please email to confirm
attendance by vendors
on any given week:
info@occidental
farmersmarket.com.*