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NEWS FROM THE OCCIDENTAL BOHEMIAN FARMERS MARKET

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SEPT 2010

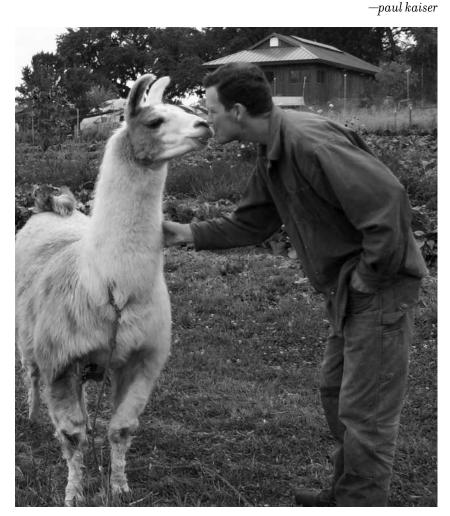
farmer profile SINGING Frogs Farm

BY SARAH HADLER

SINGING FROGS FARM 1301 FERGUSON ROAD SEBASTOPOL, CA 94572 www.singingfrogsfarm.com

distance from market: 5.8 MILES Covered in a light layer of misty fog, I rode down into the green valley bottom, where the Atascadero and Jonive Creeks converge—home to Singing Frogs Farm. I was greeted by Wenge, the very sweet, tail-wagging farm dog and a cheery, "Hey, Sarah, down here!" from Paul Kaiser, who along with his wife, Elizabeth, is responsible for the vibrant wonder that is Singing Frogs Farm.

"THIS Farm IS FOR OUR MEMBERS. WE REALLY TRY AND CREATE COMMUNITY."



Paul, Elizabeth, their two children, Lucas and Anna, and a wonderful mélange of animals (the aforementioned dog, a llama who likes to kiss, a goat, five sheep, ninety Girlie Girl chickens, and a beehive) and plants, share nine acres of lush land northwest of Sebastopol. Paul has only been farming for the past three years, but he brings his background of tropical forestry with him. His philosophy is a simple one: work with and encourage the natural environment as much as possible. He has planted and re-introduced over 800 native plants to his farm, and he has grown over 380 varieties of flowers, herbs and vegetables as he figures out what works best on this cool, wet valley floor. You can visit his always colorful and bountiful market stall at the Occidental Bohemian Farmers Market on Friday evenings, from 4 until dusk, June through October. Lucky us, we're the only farmers market he attends.

Singing Frogs Farm is kept busy by a 72-strong, and growing, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) membership. Paul is not kidding when he says, "This farm is for our members. We really try and create community." It is apparent everywhere you look, from the overall kid-friendliness to the lovely semi-circle of wildflowers that were planted for a recent wedding. Two-thirds of their CSA members pick up their weekly boxes of fresh produce at the farm; this both builds community and allows the members a chance to get to know and understand the workings of the farm.

When I asked Paul how much time he spends on the farm, he laughed... and I said, "I guess it's pretty much 24-7 then." He did not disagree. Paul also employs one full-time, year-round worker as well as many part-time workers during harvest times. He strongly believes in paying his employees a fair wage, and believes that it is socially just to do so.

MARKET CALENDAR

August 27th MUSIC Joe Szuecs & Friends + Hubbub Club

September 3th мusic

Honeybees

September 10th миsic

Dave Hamilton

September 17th MUSIC

Michel Saga September 24th

мизіс Jack Grant & Rich Jaffee

October 1st

мизіс Happenstance

October 8th

24 Hour Joe

October 29th 6th Annual Harvest Market Festival



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

HARVEST LEVEL

Eric Koenigshofer, Attorney-at-Law We spent a couple of hours talking and walking through the land. Paul peppered the time with both information and stories. Here's one story I particularly like: Paul and Elizabeth bought this land three years ago from an older couple who had spent twelve years preparing the land for organic farming. The couple took their time finding the right people to buy the property and had turned down dozens of offers; it was a clincher when they had all spent three hours walking around the land and realized, as they were saying goodbye, that Paul and Elizabeth hadn't even asked to see the house! Now, those are true farmers for you...

There is so much balance here. A couple of ponds, built on a natural seep, irrigate the crops. The animal manure goes into the compost pile which is then tilled into the soil. Natural predation is at work; Paul is very fond of snakes as they help keep the greedy gophers in balance. Crops are rotated and because rows are hand dug, plants can be micro-managed. When one crop has been harvested, a different one can be planted, and Paul often doublecrops, combining two plants in one row, like dill and cabbage. Flowers are scattered throughout the middles and edges of rows. The animals are also rotated so that they do not over-graze any one area and they also help maintain a good insect population.

On Singing Frogs Farm, there is a general feeling of anarchic tidiness, that plants and creatures are lovingly encouraged to be natural and wild. It just feels that these folks are doing it right. The land and people are thriving. As I am getting ready to head out, Lucas, Paul and Elizabeth's three-year-old son, is heartily enjoying a plum that he has just picked. Paul turns to me and says, "This guy has the life, he just wanders around and grazes all day." Ah, to be a kid at Singing Frogs Farm...

YCS, 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
○ \$

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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.

MARKET VENDORS

Farmers Armstrong Valley Farm Bella Ridge Blasi Ranch **Bloomfield Bees** Bohemian Farmers' Collective French Garden Farm Hands Full Farm Mudpie Farm New Family Farm **Bainbow's End** Sam Kim Mushrooms Singing Frogs Farm **Smiling Sun Farms** Star Mountain Gardens Strong Arm Farm Swallow Valley Farm Twin Peaks Orchard Victorian Farmstead Vine Hill Farm

Prepared Foods Bennett Ridge Baking Co. Gerard's Paella Kashava's Pizza The Hummus Guy Lata's Indian Cuisine Mommy's Yammys Paul's Smoked Salmon Salt Side Down Chocolates Sarah's Forestville Kitchen Sensational Soups & Sauces Wild Rose Ranch

Crafters Varies

Services Relax Systems Massage

Community Master Gardeners Occidental Center for the Arts

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