



THE DIRT

SEPT 2010

NEWS FROM THE OCCIDENTAL BOHEMIAN FARMERS MARKET

WWW.OCCIDENTALFARMERSMARKET.COM

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 kaiser



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-friendly 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.

CONTINUED ON REVERSE

**MARKET
CALENDAR**

August 27th
MUSIC
Joe Szuecs & Friends
+ Hubbub Club

September 3th
MUSIC
Honeybees

September 10th
MUSIC
Dave Hamilton

September 17th
MUSIC
Michel Saga

September 24th
MUSIC
Jack Grant &
Rich Jaffee

October 1st
MUSIC
Happenstance

October 8th
MUSIC
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 double-crops, 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...

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.

**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
Rainbow'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
Kashaya'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@occidentalfarmersmarket.com.