

News

Fall/Winter 2010

FALL FUNDRAISER PROVIDES FUN, EDUCATIONAL AFTERNOON



On Sunday, September 25, Farms of Amador and the Amador Farmers' Market held their annual joint fundraiser event, a tour of several farms in the Camanche/Jackson Valley area, which ended with dinner at Big Horse Ranch and Little Cattle Company. Despite unseasonable heat and the last-minute cancellation of one of the tour stops -- the Lake Amador fish hatchery -- the event was quite successful, with everyone reporting they had a good time.

When asked how he liked the tour, Keith Raddatz, who attended with Eva Lawrence, replied, "I liked the great diversity in ways of raising flocks and crops. I learned a lot, and the tour really helped Eva, who is homesick for Kansas and enjoyed seeing the farm animals." Another attendee reported that the tour was "fun and quirky," and was one of several people who expressed disappointment at not being able to see the fish hatchery.

The tour consisted of four stops, including the horse and cattle ranch. The first stop was Dave Kuester's goat farm on Jackson Valley Road. Since mid-2006, Dave Kuester has been keeping a small herd of meat goats on his property, mostly for his own consumption, but selling a few for meat. He is currently looking to expand his meat production, and to add some dairy goats to the breeding line. He has recently added solar energy to the farm, as well as a pair of Anatolian dogs he is breeding to raise guardian dogs to sell.

The next stop was Majestic Oak Farm on Buena Vista Road. This farm, in its third year of vegetable and fruit production on acres of fertile Jackson Valley soil, has taken the surprising step of doing a large portion of its growing in containers, to circumvent the tremendous gopher problem, with great success. These growers have also moved into animal production, raising meat and egg chickens, and now a milk cow and calf-- recent acquisitions from the Big Horse Ranch and Little Cattle Co.

Next, the tour meandered over to Olive Oak Farm, on Dry Creek Road. Grower Dave Friend produces both a filtered and an unfiltered olive oil, which he sells at the Jackson Farmers' Market and at a couple of local wineries. Tourgoers were able to sample the oils and tour the olive orchard.

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TREASURES OF OUR PAST

by Ray Stacey

October 16, 2010 was just another weekend as I started home from the Historical Society meeting in Jackson. As my car came over the rise on Camanche Rd., I was transported back through time. I had to stop to make sure, yes the roadway was filled with cattle coming in my direction. This was no longer Camanche Rd. it was the cattle trail that had become a road over a century ago.

Some things had changed, the cattle drive was lead by a ranch truck with flashing yellow turn signals and three A.T.V.s were scooting around the herd keeping the strays in line. Riding flank was a caballero on horseback wearing a baseball cap and making sure everything was going smoothly. I pulled into the closest driveway to give them as much room as possible and just basked in the glow of history as it passed by.

The cows moved along without fear and the calves were right next to mom as they passed. The whole event only lasted about ten minutes but it brought back to life Amador County's rich history as the home of rangeland and cattle enterprises.

Right after the herd were several vehicles, some towing boats. It was satisfying to know that we can slow down in life once in a while for a hands on history lesson. I for one have moved to Amador County so I will have time to smell the roses. What we have now and have had seems to be a lot better than what we are going to have if we don't learn to respect what Mother Nature provides us with.

Farms of Amador is composed of people who desire to be stewards of the land and its agricultural history. We might not be able to use the same methods but the lifestyle is one to be desired and enjoyed, don't be too quick to trade it in for a trunk full of glass beads.

If you live in Amador Co. because you enjoy the rural atmosphere, then you will also need to help preserve and revitalize what you enjoy by contributing to its sustainability. We need instructors and students, producers and consumers for our agricultural community to survive and flourish. With your participation we will continue to make it happen.



GRAPE HARVEST 2010

2010 will be a distinct vintage for Sierra Foothill wine. A wet, cool spring lasted until the end of May and with a summer of below average temperatures, grapes were slow to ripen. September brought a warming that lasted through October and a spike in temperatures that reached over 100 degrees one week. With a few exceptions, the grapes of Amador County ripened to industry standards.

Grape values were off from the 2009 harvest with up to 20% of Amador County Zinfandel going unpicked due to low prices and decreased demand by wineries under financial strain. However, several well known growers were able to command high prices for their quality fruit and Amador grapes continue to be sold to leading wineries throughout the state.

Most varietals survived the peculiar growing season well and one El Dorado County winemaker reports "great flavors, high acid and low sugar" for his 2010 crop.

Ninety percent of Amador fruit was crushed before the rains, while El Dorado County endured the rains with minimal rot issues. This is mainly dealt with by leaving afflicted clusters on the vine.

The heat did eventually come to the rescue with the potential for lower alcohols and great fruit to be the defining character of a 2010 Amador County vintage.



So You Want to Be a Farmer? UCCE 2011 Workshop Series

Have you been thinking about getting started in agriculture or diversifying your ag business but haven't been sure where to turn for ideas and advice? The University of California Cooperative Extension's 2011 workshop series "So You Want to Be a Farmer?" may be just what you are looking for.

The series will offer one or two classes per month from January through October 2011.

Topics will include:

- Assessing Your Resources/Developing an Ag Business Plan
- Water Pumping
- Beekeeping
- Aquaculture
- Designing an Integrated System
- Improving Produce Quality
- Grazing Principles of Grass Fed Beef Production
- Worms
- Fencing Systems
- Poultry

Classes will be taught in hands on and classroom formats depending on the subject.

Instructors will be local, regional and state experts.

Look for more information by visiting the Amador UCCE website in early 2011 at

<http://ceamador.ucdavis.edu>

Sutter Creek Primary School Garden

Dear Farms of Amador,
Our garden at Sutter Creek Primary had a fabulously productive spring, summer and fall garden. Like other gardens around the county, it's time to clean up and add to our compost. Then we can ready our boxes and plant for winter and early spring. Oh yes! We also need to make the final harvest of our tremendous volunteer crop of yellow pear tomatoes that grew out of one of our compost bins this year.

Thanks to Farms of Amador, we have two half-barrels waiting for our strawberries to be transplanted. We've had our strawberries in a garden box, but our garden gets so many hours of direct sunlight each day that they've been a little too exposed. They'll do better in a strategically placed barrel. We also have two half-wine barrels, thanks to Susan Feist, waiting for ... inspiration.

The difficulty in having a huge, beautiful school garden is finding the time to take full advantage of it. It's hard to get all students out there as often as we would like. But last year the kindergartners planted pumpkins and this year, as first graders, they were able to admire those beauties in the garden and to harvest one for their classes. First graders planted sunflowers last year. This year we all enjoyed the bluejays that hung upside-down harvesting that crop of seeds. We made tomato sauce with oregano, thyme and basil and had a spaghetti feast in Room 2.

We are always looking for volunteers to help maintain the garden and also to work with small groups of kids so more can enjoy the exceptional space we have here. Anyone who is interested can contact Liz Tone at 257-7102, or e-mail me at toneberg2@yahoo.com

Liz Tone, Teacher



garden quote of the year:

"I never liked like peas.
But I like these!"





**Your source for local products
and marketing opportunities**

Motherlode Harvest, the local food and ag product marketing and distribution association, is now operating a full service website. Check out www.mlharvest.com to find out what your local producers have to offer. Visit the website today to find out what is available and be sure to place your order by Sunday of each week for pick-up on Tuesdays between 10:15 and noon or 4 and 6 p.m. at our location behind Teresa's Restaurant on Jackson Gate Rd. We are planning to offer our customers local products throughout the fall, winter, spring and summer. If you would like to be a customer and need more info, please email Michelle Grondin at amadorcountyfarmersmarkets@yahoo.com. For producer inquiries, contact Alice Kaiser at: alicekaiser@hotmail.com

AMADOR CALAVERAS TUOLUMNE II DINNER EVENT

Calaveras Grown is hosting its second annual ACT II. That stands for Amador, Calaveras, Tuolumne and this event unites the efforts of local small-scale agriculturists in our three foothill counties while having fun and eating delicious local food. This year the event will be held at the Mokelumne Hill town hall. Our guest speaker will be Lynn Miller, editor of the "Small Farmer's Journal" and director of the Small Farm Conservancy. Lynn is an incredible member of the international ag community and we look forward to his inspiring words delivered in a humorous style. We know that all those in attendance will come home full of positive action oriented ideas and delicious local food. All members of the community are invited to attend.

Tickets are \$35/person (a steal that includes wine, dinner, speaker, music and a Calaveras Grown wine glass). The event will be held on Friday, February 25, 2011. Tickets go on sale January 4, 2011.

To get your tickets, visit <http://www.calaverasgrown.org/NewsLetters.asp> and then click on the "ACT II RSVP..." for an RSVP form, or email skriletich@ucdavis.edu or call Diane at (209) 772-1604. Please, no inquiries before January 4, 2011.

Learn more about Lynn Miller's efforts to conserve and inspire small-scale agriculture at <http://smallfarmsconservancy.org/>



WALNUTS IN AMADOR COUNTY

Walnuts are the second most plentiful fruit/nut crop in Amador County. With only 327 acres of walnuts, many fewer acres than our County's primary fruit crop, winegrapes, walnuts are a jewel of a product. Unique among nuts, walnuts contain the highest amount of alpha-linolenic acid, the plant-based omega-3 essential fatty acid required by the human body. Walnuts can be found on numerous 'superfood' lists because of their exceptional nutritional profile and the fact that walnuts earned the first approved health claim by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration for a whole food. They are high in protein, fiber, magnesium and phosphorous. One ounce of walnuts provides 18g of total fat, 2.5g of monounsaturated fat, 13g of polyunsaturated fat, including 2/5g of omega 3 fatty acid. Nutrition research paid for by the California Walnut Commission and the Federal Walnut Board, has found in recent studies that consumption of moderate amounts of walnuts may have the following significant health effects:

- reduce the incidence and management of heart disease
- improve management of Type II diabetes
- reduce the incidence of cancer
- positively impact bone health and cognitive function in aging humans

Walnuts contribute nutrients essential to a healthy lifestyle. They also taste great and are ideally suited for inclusion in most diets.



2010-2011 OLIVE HARVEST IN AMADOR COUNTY

by Susan Bragstad, Amador Olive Oil

Since the olive oil for 2011 is harvested in the fall of 2010 we depend on a moderate November and December so that frosts and snow won't ruin the olive crop.

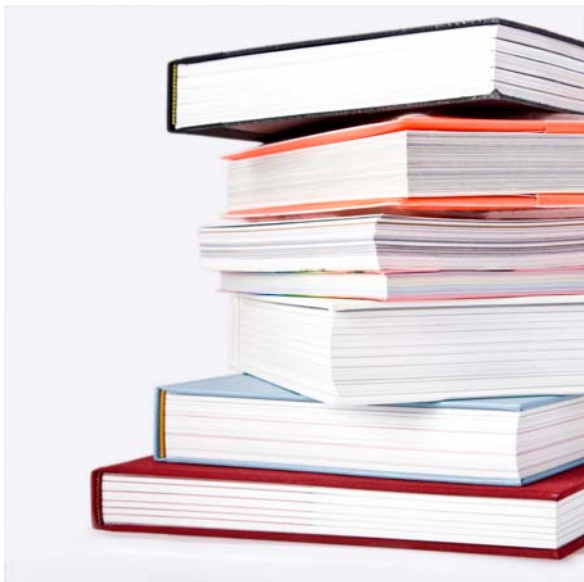
Well, the last two years have been difficult at best, with a cool spring extending into summertime, causing the olive crop to develop late, into December and January. Last year, 2009, many of us growers waited for the olives to ripen and got caught by early snows in the first week of December. I luckily harvested most of my crop in time but many folks were caught by surprise.

This year the same conditions prevailed, with heavy frosts occurring in mid November. The choices are pick early and possibly have bitter oil, or have your olives freeze. I picked early, keeping my fingers crossed for a mellow oil.

I hope Mother Nature smiles on us once again and keeps winter conditions under control next year.



**“Proper nourishment is inseparable from good flavor.”
– Masanobu Fukuoka**



BOOK REVIEW: “THE ONE STRAW REVOLUTION” BY MASANOBU FUKUOKA

This 1975 book is a commentary on the philosophy and methods of how to do more with less. Fukuoka begins as a plant pathologist before returning to his father's farm in rural Japan. There, after much trial and error he settles on what is referred to as a non-discriminatory diet and method of farming. Using a method of 'do nothing' farming Fukuoka produces at least as much rice and barley per acre as any other farm in Japan and does so without the use of mechanization. He only flood irrigates his rice one time during the season and in so doing harvests more rice grains per plant than traditional or conventional methods. Anyone with an open mind can learn something from Fukuoka's philosophy and methods: **“Right Food, Right Action, Right Awareness”**.

Review by Sean Krietch

WWW.FARMSOFAMADOR.COM: A WEALTH OF RESOURCES

If you haven't visited our web site, www.farmsofamador.com, be sure to do so soon! The site has lots of terrific information, including a calendar of events, member directory, maps showing different areas of the county and what kinds of products are available, archived newsletters and more. You can purchase Farms of Amador merchandise, find out more about Motherlode Harvest and FoA programs, and search by farm name, commodity, or area to find a particular farm or product in Amador County. Our annual membership fee is just \$20 for a web presence, improved local recognition of your products, cooperative marketing opportunities and a say in agriculture's voice in the community. To learn more about how Farms of Amador can help your agricultural business, visit our web site today. To join or renew your membership, please use the form on page 7 of this newsletter.

FALL FUNDRAISER (continued from page 1)

At the final stop, Big Horse Ranch and Little Cattle Co. on Camanche Road, attendees were greeted by the cheerful music of an old circus calliope, which rancher Ray Stacey sometimes pulls in a wagon with his team of magnificent draft horses. The grass-fed beef he also raises is from diminutive Irish Dexter cattle—perfect for those with smaller freezers. Ray is working hard to make his ranch an agritourism destination, and to promote agritourism throughout the county through Farms of Amador.

After their tour of the main work area of the ranch, attendees moved toward the dinner site. Rave reviews were heard for the dinner, which was held in “Betty's Glenn,” named for the late hostess of the ranch, Betty Stacey. The lovely spot along a small creek was given shade by oak trees, and atmosphere by the nearby “little cattle”. Atmosphere was also provided by singer/guitarist James May, who played an array of folksy country tunes throughout the evening. The delicious dinner was catered by Cafe de Coco of Jackson, who started with a bean and vegetable soup, then had local pork cooked carnitas-style, served with rice and beans, and tortillas warmed on a fire pit grill, along with side dishes of sweet potato and fruit salad. The meal was made up of about 80% local ingredients, with the pork from the Vicini family in Plymouth, and the produce for the soup and the fruit salad from Motherlode Harvest, a local foods association sponsored by Farms of Amador. Dessert was provided by one of the event organizers: strawberry trifle and chocolate meringue cookies, also using some local ingredients, such as the eggs and strawberries. Attendees enjoyed local wines, water, soda, and cold beer to beat the heat and complement the Mexican food, and “cowboy coffee” accompanied dessert.

The event ended with an extensive array of raffle prizes and silent auction items being awarded to lucky ticketholders and bidders. Highlights were Pat Noll of Glencoe winning the gorgeous quilt made and donated by an anonymous supporter of the farmers' market, and Gary Reinohl of Pioneer winning the basket of local products from the farmers' market and 10 pounds of ground beef from Big Horse ranch owner Ray Stacey. The raffle and auction were organized by long-time market supporter Katherine Venturelli of Fiddletown, who did a fabulous job.

One tourgoer expressed regret that she hadn't stayed longer to enjoy the balmy evening and sit around the campfire with Ray and others. She said, “I'll definitely stay longer next year!”

Proceeds from the event will help pay for the farmers' market's expenses, such as advertising, licenses, signs, management and musician fees, and state fees required for being a Certified Farmers' Market. They will also help fund Farms of Amador projects, including local school gardens, Motherlode Harvest, and an advertising brochure for member farms.

Farms of Amador and the Amador Farmers' Market thank the volunteers and the tour farms that made this event possible.



Auction item of local products



Café de Coco serves a local dinner

The abundant raffle table



Enjoying dinner at the ranch

Farms of Amador

TIME TO JOIN OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

January is the time to renew your membership in Farms of Amador. Membership is just \$20/year and offers you a web presence, improved local recognition of your products, cooperative marketing opportunities and a part in agriculture's voice in the community. Please renew or join by filling out the form below and sending your check for \$20 to Farms of Amador.

Please note that if you have joined or renewed your membership in October, November or December of 2010 your membership will remain current until the end of 2011. If you renewed or joined before October 2010, your membership will expire in January 2011.

Farms of Amador Membership Form

Farms of Amador is actively working on new and innovative ways of increasing the viability of Amador Co. Agriculture. The cost to join is just \$20/year.

Name _____

Company/Farm Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____

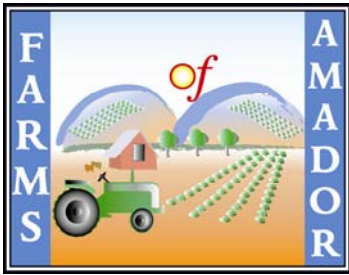
Phone _____ Fax _____

Email _____

Agricultural Products _____

Fee \$20 for Regular Membership (please make checks payable to Farms of Amador)
Please mail to: Farms of Amador, 12200-B Airport Rd, Jackson, CA 95642
Please note that out-of-county farms will become supporting members.

Please submit articles
about your Amador County agricultural business for our next newsletter
to skriletich@ucdavis.edu



12200 B Airport Rd.
Jackson, CA 95642



Photo Op: Can you find the praying mantis on this celosia?



NOMINATIONS NEEDED FOR THE 2011 BOARD

2011 is fast approaching and we need nominations for new board members. We are currently operating with just five board members, but our bylaws allow for seven board members. While more voices can make decisions more challenging, there is also the opportunity to get more done. Achieving more will lead to greater benefits for our members, the rest of the agricultural community and the county as a whole. If you or someone you know would like to serve as a board member, please send in your nomination by January 11 either by email to skriletich@ucdavis.edu or to Farms of Amador, 12200-B Airport Rd, Jackson CA 95642.

Requirements for serving on the Farms of Amador Board are simple: you must be an active member of Farms of Amador and be willing to attend the board meetings. Board meetings are currently held at 8:30 a.m. on the second Wednesday of each month at the UCCE office, 12200-B Airport Rd in Sutter Hill.

We will be holding an annual membership meeting in early 2011 to vote on the new board of directors.

CURRENT FARMS OF AMADOR BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

- Susan Feist – President
- Ray Stacey – Vice President
- Michelle Grondin – Secretary
- Susan Bragstad – Treasurer
- Lynn Morgan – Director
- Sean Kriletich – UCCE Representative to the Board

Visit us on the web at www.farmsofamador.com