

**Box Contents:**

1 lb Armenian Cucumbers  
1 bskt Cherry Tomatoes  
¾ lb Sweet Peppers  
1 Watermelon  
¾ lb Green Beans  
3 ears Sweet Corn  
1 lb Summer Squash

**September Payment due by August 26, 2011:**

September payment for four **Wednesday** deliveries is \$80.

September payment for five **Thursday / Friday** deliveries is \$100.

If you have any questions about your account status, please email us at [csa@riverdogfarm.com](mailto:csa@riverdogfarm.com) or call (530) 796-3802

Please check the "Ordered Through" column on the sign-out sheet. If the printed date in the column is earlier than the end of the month, your payment for the remainder of the current month is due by the date. Without timely receipt of payment, deliveries may be interrupted.

**Special Bulk Offers**

**Almond Butter:** 2 jars for \$24

**Pickling Cucumbers:** 10-lb case for \$15

Please email or call us to place your order by the Friday before your delivery day. Please mail your payment to our address when you place the order.

**Report on the USDA, written by Cassidy Campbell Mueller**

I bet you've heard it before, the big 4 letters so important to farmers, food processors, and eaters: USDA, or the United States Department of Agriculture, which is responsible for the federal government's policies on agriculture and food. Now that you've been introduced to the policy maker around here (and you would be surprised at how much your life is affected by this department; everything from the food pyramid to food inspection policies to the cost and availability of food at the grocery store.) you might be wondering how they manage such a big task. The USDA's main piece of legislation is called The Farm Bill. Let's back up a few decades, the main ideas of the farm bill grew out of the great depression in the 1930s. There have been 10 official Farm Bills since 1965. Of course there was a USDA before that, and it had agricultural policies and legislations, but they weren't called 'the farm bill'. What makes this bill so special is that it is omnibus. Who knows what omnibus means? It means that instead of a bunch of separate laws floating around, all (or most) of the USDA's legislation and policies are grouped together into one bill, which is voted on as a whole. This helps create broad support to pass laws that otherwise would not have survived the legislation process. The omnibus farm bill is updated every five years or so, the current one is called the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, which replaced the 2002 bill. Much of the legislation on the 2008 bill is set to expire in 2012 so we will be hearing a lot about changing policies in the upcoming year. What exactly is there to change on this Bill anyway? On the current Farm Bill there are 15 titles, or separate policies. The bill has increased in size since 1965, when main titles today, such as conservation and energy, weren't even included. The latest titles are Horticulture and Livestock. Although the farm bill may seem like another large and distant part of our government, it has had effects in our own little Capay Valley. For example my parent's farm applied for a grant to help pay for a solar installation, they received the grant, which paid 25% of the \$140,000 total. Full Belly Farm and Haag Walnut Farm also applied and received the grant. The solar grant is under Title IX of the 2008 Farm Bill. This piece of legislation is constantly evolving, introducing new ideas and changing priorities. A new development in 2008 was the number of small organizations that lobbied congress for changes in the Farm Bill. Everyone from church organizations with soup kitchens to Capay Valley farmers wanted a say in how America eats. Did I say Capay Valley farmers? Paul Muller of Full Belly Farm went to DC in 2007 to help lobby for a different subsidies system. If you think that something needs to change in agriculture around here then follow Paul's footsteps and bring it up with Congress in the 2012 debates.

Controversial matters relevant to our current and upcoming farm bill are:

- The 2008 bill increased spending to about 288 billion-thus increasing the budget deficit. 37 federal aid programs that are set to expire in 2012 will no longer have funding, cutting out programs that have been supporting people and farms.
- Subsidizing is a big part of the farm bill. The federal government has spent about 26 billion over the past 4 years on direct subsidies to farms. This means that the government pays farmers to grow commodities such as wheat and corn and to sell it cheaply. This has the general effect of lowering the cost of food in the US, our country some of the cheapest food prices in the world! This seems pretty good for us right? Some people think so... like the huge monoculture growers who are pocketing thousands a year from the government. Other people have different ideas about the effects of subsidies.
- Michael Pollan, a UC Berkeley professor, wrote a book accusing the farm bill of endorsing the practice of raising livestock in small, enclosed areas and feeding them

cheap subsidized corn.

- The crop subsidies system rewards production, meaning many farmers actually grow their crops for the payments, instead of what is good for their land, or what is actually needed. This induces unsustainable stewardship practices for farmland.
- The main subsidized crops are corn, wheat, cotton, peanuts, and rice. The farms that produce these crops are generally big, monoculture, businesses. Some people argue that these farmers, who are already rich, should not be receiving federal money, which they can buy bigger equipment and more acreage with, decreasing competition and pushing small businesses out.
- Since farmers are getting paid for how much they grow, why not milk the system and get paid more? A joke about rice farmers, who have a cap of \$50,000 subsidy money per farm yearly, is:

How do you increase your net farm income by 50 thousand dollars a year in rice country?

You put up another mailbox. (If you have another address, say for your wife or son, you can divide your farm, on paper, thus receiving the subsidy for each additional "farm".)

- Another perspective on this is that under Title IX of the 2008 bill subsidies were created to support the development of renewable energy.

What do you think? Should the federal government be funding subsidized food prices? Or the development of renewable energy sources? If that looks confusing, this is what the USDA says the 2008 farm bill is all about:

"The 15 titles include administrative and funding authorities for programs that cover income and commodity price support, farm credit, and risk management; conservation through land retirement, stewardship of land and water resources, and farmland protection; food assistance and agricultural development efforts abroad and promotion of international access to American farm products; food stamps, domestic food distribution, and nutrition initiatives; rural community and economic development initiatives, including regional development, rural energy efficiency, water and waste facilities, and access to broadband technology; research on critical areas of the agricultural and food sector; accessibility and sustainability of forests; encouraging production and use of agricultural and rural renewable energy sources; and initiatives for attracting and retaining beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers."

**Salad Nicoise** from <http://www.epicurious.com/recipes/food/printerfriendly/Salade-Ni-oise-15533>

**For the vinaigrette:**

**3 tablespoons best quality cider vinegar**

**1 tablespoon Dijon-style mustard**

**1 cup plus 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil**

**1 medium new white onion, sliced paper-thin**

**2 cloves garlic, minced**

**3 cups flat-leaf parsley leaves, loosely packed**

**¾ cup mixture of tarragon and fresh chervil leaves, loosely packed**

**Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste**

**For the Salad:**

**2 pounds fresh tuna**

**Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper**

**1 tablespoon olive oil, for rubbing on the tuna**

**20 anchovy fillets (preferably packed in oil)**

**1 pound green beans, trimmed**

**1 pound yellow beans, trimmed**

**2 pounds of tiny new potatoes, scrubbed**

**5 farm eggs, hard-cooked and peeled**

**½ each red and yellow bell peppers, cut in thin (¼-inch) strips**

**6 medium red and yellow tomatoes, stemmed and quartered**

**1 cup Nicoise olives**

**Sprigs of parsley and chervil, for garnish**

Make the vinaigrette. In a large bowl make the vinaigrette by whisking together the vinegar and the mustard. Slowly whisk in the oil in a thin stream to emulsify the mixture. Stir in the garlic and the onions. Mince the parsley and add it, with the tarragon and chervil, to the dressing, mixing well. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Prepare the salad. Rinse the tuna, pat it dry and refrigerate it until just before cooking.

Build a small fire in a barbecue. When the coals are red and dusted with ash, spread them out, and lay the rosemary atop them. Set the grill atop the coals. Rub the tuna on all sides lightly with olive oil, and place on the grill. Cover the grill, leaving the vents open, so the tuna grills and smokes at the same time. Grill until the tuna is lightly golden and almost cooked through, 5 to 7 minutes. Carefully turn the tuna and cook until it is golden on the other side and opaque through, an additional 5 to 7 minutes. The cooking time will vary depending on the heat of the fire, so check it carefully. Transfer the tuna to a plate, season it lightly all over with salt and pepper, and let it cool to room temperature. When it is cool enough to handle, carefully remove the skin and any bones. Drizzle it on both sides with about 3 tablespoons of the vinaigrette, then reserve at room temperature.

Drain the anchovies of oil and pat them dry.

Bring 4 cups water to a boil in the bottom of a steamer. Add half the beans, cover, and steam until they are tender firm, about 6 minutes. Remove from the steamer and let cool on a wire rack covered with a cotton tea towel. Repeat with the remaining beans.

Transfer one-third of the dressing to a medium sized bowl.

Bring a medium-sized pot of salted water to a boil, and add the potatoes. Cook just until they are tender through, about 15 minutes. Drain. If you want to peel them, do so as soon as they are cool enough to handle. Add them, still warm, to the one-third of the vinaigrette. Toss, and reserve.

Assemble the salad. Just before serving toss the beans and the peppers with enough vinaigrette to fully moisten them, and arrange them in the center of a serving platter. Top them with the anchovy fillets, arranging them attractively on top. Quarter the eggs, and place them, with the tomatoes, around the beans and peppers. Drizzle them with 2 to 3 tablespoons of the vinaigrette.

Place the potatoes on another platter. Break the tuna apart into large pieces, and arrange the pieces attractively atop the potatoes. Sprinkle with the olives. Drizzle with any remaining vinaigrette, and garnish with several sprigs of parsley and chervil. Serve immediately.