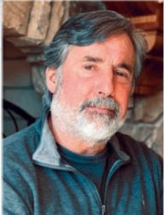


The Struggles of ELMER FUDD

Eat Your View



By ROBERT TURNER

Bugs Bunny would pull carrots out of the ground as fast as Elmer Fudd could plant them. *Kwazy Wabbit.*

Given the struggles that small growers like Fudd encounter, and it's not just wabbits, I was truly amazed by this mountain of carrots that I recently encountered at my local CSA

(community supported agriculture) program.

I've never seen so many carrots in one place. Not in a grocery store. Never like this. A huge pile of carrots, beets, shallots and kale. There were also cucumbers, basil and cilantro, all nicely stacked in bunches banded together with rubber bands, and then free-range chicken eggs to boot.

I gazed upon this wonder in amazement. I was so blown away that I had to snap pictures. I thought to myself, "Did all of this come out of the ground just this week, right here at this little farm? How is that possible? And all of it grown with no chemicals, pesticides, herbicides or glyphosate?"

Normally, I'm late on pick-up day. I usually pull up to the farm stand just before our farm manager Ayrton closes up at six o'clock. On this day, I happened to be early, one of the first CSA members to arrive at three o'clock in the afternoon, and here I finally had a chance to see the bounty of summer firsthand and before the 65 other CSA members arrived to dismantle this mountain of carrots.

"How does he do it?," I ask myself. And this isn't all. This is just part of the weekly harvest. Ayrton also sells his weekly produce at the downtown Asheville City Farmers Market and to several restaurants around town under his farm name Maypop Farms. He employs succession planting, so there is always

something new coming up at the farm, and we, of course, eat with the seasons.

But how does he do it? He works very hard all summer long; that's how. Being an organic farmer is one of the toughest jobs that I know. It means very long days, usually six or seven days a week.

Elmer Fudd was also an organic farmer, by the way. That's because he was first created in 1937, long before chemical fertilizers and pesticides were widely adopted by farmers in the '50s and '60s. And Fudd the farmer was always frustrated—you could tell by the red face and the steam that came out of his ears. Being an organic farmer adds greatly to the challenges of growing food, but for many it's worth it because the agricultural chemicals out there are proven to be harmful to the environment and to our bodies.

Our farm manager is nothing like Elmer Fudd, but I've seen the same frustration, like after a deer ate an entire bed of lettuce just



before it was ready for harvest. The CSA has taught me to appreciate the hard work that goes into my food, and I'm more grateful for it. When you know where your food comes from, and the person that worked long hard days to produce it, then it adds another level to the experience of eating. You become more connected to it, to the food and to the earth that it came from.

In a CSA, people purchase a "share" for the season, and pick up their box of veggies at the farm or another location every week. The best thing about joining a CSA program, at least how I see it lately, is that it really forces you to eat your vegetables, which we all know is important.

That's simply because the box of veggies keeps coming every week. I find myself eating the last of the cucumbers or kale on a Tuesday night, sometimes forcing myself to eat it, because I know tomorrow is another pick-up day. I feel healthier because I've committed to eating more vegetables through the CSA, but I also feel better about myself because I've committed to the whole thing and tried to stick to it without letting anything go to waste.

When I was a kid, I always tried hiding carrots under the rim of my plate so my mother wouldn't see them or spreading them out around the plate so there wasn't a big, obvious pile of carrots sitting there. "Eat all your vegetables" was the rule in the house where I grew up. "Why did Fudd even bother growing these things?" I thought. And why would Bugs Bunny even want to steal them?

My attitude toward carrots, and vegetables in general, has changed greatly since I was a kid. In a recent book, I wrote a story about bringing a group of school kids out to the farm and testing their knowledge of food and farming. Before they arrived, I tied some carrots to the branches of an old maple tree to disguise it as a "carrot tree." The kids, of course, hadn't had the benefit of watching Bugs Bunny pull carrots out of the ground like I did, and most of them didn't question the carrot tree for a second. Later in the farm tour, they were a bit surprised, and I watched many little noses crinkle up, as I pulled some carrots out of the dirt. I think they were concerned that food came out of the dirt like that, and probably preferred carrots from trees because they were cleaner.

We try to teach kids about the importance of eating your vegetables for a good reason. Vegetables are packed with the vitamins and minerals that our bodies need to fight off cancer and other diseases. So the next time you say, "What's up Doc?," you might get a better answer if you eat your vegetables.

Robert Turner is a farmer and author of *Lewis Mumford* and *The Food Fighters: A Food Revolution in America*. Learn more at EatYourView.com.

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