

Published July 21st, 2010

## Homegrown Farmer Returns to Lafayette

By Cathy Tyson



Darryl Wong at the Lafayette Farmers Market with lettuce Photo Cathy Tyson

farming.

He met farm partners Amy Courtney, who founded the farm, and Kristen Yogg when they were students at UC Santa Cruz's Apprenticeship Program at the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems. The trio purposefully keeps the organization of the farm a collective - equally sharing work and profits.

He says it's difficult to sum up why he loves this job, "I think there's often a disregard for physical labor in our community and society at large and working with your hands tends to hold some negative social connotations, and yet, for me, and I'm sure many others, it seems to be the way our bodies are genetically programmed."

"I also have a very analytical mind that needs stimulation and a constant flow of interesting material," continued Wong. "The Farm is such a diverse system: each of our 30 crops having different growing cultures, needing to understand the how, why and when of tractor cultivation, dealing with the management of volunteers and ourselves, as well as taking on all of the business necessities of running our own small business."

In addition to their regular stall at the Lafayette Farmers Market, Freewheelin' Farm has a growing Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) business - allowing members to buy into the farm and get a regular delivery of a variety of organic fruits and vegetables. The farm also provides produce to a number of restaurants in the Santa Cruz area plus San Francisco and Oakland.

"Darryl is incredibly focused and clear thinking," said farm colleague Courtney. "He is an amazing problem solver and is always trying to find new and better ways to do things. He is driven and responsible, a great teacher to our youth volunteers, our interns and to myself."

Now in its third season, Freewheelin' Farm has racked up an impressive sales history - tripling the size of its business from the first to the second season, up 50% this year. Impressive when you consider only three farmer-owners and one and a half workers are managing their eight acres. "We work on more efficient labor - allowing so few people to do so much work," he adds, "we're a two tractor family."

Even more remarkable is that their success was fueled in a sustainable fashion -conserving water, decreasing petroleum consumption and delivering their bounty via bicycle where possible.

On a recent evening, Wong was serving customers, answering questions and chatting with his mom who came to spend time with him - a rare opportunity for this hard-working businessman. It's clear that, as he explains it, he's found work that has meaning. "It's nice to be able to see the literal fruits of my labor and know immediately how that affects my community, and our environment in a positive way," said Wong.

The Lafayette Farmers Market runs through September 30, every Thursday evening from 4:00 to approximately 8:00 p.m. at Plaza Park. For more information and great photos, go to

The young man selling produce at the Lafayette Farmers' Market should look familiar to members of Acalanes class of 2000. Darryl Wong is the proud co-farmer-owner of Freewheelin' Farm. He and two other farmer-owners supply Bay Area residents and restaurants with organically grown produce raised on eight acres just north of Santa Cruz.

It was a circuitous route from the halls of Acalanes to the fields of Santa Cruz and Plaza Park. After graduation Wong attended Amherst, but the events of 9/11 got him thinking it was time for a change.

Wong, a vegetarian since age eleven, then spent a year with Global Ecology, a program learning about cultures and food in England, India, the Philippines, New Zealand and Mexico. "Despite cultural and language barriers, it seemed like there was always the common denominator of food to fall back on. It was amazing to see what a large role food and agriculture played in so many peoples' lives around the world in contrast to how little of a role it seemed to play in mine at home," said Wong.

Once back home he had internships in the kitchens of restaurants Oliveto and Lalime's adding to his diverse skill set for his future in

Reach the reporter at: [cathy@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:cathy@lamorindaweekly.com)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA