



The Cedar Post

Cedar Down Farm's Weekly Newsletter

Summer CSA, Week 13, September 3, 2012

This week's share:

Spinach, lettuce mix, tomatoes, beets, kale, leeks, cucumber, beans, peppers, hot peppers, garlic, herbs

Next week's guess:

Spinach, lettuce mix, edamame, beans, potatoes, onions, peppers, hot peppers, fennel, herbs

On the farm...

This morning's field walk was one of those where you walk through the garden and are almost overwhelmed by the abundance of what you see, by the amount of food that seems to be bursting from the ground. We took a look under the row cover this morning at the fall brassica crops and were delighted to see huge, succulent broccoli and cauliflower plants, colourful fall radishes getting big and tasty, enormous kale ready to harvest. Even the cabbage and rutabaga plants that a few weeks ago were being ravaged by flea beetles have undergone a startling recovery and now sport some beautiful, big leaves.

One thing that's really great to see this time of year is our seed crops maturing. We checked on our onion seed and kidney bean seed crops this morning and they are looking just about ready to harvest. And this morning, Katie treshed and winnowed our shell pea seed (see photo). Seed saving is a greatly satisfying and very important part of the farm and one which we are trying every year to do more of.

I'm sure many of you know a bit about seed; seeds form the basis of, well, everything! And certainly of everything that we eat. Each year, we spend 6 to 8 thousand dollars on seed for the farm, everything from garlic, potato and vegetable seed to grass seed, clover seed and now grain seed. We source all this seed from reliable, certified organic seed companies.

But much of the vegetable seed that we buy comes from the US or much farther. And, as many of you know, seed is swiftly becoming less a part of the public domain and more a patented, corporate-owned commodity. In fact, over the last 20 years or so, 5 or 6 major chemical and pharmaceutical companies have bought or merged with a huge number of independent seed companies that used to be the main suppliers of seed in the US and Canada. Monsanto, DuPont, Syngenta, Bayer, Dow, and BASF collectively own or partially-own hundreds of formerly-independent seed companies and Monsanto, of course, dominates them all.

At this point, it is still possible to buy vegetable seed from small, independent seed companies (and we seek out seed from companies that have signed a "Safe Seed Pledge," certifying that don't knowingly sell genetically-modified seed), but it is still very possible to unknowingly buy seed that is owned by Monsanto if you aren't careful.

This is just part of the reason why we are trying to increase the amount of seed that we grow for ourselves. Seed was once the sole domain of the farmer and grower and as such was nurtured and bred for the characteristics that make it beneficial to the community. Moreover, farmers were the growers and suppliers of their own seed and did not need to depend on outside sources for their yearly seed supply. By growing even some of our own seed here at the farm (and sharing it with other local growers), we hope to regenerate some of the seed saving knowledge that is quickly being lost and supply ourselves and our peers with some home-grown seed!



Fettuccine with Leeks and White Beans

2 tablespoons olive oil
1 pound leeks (about 1 bunch), sliced and cleaned
Coarse salt and ground pepper
2 cans (15 1/2 ounces each) cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
3 1/2 cups chicken or vegetable broth
1/2 teaspoon sage
12 ounces fettuccine
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1/2 cup heavy cream
1/2 cup finely grated Parmesan cheese, plus more for serving
1/4 cup coarsely chopped fresh parsley, (optional)

In a large skillet, heat 1 tablespoon oil over medium-low heat. Add leeks, 3/4 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Cook, stirring often, until softened, about 10 minutes.

Add beans, broth, and sage to pan; with a potato masher, mash about one third of beans. Bring to a boil; reduce to a simmer. Cook until sauce has thickened but is still soupy, about 10 minutes. Cool.

Meanwhile, in a large pot of boiling salted water, cook pasta 2 minutes less than package instructions suggest. Drain; rinse under cold water until cool. Transfer to a bowl, and toss with remaining tablespoon oil to coat.

In a large saucepan over medium heat, bring sauce and lemon juice to a simmer. Stir in cream and Parmesan. Add pasta; cook, stirring, until heated through, 2 minutes. Serve sprinkled with parsley and more cheese, if desired.



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Leeks!

Ahh leeks. Leeks to me are one of the most elegant vegetables in the garden; beautiful and understated, they serve as a subtle and lovely indication that fall is coming. I'm sure most of you have had the pleasure of eating leeks before - they are the sweet, subtle cousins of onions and bring rich flavour and a delightful, oniony sweetness to any dish. Leeks can be used in any recipe where you would use onions but they also shine as the star of many dishes. Braise them, roast them, frizzle them, add them to soup. They can be steamed or braised, topped with a vinaigrette or drenched in cream and cheese.



Many recipes call for the green tops of the leeks to be removed, but I like to make the most of my leeks and use all of the white and much of the green part in many dishes. The trick with leeks is to clean them thoroughly. Remove the root end and trim greens down to about 2 inches above white part. Slice leeks lengthwise in half and run cool water between the layers to remove dirt stuck in between. Store leeks wrapped in your refrigerator - they will last for several weeks.

Braised Leeks with Parmesan

1 bunch leeks, (3 or 4)
2 tbsp butter
1/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
chicken or vegetable stock or water

Trim leeks, leaving white and light green parts only; remove tough outer leaves. Holding leeks by root ends, swish in cold water to remove any hidden dirt. Cut in half lengthwise; cut in half crosswise. Place in ovenproof skillet just large enough to hold leeks. Cover with 2/3 cup (150 mL) stock or water; dot with butter. Cover and simmer over medium heat until just tender, about 10 minutes.

Uncover; bring to boil. Boil until liquid is reduced to 2 tbsp (25 mL), about 5 minutes. (Make-ahead: Let cool to room temperature. Cover and refrigerate for up to 4 hours. Reheat.) Spoon liquid over leeks; sprinkle with cheese. Broil until golden, 3 to 5 minutes. Serve with diced tomatoes tossed with garlic, olive oil and salt.

Herbs - Sage and Thyme

Sage and thyme are wonderful, intensely aromatic herbs that pair well with many autumn recipes. They add aroma and earthy, herby flavour to simple vegetable dishes and are indispensable for flavouring meat, stocks and soups. Add a sprig of thyme or sage to a roasting chicken, throw it in with a bubbling soup or chop and toss in to vegetable dishes such as the braised leeks on the left.

Store these herbs wrapped in a bit of paper towel in your fridge or hang them in your kitchen and use them as they turn from fresh to dried. These herbs dry extremely well - you can hang a bunch in your kitchen and then store in a jar when dry and use all winter.



Rustic Caramelized Leeks and Tomato Tartlets

Serves 2

Two sheets filo pastry, room temperature
1 large or 2 smaller leeks
2 tsp butter
1/2 tsp of oil
1 large or 2 small tomatoes
4 tbs balsamic vinegar
1 tsp brown sugar
1/4 cup basil, chopped or 1 tsp chopped fresh thyme
1 clove of garlic
1 tsp good olive oil
salt and pepper, to taste

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees.

Heat butter and 1/2 tsp of oil in a skillet over medium heat.

Wash and slice leeks into half-moons, and add to pan, stirring to cook slowly (don't let it get brown and crispy - you want golden and soft).

Meanwhile heat the balsamic vinegar and brown sugar in a saucepan stirring to dissolve the sugar. Keep an eye on the balsamic while the onion cooks, and occasionally stir the pot until it's reduced to about 1 tbs and is thick, dark and syrupy (roughly 5 mins). Remove from the heat.

Once the leeks are caramelized, translucent, soft and smelling great, turn the heat down to low but leave them in the pan while you cut the tomatoes into 8ths. Gently place in a bowl - you don't want all the seeds falling out - and pour over the balsamic reduction. Grate the clove of garlic over the tomatoes, then add the basil, olive oil, salt and pepper and stir very gently to combine. Set aside while you prepare the pastry.

Take the sheet of filo pastry, brush with melted butter fold in half. Repeat the process so you have a small, tartlet sized rectangle. Place in the tartlet pan, and scrunch and fold the edges gently to fit - be careful, because the pastry tears easily. Repeat with the other sheet of pastry.

Place the leeks in the pastry shells, then top with the tomato segments, seeds facing up. Spoon over the deliciousness from the bottom of the tomato bowl, then add an extra shake of salt and pepper.

Bake for 15-20mins (mine took 17). If the pastry is browning too fast, tent it with tin foil. Serve immediately.

Farm Tour and Squash Harvest!

Come see the farm as the fall begins and help us gather our winter squash from the field!

Saturday, September 14

1-5pm

Farm tour at 1:30, squash harvest from 3pm onwards.

Yummy, squashy treats to follow!