



# The Cedar Post

Cedar Down Farm's Weekly Newsletter

Summer CSA, Week 5, July 9, 2012

## This week's share:

Lettuce, kohlrabi, chard, spring onions, fresh garlic, zucchini, herbs, arugula

## Next week's guess:

Lettuce, savoy cabbage, carrots, fava beans, zucchini, fennel, greens, herbs

## On the farm...

In trying to think of what to talk about in this week's newsletter, it was hard to not just keep writing about rain! Rain! Or, the lackthereof. No, we haven't had rain yet but we're hoping for it. Some of the crops that we had hoped would be in the this week's share in abundance - fava beans for example - aren't going to be around as much due to this spring's extremely hot and dry weather. And others are growing slowly and without vigor (carrots, greens) without the regular water that makes them happy.

But thinking about rain brought me to thinking about soil because the soil's ability to hold on to moisture is a really important characteristic in a time like this. Here at Cedar Down Farm, we have quite a light soil with more sand than clay and a sub-soil that is largely made of gravel meaning it is very well draining and generally holds onto moisture less well than a clay soil with more of a clay bottom. For the most part, a sandier soil is much better for us as vegetable growers because we are planting, cultivating and generally working on the soil constantly and a sandier soil normally suffers less from this intensive agriculture than a clay soil does. A sandy soil allows us to get on the land quicker after a rain and is less prone to compaction than a more clay soil.

But, of course, in a dry summer, a sandy soil means less moisture retention. We try as much as possible to increase our soil's capacity to hold water (and nutrients) primarily by adding as much organic matter as possible. We do this by planting and plowing in cover crops high in bio-mass such as rye, by adding compost to the soil and by cover cropping to avoid erosion as much as possible. We have seen a definite improvement in tilth (structure and nutrient-holding capacity) in areas of the garden that have had plow-down crops.

One of the ways that we protect the soil in the garden is by using a buckwheat cover crop between the rows of crops in the squash family. These crops need about 10 feet of space between the rows - a lot of soil to leave bare. So we plant buckwheat - a crop that forms a dense thick canopy - to smother weeds and keep the soil covered. When the plants are big enough we mow it down, leaving buckwheat stalks that hold the soil in place and



allowing the plants to vine out into a weed-free area. Take a look below!



Buckwheat growing between the squash...

Then after it's been mowed.

## Zucchini and Ricotta Fritters with Lemon

serves 4-6

- 1/2 cup ricotta cheese
- 2 large eggs, lightly beaten
- 2 Tablespoons minced fresh parsley leaves
- 2 medium garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon grated lemon zest
- 2 medium zucchini, scrubbed and ends trimmed
- salt and ground black pepper
- 1 3/4 cups plain bread crumbs
- vegetable oil for pan-frying
- lemon wedges

Combine the ricotta, eggs, parsley, garlic, and lemon zest in a large bowl.

Grate zucchini - wrap with a few paper towels or a kitchen towel and squeeze tightly to remove as much moisture as possible. Add the zucchini to the ricotta mixture, and season with salt and pepper. Stir well to combine, and add enough bread crumbs so that the mixture is no longer sticky - about 1 cup or so.

Spread the remaining bread crumbs on a plate.

Heat about 1/4 inch of oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat.

Take about 1/3 cup of the zucchini mixture and form into a 3-inch patty. Dredge both sides with the bread crumbs. Place the patty on a baking sheet or platter and repeat with the remaining zucchini mixture. Preheat the oven to 200 degrees.

When your oil is hot, add as many fritters as will fit comfortably in the pan. Cook about 4 minutes per side, until the bottoms are a rich golden brown, turning once.

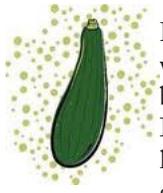


Keep warm in the oven while you fry the remaining ones. Serve with lemon wedges.

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## Fresh Garlic and First Zucchini!



Hmm, it's a yummy and much-awaited time of year when the first zucchini is ready to harvest and we begin pulling fresh heads of garlic from the ground. I'm sure all of you are familiar with zucchini and have your favourite recipes that you use but I could go on and on about the versatility of this delicious fruit. Once zucchini is around, we put it in just about everything - fried in pastas, with eggs or over rice, roasted or grilled with a bit of olive oil, salt and herbs, grilled and put on pizza or in a sandwich or baked with a whole lot of cheese! Zucchini is truly a wonderful thing and you can even eat it raw. Store zucchini in your fridge in a plastic container or in your crisper - it will store well as long as it is kept from drying out.

To go with that delicious zucchini is our first bulbs of garlic. Fresh garlic is never seen in the grocery store so you may have never used it. It is simply the garlic bulbs pulled fresh before curing so their wrappers have not dried down to the papery cover that you are used to. It can be used exactly like the cured garlic you know - you will just find that the cloves are held in a juicy skin rather than a dry one. Garlic, fresh or cured, can be left to sit on your counter and does not need refrigeration. And, as I'm sure you know, garlic is good in everything!



### Fava Bean Puree

Adapted from Alice Waters' In the Green Kitchen

1/2 lb fava beans in their pods  
2 tbs olive oil  
2 tbs water  
salt

1 garlic clove

1 tsp fresh thyme, minced

1. Remove the beans from their outer pods.
2. Parboil the beans for 30 seconds to loosen the shell, and then use your thumbnail to tear the skin at one end, then squeeze to pop out the bean.
3. Heat olive oil in saucepan and add beans, water, and a pinch of salt. Cook gently for 15 minutes or so, until beans are very soft. Add the garlic and thyme and cook a couple minutes longer.
4. Mash the beans with a mortar and pestle. Taste and add more salt or olive oil as needed. Makes only about 1/3 cup or so; recipe doubles easily.

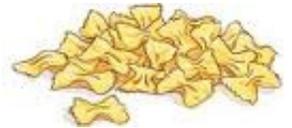
Spread on toasted crusty bread or toss with pasta or as a topping for rice or risotto.

## Bow Tie Pasta with Zucchini and Garlic

From "Pasta Verde" by Judith Barrett, Serves 4

2 lbs zucchini, cut in half lengthwise and sliced crosswise into 1/2 slices  
1 tbsp salt plus extra for sprinkling on zucchini  
1/4 cup olive oil  
1 large clove garlic, pressed or finely minced  
1/2 lb dry bow tie pasta (farfalle)  
2 tbsp chopped fresh basil or parsley  
1/4 cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Place zucchini in a colander; sprinkle lightly with salt and allow to stand and drain at least 30 minutes. Put the zucchini in a medium size roasting pan. Add the oil and garlic, toss well to coat. Place in the oven on the top rack; roast until the zucchini is golden brown, 25-30 minutes. While the zucchini roasts, bring a large pot of water to boil. Add the tablespoon of salt and the bow ties. Cook, stirring occasionally, until the pasta is tender but firm, about 7 -10 minutes. Drain; transfer to a large, preheated serving bowl. Add the roasted zucchini, basil and cheese. Toss well, serve immediately.



## Fava Beans

Fava beans, also known as broad beans, are common food in many cuisines around the world. Plump, green beans growing in large, downy pods, they are one of the oldest cultivated crops and are used by different cultures in a variety of different ways. In Italy, they are used to make a fresh puree while in China, Columbia and Peru (among others) they are fried and eaten as a crunchy snack. In the Netherlands they are eaten with fresh savory and melted butter and various Middle Eastern cultures cook the dried favas, mash them and serve with olive oil, chopped parsley, onion, garlic, and lemon juice called *ful medames*.

The fresh, green favas you have in your share are simple to use - just pod them, steam or boil until tender and pop each bean out of its translucent skin. Top with a little butter and salt and they are a simple side dish. Add to pastas or try the delicious puree on the left!



### Farm Open House!

Saturday, July 28th 1-5pm

**Come and see where your food is grown!**

Please join us at the farm for a tour, meet other CSA members and check out how we grow the veggies in your CSA shares.

**Farm tours at 1:30pm and 3:30pm**

