



The Cedar Post

Cedar Down Farm's Weekly Newsletter

Summer CSA, Week 4, July 16, 10, 2013

This week's share:

Lettuce, kale, spring onions, cabbage, fresh garlic, zucchini, fennel, basil, parsley, dill and cilantro

Next week's guess:

Lettuce, chard, carrots, fennel, fava beans, kohlrabi, zucchini, spring onions, basil, herbs

On the farm...

Thanks so much to everyone who came out to our farm tour and barbecue this weekend. It was really great being able to show some of you the garden and tell you a bit about how we do things around here. Many of you got to see our wash station and cooler system so you know a bit about how it is that your veggies get from our fields into your hands, but for those who couldn't make it, I'll let you in on it here. First, of all, we could never get all these veggies harvested, washed, packed, cooled and delivered to you if it wasn't for our great team. Besides myself (Leslie) and Jeff, who manage the farm, we have two guys with us this season - Sean Donald and David Adams. Sean, who was here for a couple of months last season as well, is pretty much our right hand man at the farm. Competent, smart and pretty funny too, he's helped us keep things running smoothly this summer and we're lucky to have him. David Adams is our intern this summer, here to learn all there is to know about growing vegetables and running a CSA. He's out with us in the fields everyday growing your food and he's been a great addition to the farm.

So, the four of us go out to the field at 6am three days a week to harvest the veggies for our three delivery days - Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Most of the veggies are harvested the day they are delivered and we start bright and early before the heat has a chance to set in. After we've cut, dug or picked the veggies, we bring them back to our processing area in the shed. There we soak all the green things in the coldest of water, bunch or trim or spray with water whatever needs it and pack everything into clean greens bins to go into the cooler. The thing with vegetables is that the quicker they are removed from the field and the heat is taken out of them, the longer and better they will store in your fridge. So things like lettuce and spinach and chard and kale need to get out of the field before they heat up with the day and then they are quickly dunked into cold water to remove any heat that they might be storing. This is called "hydro-cooling" and it is a very important step towards increasing our veggies storageability.

Other veggies need different treatment. All the fruited crops like zucchini, cucumber, eggplant and tomatoes need to be harvested when they are dry of dew. We avoid spreading disease in these crops by not touching the plants when they are wet and they all store better in your fridges if they are dry when we harvest them. So these veggies don't get harvested until later in the morning or afternoon when they are dry. Then we quickly cut or pick them and put them straight into the cooler to cool down.

We plan the contents of your shares way in advance in the winter and then once the season begins, we check at the beginning of each week to see what is ready to harvest. On the farm, nothing ever goes exactly according to plan so we harvest whatever the garden tells us to. Sometimes crops fail and we never get to harvest them (read: last week's broccoli planting which was damaged by swede midge - a tiny fly that attacks the centre growing point and often causes the plant to rot instead of grow), sometimes crops are ready late or early, but because we plant to many dozens of things throughout the season, there is always lots to fill your shares.

Seared Beets with Walnuts Over Wilted Kale

From "Vegetable Literacy" by Deborah Madison Serves 4

5 small beets
3 tbsp olive oil
1 bunch kale, stems removed and leaves finely chopped
1 clove garlic, finely chopped
Sea salt
Red wine vinegar
Small handful of walnut halves or pieces
Thinly sliced goat feta or Gouda cheese
Crushed aniseeds or dried oregano
A handful of chopped komatsuna

Rinse beets and trim greens to about 1 inch about root (reserve greens for another meal - they are delicious). Steam over simmering water, covered until tender, about 25 minutes. cool beets under running water then slip off skins with your hands and cut into wedges. Heat 1 tbsp of the oil in a wide skillet over medium heat. Add the beets and cook, turning as needed until seared, about 10 to 15 minutes.

While the beets are cooking, rinse kale and drain. Heat 1 tbsp oil in a second skillet over high heat. Add the kale, garlic and a pinch of salt. Turn the greens as they cook, taking care that the garlic doesn't burn. The water clinging to the kale will steam the greens then evaporate. When they are tender, add 1 tbsp vinegar and toss with the kale. Taste for salt. Loosely arrange kale on a small platter and cover with the beets, walnuts and slivers of cheese. Sprinkle with a pinch of crushed aniseeds, and drizzle over the remaining oil and vinegar. Serve with a handful of chopped, fresh komatsuna.



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Basil, Beets and Garlic!

What a combination! You truly know summer is here when you can smell the spicy aroma of basil wafting through your kitchen and you break open the first fresh bulb of garlic. We feel so happy when we first begin to harvest these crops - the first beets are oh so tender and sweet, fresh garlic is tangy and mild and basil is just plain good with everything.

A few notes about these three. Remember that beet greens are extremely nutritious and very tasty. You can use them the way you would chard or spinach - lightly sautéed them, add them to an omelette or toss with pasta and butter. They are super healthy, containing lots of vitamin C, iron and calcium. The delicious red roots attached to them aren't bad either!

Fresh garlic is just the same garlic that you are used to but before it has been cured. That means that the skin around the bulb is still fresh, not dried the way it becomes after being cured for storage. Use it the way you would any garlic, it does not have to be kept in your fridge.



And basil - basil is a wonderful herb that pairs well with just about everything. Add some chopped basil to pastas and salads or with sautéed greens - it is absolutely delicious in a fresh fennel salad. The thing to remember with basil is don't put it in the fridge! We harvest the whole plant for you, with the roots on so that you can place the roots in a cup of water on your counter just like you would flowers. This will allow it to store for you for a very long time. The enemy of basil is humidity - don't put it wrapped in your fridge or it will turn black.



Fabulous Fennel!

Fennel is one of our favourite vegetables here at the farm. We dream about it all winter and spring long and start using it almost daily when it becomes ready in the garden. Fennel is a delicate veggie that has beautiful crunch and a lovely, mild anise flavour. It lends itself well to fresh salads but also to being roasted, braised, sautéed or grilled. We find that the best way to enjoy raw fennel is sliced or shaved very finely. Big chunks tend to be overwhelmingly crunchy but when finely chopped or shaved, the texture is wonderful.



Fennel al forno

- 2 fennel bulbs
- 1 4 ounce ball of fresh mozzarella, or goat cheese or feta
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 2 tbsp olive oil

Trim stalks from fennel bulbs, cut in half lengthwise and cut the halves into wedges about 1 1/2 inches thick. Heat the olive oil in a wide skillet and when hot add fennel. Cook until golden, turning occasionally. When well coloured, add garlic and sauté 1 minute more. Slide the cooked garlic into a well oiled baking dish. Slice the mozzarella and tuck amongst the fennel slices. Bake at 375 degrees until the cheese had melted and the dish is bubbly, about 25 minutes. Grate Parmesan all over, let settle for a few moments and serve

Beet, Blue Cheese and Almond Salad

From "The Farm" by Ian Knauer

Serves 6

- 2 lbs beets
- 1 small garlic clove
- kosher salt
- 3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- 1/2 tsp black pepper
- 8 ounces creamy blue cheese
- 2 ounces almonds
- 1 tbsp chopped fresh parsley

Trim and peel the beets. Cut all but two of the beets into bite-sized pieces and place them in a steamer rack over a pot of boiling water. Cover the pot and steam the beets until they are tender, about 25 to 30 minutes.

Coarsely grate or chop the remaining beets into a bowl. Mash the garlic to a paste with a pinch of salt. Add the oil, lemon juice, garlic, 1 tsp salt and the pepper to the grated beet. When the beets are cooked, toss them with the dressing and let them cool to room temperature.

Crumble the cheese over the beet salad and sprinkle with the almonds and parsley before serving.

Fresh Dill and Fennel Salad

From www.klfoodblog.com

Serves 4

- 2 medium fennel bulbs
- 1/3 green cabbage, grated or thinly sliced
- handful of fresh dill, chopped
- 3 spring onions, sliced
- 2 oranges, peeled and sliced into segments
- 2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tbsp orange juice
- salt and black pepper

Slice the fennel bulbs in half and remove the core. Slice the remaining bulb into very thin strips. (It helps if you have a mandolin to do this.)

Place the fennel in a large bowl with the cabbage, dill, spring onions and oranges. Whisk together the oil, orange juice and a pinch of salt and pepper. Toss with the salad and leave to marinate for 30 minutes before serving.

