



THIS MONTH ▶Field to feast farm visit **3** ▶Soak your seeds Part 2 **5** ▶Cumin **6**

First Open Day a resounding success

Our first Open Day on Sunday March 14 was an all-round success, with more than 50 people visiting the store for the first time. Alfalfa's chair, Jo Rose, who was one of a number of members who volunteered to help show new shoppers around, said, "It was great to see so many local residents who'd peered in the window but never braved

the doorway come inside and discover the joys of the co-op."

Many visitors stayed around the store for quite a while, chatting to volunteers and enjoying the free food samples on offer.

"I'd like to especially thank the many members and staff who volunteered their time to help set up the store, welcome people and show them around.

Your presence made a big difference in helping demystify how to shop co-op style," said Jo. "And a big thank you to those who letterboxed our flyers in the weeks before the Open Day."

A couple of visitors were very excited to see the 'unusual' fruit and vegetables on offer and some even shared their cooking tips (SEE PAGE 4).

— Stevie Bee



what's good in fruit+veg with Renata Field

A CHANGE IS IN THE AIR

It's officially Autumn, my favourite time of year for fresh produce: new season apples, but still with some joys of summer such as eggplants and melons.

NEW ARRIVALS

- ▶APPLES: Galas and Granny Smiths from Cooma, southern NSW
- ▶CHILLIES: Tasty and hot hot hot. Pop in the freezer to keep for the whole year.
- ▶CHOKO: Use in stews or curries. Adds a juicy flavour.
- ▶KUMERA LEAVES: Available every Wednesday, a high protein, high iron alternative to spinach or silverbeet.
- ▶PEARS: Biodynamic Victorian Buerre Bosc and Williams varieties

ON THEIR WAY OUT

- ▶LEMONS: Very difficult to get due to weather-affected crop failures. Only

available from far north Queensland so try NSW limes instead.

- ▶MANGOES
- ▶NECTARINES: White-fleshed
- ▶PERSIMMON: Perfectly ripe when soft and squishy.
- ▶PLUMS: Very juicy, blood plums and amber jewels. Other varieties soon.
- ▶QUINCES: Only for short periods.

WHAT'S GOOD NOW

- ▶BANANAS: Lady Fingers are currently the only NSW bananas we can get.
- ▶BASIL: Make up some pesto to get you through the winter months.
- ▶BEANS: Snake beans and green beans
- ▶CAPSICUM: Some tasty reds available.
- ▶CUCUMBER: Yum!! Try all the different varieties; Suyo Long, English, Lebanese, Gerkins and Apple cucumbers.
- ▶EGGPLANT: Perfect right now. Try the

- white variety or the stripy purple rosita!
- FD—fresh every Wednesday and Friday.
- ▶GRAPES: Seeded Black American, seedless Crimson and green Calmeria
- ▶KALE: Use in place of silverbeet. Try the dark green Tuscan, curly purple or green varieties or flat leaved Chou Moullier.
- ▶OKRA: Try fried or in curries and stews.
- ▶ROCKMELON: So sweet. Perfect now.
- ▶SILVERBEET and RAINBOW CHARD
- ▶SQUASH: Gigantic blue hubbards and pimply squash. Use in place of pumpkin. Fantastic baked and stuffed.
- ▶TOMATILLOS: Key food in South American cuisine, try in relish and salsa. Like a tomato but sweet and spicy.
- ▶TOMATOES: Plentiful. Romas, Round and cherry. Order a box and make some relish or tomato sauce for the winter.
- ▶WATERMELON: Sweet and flavoursome
- ▶ZUCCHINI: Tasty and abundant

NEW, BACK & OUT

GROCERIES WITH MONIKA BAUMANN

WHAT'S new

- ▶ Organic **MACADAMIA MUESLI** from Organic Soul, limited time only. Contains rolled oats, honey, macadamias, almonds, sunflower kernels, linseed, coconut, sesame seeds.
- ▶ Organic **PUFFED GLUTEN-FREE TOASTED MIXED MUESLI**. Contains sultanas, honey, almonds, puffed sorghum, sesame seeds, apples, coconut, puffed millet, puffed rice, pumpkin seeds.

WHAT'S back

- ▶ **CHIA SEEDS**, chemical free from WA are back in stock.
- ▶ **HALVA GEMS**, these tasty gluten-free treats from Inana have returned.

- ▶ **WALNUTS** – new season stock should be here by the time you read this.
- ▶ **ALFALFA MUESLI** – all the required ingredients are available again so it's back.
- ▶ **WASABI** from Coppersolly, made from pure, true wasabi from New Zealand. Contains fresh wasabi, lemon, citric acid, vegetable oil and salt.
- ▶ Organic **RAISINS**

WHAT'S out

- ▶ **GRAWNOLA** is unavailable at our supplier until further notice and has been temporarily replaced by the Organic Soul macadamia muesli.
- ▶ **CHIA CRAWKERS** – similarly unavailable at the supplier, perhaps due

to the current chia seed shortage.

- ▶ **PUFFED AMARANTH** is unavailable at supplier due to quality control problems; next shipment is due at the beginning of May.
- ▶ **SPELT MACARONI PASTA** has been discontinued by the supplier but we'll be replacing it with organic spelt spaghetti, which we expect will arrive mid-April.
- ▶ **GENMAI** and **NATTO MISO** – both really difficult to get at the moment.
- ▶ **CARMEL VALLEY GINGER SURPRISE** and **FRUIT SALAD** treats have been discontinued due to space constraints.

■ FOR REGULAR UPDATES CLICK [HERE](#).

Help Miriam with her PhD

Co-op member and PhD candidate in Human Geography at the University of Newcastle, Miriam Williams, is researching the subject of how care is practised by volunteers and staff of three different community-based organisations in the changing demographic of Newtown-Enmore. As part of her thesis Miriam is seeking Alfalfa House members who would be prepared to be interviewed on their experiences volunteering at Alfalfa: why they volunteer, what they do; and what they think about inner-city neighbourhoods and the role of volunteering. IF INTERESTED, PLEASE CONTACT Miriam Williams (miriam.williams@studentmail.newcastle.edu.au)

Keep it clean!

All shoppers are expected to wash and dry their hands before they shop, unless they're buying *only* pre-packaged goods. So please make use of the sink at the back of the shop and help keep the bugs out of the bins! Thanks.

things to do, places to go

Talk on local food co-ops

WHAT The Cooperative Group at Sydney Uni presents a talk on local food co-ops by Renata Field, Alfalfa's Fruit+Veg Coordinator. All welcome. A light lunch is provided. Please RSVP to greg.patmore@sydney.edu.au by close of business on Friday April 23 for catering.

WHEN Wednesday April 28, 1-2pm

WHERE Room 214/215, Level 2, Faculty of Economics and Business, H69, Sydney University

MORE ABOUT THE COOPERATIVE GROUP

www.econ.usyd.edu.au/research/co-operatives

Fundraiser and film night for Inner West Seed Savers, Addison Road Community Garden

WHAT Film, food, music, dancing, speakers

Film: *Our Seeds: Seeds Blong Yumi*

Speakers: Robyn Frances (Cuba-Australia Permaculture Exchange)

David Arnold (Permaculture Designer) on community resilience and transition

Music: Lemon Myrtle as MC, Latin music with Juan Carlos and Olympia

Seed Savers display by Robyn Willilamson

Food: empanadas, salads and cakes for sale

WHEN Wednesday April 28, 6-11pm (6pm meet, greet, seat and eat; 7pm presentations; 8pm Film followed by dancing and mingling)

WHERE Red Rattler 6 Faversham Street, Marrickville

COST \$10 (at the door only)



The People's Kitchen

WHAT Weekly free or by donation vegan dinner. All welcome to come eat or get involved with making the meal.

WHEN Every Wednesday from 7pm (earlier if you'd like to help with prep)

WHERE 22 Enmore Road (100m from Newtown station)

■ Send your local community food event (what, when, where etc) to info@alfalfahouse.org. Next deadline Wednesday March 24



Hapi Fiefia How things should be!

Two years ago, Hapi Fiefia decided to give up his busy and stressful life in the city for the farm life, albeit on the edge of the city. And in that short time, he's happy to report he now produces a wide variety of chemical-free vegetables on not quite two hectares (five acres) in Catherine Field, in Sydney's South-West, under the name Field to Feast.

It's been a lot of work, though. Due to the practices of the previous owners, the soil was very acidic. To restore the balance, Hapi added lime, organic blood and bone, turkey manure and he rotated crops. "This is my fertiliser," he says, "only natural things!" Nowadays, the soil structure is beginning to re-form and the soil is finally back to an acceptable pH level.

To deal with weeds, Hapi often walks along the beds and removes them with his Tongan hoe. As such, he doesn't use or need any chemicals to remove them. As far as pests go, he applies a garlic,

onion or chili spray to manage them. When they are too many, he usually rotates the crops in the problem beds.

Hapi is very enthusiastic when talking about his farm and his produce. When asked why he chose to go chemical-free, he answers quite effortlessly: "Well, I was already chemical-free when I used to farm in Tonga. This is how things should be!"

While his range includes eggplant, snake beans, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, kale, pele or Tongan spinach, pumpkin and dandelion greens, his specialty is chillies. And he grows an astonishing 34 varieties, with about 200 of each variety.

"I grow the hottest chili in the world!" he boasts. The chillies are sold under the trading name *Damn Hot Chili*. You can find Field to Feast's produce every Wednesday at Alfalfa House, marked as local, uncertified organic from South West Sydney.

A CSA FOR FIELD TO FEAST?

Field to Feast and Alfalfa House are keen to set up an arrangement known as community-supported or community-shared agriculture or CSA, whereby Alfalfa members contribute to the farm and share in the produce. (CSA brings together a community of individuals who pledge support to a farm where the growers and consumers share the risks and benefits of food production. They are popular in North America, Germany, Switzerland, and Japan. Involvement can mean simply helping out on the farm to full financial support.)

OUR FIRST VISIT: APRIL 24

Our first visit to Hapi's farm will be on Saturday April 24. We'll meet at Alfalfa

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▶4



ABOVE One of Hapi's pumpkins, also in full bloom

House at 9am, and carpool for an hour out to Catherine Fields.

When we arrive we'll prepare for our lunch using the Umu (a Polynesian earth oven), which will take about two hours to stew. While lunch is cooking, we'll go out onto the farm for a tour and do some work around the place. Then we'll break for lunch and then it's on to some more work and finally packing a vegetable box for each of us.

We'll be back in Enmore by 5pm. Cost is just \$15 (\$10 concession), including lunch, the veggie box and petrol. Children are most welcome. Please email produce@alfalfahouse.org by Monday April 19 if you'd like to come.

- Frankie R

IN A NUTSHELL

FARM VISIT April 24, from 9am-5pm, Field to Feast farm, Catherine Fields. RSVP (e: produce@alfalfahouse.org) April 19.

Recipes FROM OPEN DAY

OR WHAT TO DO WITH THOSE 'UNUSUAL VEGETABLES'

Spaghetti Squash

- 1** Boil the entire squash, whole, until it starts to feel slightly soft.
- 2** Let it cool, then peel it and chop it into chunks.
- 3** Fry the chunks in a little butter or oil and then add some stock (and a splash of white wine if you like) and simmer until soft.
- 4** Use a fork to break apart the chunks to create a 'spaghetti' look.



Kohlrabi

Treat as a cross between a carrot and an apple.

- Peel outer skin and then slice or dice and add to salads.
- Grated kohlrabi can also be used in coleslaw.
- Use the firmer bottom in stews or stocks as you might with parsnip or celery.
- Be warned, however, because once you taste it raw, you're likely to start nibbling and before you know it, it'll all be gone!

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HOLIDAY TRADING HOURS EASTER

THURSDAY	APRIL 1	11AM-8PM
GOOD FRIDAY	APRIL 2	CLOSED
EASTER SATURDAY	APRIL 3	9AM-6PM
EASTER SUNDAY	APRIL 4	CLOSED
EASTER MONDAY	APRIL 5	CLOSED
EASTER TUESDAY	APRIL 6	11AM-7PM

Some deliveries (bread, dairy) will be affected by public holidays. No prepay orders until after April 9.

ANZAC DAY

SUNDAY	APRIL 25	1-7PM
MONDAY	APRIL 26	CLOSED

For prepays the week beginning Monday April 26 contact Monika (groceries@alfalfahouse.org) as deliveries may be delayed. Trading before 1pm on April 25 is not permitted. Monday is a public holiday.

We've joined the federation

In February, Alfalfa House joined the [Cooperatives Federation of NSW](#). The Federation, which is the peak representative body for co-ops in NSW, provides information and help to co-ops and our joining also strengthens co-ops across the state and the cooperative movement in general.

Hyperlinks just a click away

Hyperlinks have come to the eNews. When you see some text or a website address or 'click here' in dark green you can move your mouse over the word or words and the small hand symbol will appear, which indicates that if you click on that word or words, the webpage to which it is linked will appear in your web browser and you can view the page. It saves copying the webpage address from the eNews and then pasting it into the address bar in your web browser. For example, there's a hyperlink ([Cooperative Federation of NSW](#)) in the story above. Click on any of the words in green and you can visit the federation's homepage.

Free food each day

Each morning we're giving away food that can be eaten or processed that day. So come in at 11am (9am on Saturdays) and check out the free food down by the cost price section in the shop. It is clearly labelled.

SOAKING SUNNIES AND SESAMES

The last two issues we've focused on nuts and some of the seeds and why it's important to soak them. This issue, it's sunflower and sesame seeds. Although most of us either eat them as is or roasted or ground (as in pastes such as tahini) and in sauces, these two seeds could also benefit from soaking to improve digestion.

To recap, nuts and seeds have enzyme inhibitors that can put a strain on our digestive systems. You'll know it when you feel stomach pain, and/or bloated and have gas! When we soak our nuts, and seeds, we release these enzyme inhibitors and make digestion easier by reducing phytic acid, which inhibits vitamin and mineral absorption.

STORAGE

Buy seeds in small quantities, because if kept too long they can turn rancid. Store them in a cool, dry place in airtight containers away from the light. In summer, it's best to refrigerate them.

SESAME SEEDS

Sesame seeds range in colour from creamy white to charcoal black. In general, the paler varieties are favoured in the West and Middle East, while the black are prized in the Far East. For example, the tahini in homous and babaganouj is white hulled.

Unhulled, they contain good amounts of vitamin B1 (thiamin), vitamin E, calcium, magnesium, phosphorous, manganese, copper and zinc and are particularly rich in iron, with as little as 25g providing nearly half the daily requirement of iron. (Unhulled seeds contain 90mg of calcium per tablespoon; hulled seeds just 10mg.) Sesame seeds are also a good source of dietary fibre and of monosaturated fats. They contain antioxidants called lignans, one which, sesamin, is unique to it. They also contain phytosterols, which block cholesterol production. These nutrients are better absorbed if the seeds are soaked or sprouted. (If sprouting, the seeds must



be unhulled, and can be sprouted, much as you would alfalfa seeds.)

While it is preferable to eat seeds soaked and raw (often called activated nuts or seeds), finding time in our busy lives to remember to soak can be a problem. At minimum, sesame seeds should be ground into a meal or eaten in the form of tahini in preference to eating them whole.

► **SOAK TIME:** At least 8 hours for hulled (white) and black; 4–6 hours for the unhulled (brown).

SOAKING

1 Place seeds in a glass jar of either spring or filtered water, double the amount of seed you're using, and cover with something breathable, such as cheesecloth affixed with a rubber band around the mouth of the jar.

2 Drain and rinse seeds. They can now be blended or dried slowly (on a tray covered with cheesecloth in the sun or in a dehydrator or a very low-heat oven) and then ground into a meal.

3 They can be stored in the fridge for up to three days. If storing, rinse with a little organic apple cider vinegar, which will clean them of any bacteria without being absorbed.

SPROUTING Using unhulled sesame seeds for sprouting, follow **1** and **2** above, then continue to rinse the seed and drain the water. Prop the jar up in the kitchen drainer at a 45° angle. Keep it out of direct sunlight. Rinse seeds in the jar two to three times a day until

ready, always keeping the jar angled for drainage. Sprouts appear after 1–1½ days and will continue to grow but will start to become bitter at two days, and can be very bitter by 2½ days, so eat no later than two days.

● Alfalfa House stocks hulled white, unhulled white and hulled black sesame seeds as well as hulled and unhulled white tahini and black tahini. All are organic, and all the seeds in these tahinis are slightly roasted prior to grinding.

SUNFLOWER SEEDS

Sunflower seeds are a good source of protein, fibre, vitamins B, C and E, and minerals such as iron, zinc, potassium, phosphorous, magnesium, selenium and calcium. Eating sunflower seeds may have anti-inflammatory and cardiovascular benefits, and lower cholesterol, as they are high in phytosterols. Sunflower seeds are also an excellent source of linoleic acid, an essential fatty acid.

As with sesame seeds, they can be soaked, sprouted or ground and are similarly susceptible to vitamin and mineral loss when heated.

► **SOAK TIME:** Between 6–8 hours for hulled sunflower seeds (light grey in colour) See **SOAKING**.

SPROUTING Using unhulled sunflower seeds (black–dark grey, with a cream–coloured stripe) follow **SPROUTING** and allow to sprout into sunflower greens.

MORE INFO

● Alfalfa House stocks hulled and unhulled sunflower seeds.

SOURCES

● www.foodmatters.tv/_webapp_262145/The_Benefits_of_Soaking_Nuts_and_Seeds

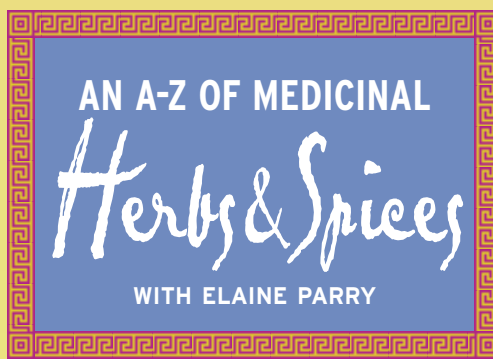
● www.veghealthguide.com/nuts-seeds/
– Compiled by Jann French and Stevie Bee

Cumin (*Cuminum cyminum*) is the dried seed of a small umbelliferous herbaceous annual plant of the Apiaceae (*Umbelliferae*), or parsley, family. It grows to 30–50cm in height and has small white or pink flowers. It's native to an area stretching from the eastern Mediterranean to India, preferring a hot, arid climate, although it can on occasion be found growing wild as far north as southern England.

The seeds closely resemble caraway seeds, being oblong in shape, longitudinally-ridged, and yellow-brown, but are lighter in colour and larger. Many European languages do not adequately distinguish between the two, often referring to cumin as 'Roman caraway'. For example, in Finnish, caraway is called *kumina* and cumin is called *roomankumina*, whilst in Hungarian the word for caraway is *kömény* and cumin is known as *római kömény*. It is unclear if the word *cumin* derives from the Arabic *al-Kamm n* via the Spanish *comino* or from the Latin *cuminum*. To add further to the confusion, the city of Kerman in Persia may have given its name to the spice: most of ancient Persia's cumin was produced in Kerman, a city locally known as Kermun which, it is believed, became corrupted to Kumun.

Cumin has been in use for millennia. It was known to the Egyptians 5000 years ago as attested by the discovery of cumin seeds in the Pyramids. Cumin has also been found at some ancient Syrian archaeological sites, where they have been dated to the second millennium BC. Cumin is also mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments, as well as in ancient Greek and Roman texts. The Romans and Greeks used it medicinally, and apparently, cosmetically to induce a pallid complexion. They also made good use of it in their cuisine.

With the exception of Spain, the spice became unpopular in cuisine in the Middle Ages, although folklore has it that cumin kept chickens and lovers from wandering! It was also believed that a happy life awaited the bride and groom who carried cumin seeds



CUMIN



throughout the wedding ceremony.

Cumin is the one of the world's most popular spices. It possesses a pungent, powerful, sharp, and slightly bitter flavour, but a warm and earthy aroma, and is popular in Indian, Sri Lankan, Pakistani, North African, Middle Eastern, Mediterranean, Mexican, Cuban, Tex-Mex and Western Chinese cuisine. The seeds should be lightly roasted before being used to bring out the flavour. It complements other spices well and is therefore used in mixtures such as curry powder. In fact, it is an essential ingredient in many curries, chilli con carne, soups and stews where a strong spicy flavour is called for. It complements lamb and chicken dishes particularly well, but also serves as a flavouring ingredient for couscous and rice in the Middle East. In Mediterranean cuisine, Portuguese sausages and many Spanish dishes use cumin. Although not traditionally used in North European cooking, the Dutch use it in their Leyden

cheese and, in Germany, it can be found in pickled cabbage, Sauerkraut and chutneys. Cumin, along with caraway seeds, also flavours the famous German liqueur, Kummel.

Cumin's medicinal qualities are also long-established. Although it is not used in Western herbal medicine, it is still widely used as a traditional herbal remedy in Ayurvedic medicine. It is reputed to remedy digestive disorders due to its stomachic, carminative (relieves smooth muscle spasm) and astringent properties. Its bitter flavour stimulates the appetite by increasing the flow of pancreatic enzymes. It is useful in cases of dyspepsia, and diarrhoea, and may help to relieve flatulence and colic. In Sri Lanka, toasting cumin seeds and then boiling them in water makes a tea used to soothe acute stomach problems. It is also reputed to reduce morning sickness, increase lactation, and relieve inflammation. In the West, it is now used mainly in veterinary medicine, as a carminative.

RECIPE Cumin Spice Powder

- 1/2 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp star anise
- 2 tsp fresh coriander, chopped
- 1/2 tsp fresh chilli (or to taste)
- 1/2 tsp fresh ginger, chopped
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp lemon juice

METHOD

Pound all ingredients, except star anise, together in a mortar and pestle or grind in a coffee grinder. Decant to a bowl and stir in the lemon juice. Rub on fish, chicken and vegetables before cooking or use as a flavouring for soups and stews.

- ALFALFA STOCKS cumin seeds and ground cumin

Elaine Parry is a qualified and accredited naturopath, medical herbalist and clinical nutritionist. She practises at The Buddha Bar Healing Clinic, 434 King Street, Newtown. If you have any questions relating to this column or to herbal medicine or nutrition in general please contact her (elaine.parry@gmail.com).

PLEASE NOTE Opinions expressed in the eNews are not necessarily those of Alfalfa House. Any nutritional advice given in the eNews is of a general nature only and does not take into account individual circumstances or needs. It is not intended as a substitute for professional advice. Alfalfa House encourages readers to seek specific advice from health professionals as needed.

FEED THE eNEWS

The eNews is your voice and a good way to communicate with other members. All regular contributors are co-op members.

Feel free to join them and send your feedback, tips, ideas, suggestions and recipes to info@alfalfahouse.org.

The eNews is edited and designed by Stevie Bee, Information Coordinator, for Alfalfa House Community Food Cooperative Ltd

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