



Farm manager
Joshua Schiff takes
us through spring,
summer, fall and
winter at Chatham
Bars Inn Farm.

Seasons *of* Change

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY JULIA CUMES, JANICE ROGERS,
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Chatham Bars Inn Farm supplies fresh seasonal fruits and vegetables for the kitchens of Chatham Bars Inn and for its farm stand.

In the grand scheme of all things agricultural, the eight-acre Chatham Bars Inn Farm, located on Route 6A in Brewster, is a small property. But for the people who work there, its many customers and the lucky guests at the world-renowned Chatham Bars Inn, this farm is a very big deal.

“Each year, we produce well over 100,000 pounds and 125 varieties of vegetables,” says Joshua Schiff, who has been the farm manager at CBI Farm since its inception, “and this year, we tripled our production.”

Growing up in Chicago, Schiff was not exposed much to gardening, but once at college at Washington State University, he was introduced to large-scale organic farming. After graduating with a business and marketing degree, specializing in green and sustainable businesses, he was drawn first to community farming, then to working full time in agriculture.

“I happened to see the job listing for farm manager at this newly acquired property here on the Cape,” says Schiff, “and when I came out for the interview, I became excited at the opportunity to be part of starting a farm from scratch.”

Eight seasons later, the CBI Farm is flourishing, both as the feeder farm for the kitchens of Chatham Bars Inn, and as a popular farm stand and bucolic location for events and classes. “I love being at the farm,” says CBI executive chef Anthony Cole, who visits two to three times a week for meetings, planting strategy sessions and farm-to-table dinner events. Cole says that the experience gives him a deeper connection to the food. “It’s incredible as a chef to be able to watch produce grow from sprout to full-grown vegetable, then prepare and serve it.”

Schiff is equally passionate about the farm and its potential. “There is lots of labor-intensive work required here,” says Schiff, “but the farm is continuing to grow and expand, and that is really exciting.”

To get a sense of what the CBI produces for the inn and the community, we sat down with Schiff to explore each season on the farm and the many ways Cape residents and visitors can enjoy its incredible bounty throughout the year.

MICHAEL & SUZ KARCHMER



PHOTOS: MICHAEL & SUZ KARCHMER; BOTTOM: JULIA CUMES

Spring

The busiest time of the year! The team has already begun, in the late winter, planting in the greenhouses, and now all of the growing areas of the farm are being prepared. “We do soil testing, spread amendments and perform any needed corrective actions to be ready for the big growing season,” says Schiff. “We are also finishing any repairs and infrastructure projects and setting up the irrigation systems.”

Greenhouse-grown tomatoes and cucumbers are the first crops to be ready, with early spring lettuce, arugula, kale and radishes quickly following.



CBI Farm grows a wide variety of vegetables and flowers, but it’s really known for its tomatoes. “We grow over 20 varieties throughout the season,” says Joshua Schiff, the farm manager.



The plots at CBI Farm yield vegetables, colorful flowers and lush berries in summer.

Summer

Is all about tomatoes. “We grow vegetables from A to Z, but we are really known for our tomatoes, and have over 20 varieties throughout the season,” says Schiff. “We also plant about 400 heads of lettuce every 10 days in the summer, and have crews harvesting our crops every day during these months.” Summer also means a lot of active crop maintenance—pruning and weeding as well as the daily deliveries to the inn.

Some of the many fresh summer vegetables on the menu at CBI and available at the farm stand include eggplant, sweet and hot peppers, carrots and zucchini. “We also have our flower program, and the cut flower garden really begins to produce in the summer into the fall,” says Schiff.



PHOTOS: LISA CONNORS, TOP: MICHAEL & SUZ KARCHMER

Strawberry Shortcake

Servings: 6 to 9

Prep time: 20 min.

Cook time: 12 min.

Total time: 32 min.

Ingredients

- 1 quart (4 cups) strawberries, sliced
- ¼ cup sugar (for strawberries)
- 2⅓ cups Original Bisquick mix
- ½ cup milk
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1 pint heavy whipping cream
- ¼ cup superfine or confectioners’ sugar

Directions

Heat oven to 425 degrees. Set oven rack in the middle position. Line a 9 × 13-inch baking sheet with parchment paper.

In medium bowl, stir Bisquick, milk, 3 tablespoons sugar and the melted butter until soft dough forms.

On baking sheet, drop dough by 6 spoonfuls for large shortcakes or 9 spoonfuls for smaller shortcakes. Bake 10 to 12 minutes or until golden brown.

In large bowl, mix sliced strawberries and ¼ cup sugar; set aside.

Meanwhile, in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the whisk attachment (or beaters), whip the heavy cream until soft peaks form, adding sugar gradually. Be careful not to overbeat.

Using a serrated knife, split warm shortcakes in half horizontally and transfer the bottoms to dessert plates. Spoon berries evenly over the bottoms. Top with whipped cream and cover with a biscuit top. Spoon a little more cream and berries over each shortcake. Serve immediately.

Note: Shortcakes can be baked ahead and warmed in a 350-degree oven before filling.

The whipped cream can be made a few hours ahead and stored in the refrigerator in a covered container.



JULIA CUMES



Fall

“We have very long productive falls on the Cape,” says Schiff. CBI Farm will harvest vegetables such as cabbage, beets, radishes, winter squash, turnips and herbs until mid-November, and put bulk harvested products into winter storage. “We still have microgreens and tomatoes in greenhouses, and spinach and kale can be picked into December from the greenhouses as well,” says Schiff. “And some of the highlights of the fall are our late-season dahlias from the flower garden.”

The farm stand remains open until the week leading up to Thanksgiving and then closes for the season until April.

CBI Farm will harvest vegetables such as cabbage, beets, radishes, winter squash, turnips and herbs until mid-November, as well as some autumn flowers.



PHOTOS: MICHAEL & SUZ KARCHMER; CIRCLE: JANICE ROGERS



The farm stand on Route 6A in Brewster stocks vegetables, fruits and flowers that are in season from spring until the day before Thanksgiving.

Fusilli alla Caprese

Adapted from Giadia De Laurentiis



Simple, yet spectacular, this fusilli alla Caprese requires just a handful of ingredients, comes together quickly, and is delicious hot or cold.

Servings: 4 to 6

Prep time: 10 min.

Cook time: 20 min.

Total time: 30 min.

Ingredients

- 1 pound fusilli (or similar) pasta
- 1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 large cloves garlic, minced
- 3 cups (1 1/2 pints) cherry tomatoes, halved
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper

- 8 ounces fresh mozzarella pearls (alternatively, you can use an 8-ounce ball of fresh mozzarella, diced)

- 1/2 cup fresh basil leaves (for garnish)

Directions

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the pasta and cook according to the package directions, until al dente. Drain the pasta, reserving 1/2 cup of the cooking liquid.

In a large skillet, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the garlic and sauté until fragrant, 1 to 2 minutes; do not let it brown.

Add the tomatoes, salt and pepper and increase heat to medium high. Cook, stirring occasionally, 4 to 5 minutes, until tomatoes start to soften. Using a fork, smash half of the tomatoes into a chunky sauce.

Add the drained fusilli to the pan and toss to combine. Right before serving, toss in the basil and mozzarella pearls. (It's important to do this at the last minute so the cheese doesn't melt too much. Taste and adjust seasoning, adding the reserved pasta water little by little if the pasta seems dry.

Spoon into bowls, garnish with basil leaves and serve.

JULIA CUMES



After Thanksgiving when the farm stand closes, the crew plants protective cover crops and cleans up the fields. The last remaining vegetables, such as Tuscan kale, are harvested.



PHOTOS: MICHAEL & SUZ KARCHMER

Winter

After Thanksgiving, the rhythm of the farm changes. Schiff and his now smaller crew begin to transition the fields into protective cover crops, such as winter rye, winter peas and oats. "We clean up fields as best we can, harvest the rest of the tomatoes, and begin making hot sauce, kohlrabi pickles, and generally getting creative with our stored produce."

Everyone, including Schiff, takes a bit of break over the holidays, and then by January 1, it is time to prepare for the new seasons of growing. "I'm ordering from seed catalogs, putting the growing plan in place for the coming year, and already starting new tomato seeds."

Schiff admits that farming on Cape Cod can be incredibly challenging, but he feels his work with the inn is very collaborative and rewarding. "It is a great relationship, which offers amazing results for the community," he says.

"From the incredible seasonal menus Chef Cole creates, to our immersive farm-to-table dinners, to the high-quality products we sell at the farm stand, we are making the experience of a sustainable, working farm accessible to everyone on Cape Cod." ▲