Notes from the Field by Kana Azhari Carlisle, First Year Apprentice

Last Thursday, we apprentices participated in a class on saving seed and the role this ritual has played for peoples of ‘many worlds’ through time. The presenters shared a short historical account of an enslaved (African) Guyanese woman who ran for her freedom with sprouted rice seeds tucked in her hair. Dozens of similar stories were carried all over the Americas during chattel slavery. It made us think of the importance of seed in preserving culture and ancestral memory.

I wrote this poem in dedication to all peoples who have endured or continue to endure physical, mental, or spiritual bondage, yet strive to liberate themselves, their native ways and seeds. And I write this for her.

Seeds fill my hair and my hands and my mind
comfort and fright live in my heart
I've come so far…
I find shelter
among bushes of bitter berries and thorns i hide
My endurance ensures their safe passage
I lay but rest does not come
chased in the dark and chased by the dark
We be the light
I am the keeper of the seed
Kneeling by the river bank I pray for water
and rest
Keep moving…
I feel the force
Keep moving…
I am the force
I am the force
Holding rice and holding ankle pains I strive on
Mysterious thoughts of the future,
Ancestral lands
and the maroons* carry my weakened bones and
stiffened back
I am the keeper of the seed
Banana and sugar cane replenish my flesh
and torture my soul
I search for signs.
Keep moving…
…I must keep moving
To the hills…
I chant on
pray on
and bless on

Am I carrying seed?
or is seed carrying me?
Am I a keeper?
or is it me that has been kept?
…
My heart races…
…I can hear the dogs now.
Nah, no time to daydreams
No time for dreams at all
Oh Sacred Seed…
I yearn to plant you and yield the rewards of my own sweet labor
oh seed…oh prosperity…
oh life unborn and infinite show me the way
Oh Sacred Seed…
lead me to the mountain top
and in the the hearts and arms of those of the resist-stance
to those of the old way
to those of the Mamas and Babas
oh keeper of the seed… keep moving
me must keep moving
keep moving
and plant my crop.

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Maroons (from the Spanish cimarrón: “wild animal, fugitive, runaway”) were African refugees who escaped slavery in the Americas and formed independent settlements. The term can also apply to their descendants.
**Linguine with Sardines, Fennel & Tomato**

*Serves 6*

- Kosher or sea salt
- 1 tin sardines packed in olive oil (about 4-1/4 oz.)
- Extra virgin olive oil
- 2-3 fat cloves of garlic, peeled, smashed, and roughly chopped
- 1 small or 1/2 large bulb fennel, fronds reserved
- 1/4 teaspoon red chile flakes, or more to taste
- 1 cup peeled tomatoes with their juice, gently crushed
- 2 ounces white (dry) vermouth
- 1 medium lemon, juice and zest
- 1/3 cup toasted bread crumbs
- 3/4 pounds dry linguine

Bring a very large pot of heavily salted water to a boil. Open the sardine tin and drain a tablespoon or so of the oil into a wide skillet (the amount of oil in the tin will vary by brand, so add additional extra virgin olive oil if necessary to make up a tablespoon). Warm the oil over medium-low heat and add the garlic, cooking until fragrant.

Trim the fennel and slice the bulb very thinly (a mandoline works great here). Add to the skillet with a sprinkle of salt, raise the heat to medium, and cook until the fennel is soft and beginning to caramelize. Add the chile flakes and let them sizzle for a minute, just until fragrant, then add the tomatoes with their juice. Cook until the liquid is reduced, then add the vermouth and let that reduce slightly.

Add the sardines to the skillet with the tomato and fennel mixture, breaking up slightly but leaving some chunks. Zest the lemon and combine a tablespoon or so of zest with the toasted breadcrumbs, then set aside. Juice the lemon and add the juice to the pan. Taste and adjust salt if necessary.

Add the linguine to the boiling salted water, cooking it until it is just short of al dente. Using tongs, transfer the linguine to the sauce to finish cooking, adding a little bit of the starchy pasta water and tossing gently to combine. (You’ll want to leave this a little wet, as the breadcrumbs will soak up the sauce and dry the pasta out a bit once you’ve added them.)

Transfer the pasta and sauce to a large warmed serving bowl (or individual pasta bowls), add a drizzle of olive oil, sprinkle on the toasted breadcrumb-lemon zest mixture, and garnish with picked small fennel fronds and the remaining lemon zest.

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**Cilantro-Lime Cabbage Slaw**

*Slaw:
- 1/2 purple or green cabbage, sliced very thinly or shredded
- 2 carrots, shredded
- 1/4 cup finely chopped purple onion
- Salt

*Dressing:
- 1/4 cup fresh lime juice
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 2-1/2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh cilantro
- 1 garlic clove, peeled and minced
- 1 teaspoon chopped jalapeño pepper (optional)

Toss all ingredients in a bowl and season to taste with salt and pepper. Let sit for 30 minutes to allow flavors to develop.

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**Prickly Pear**

From the Farm Center we look upon a gift from Manfred Warmuth, a tall nopal cactus, also known as prickly pear. The variety of cactus which we enjoy at CASFS was bred by Luther Burbank of Sonoma County. There are 114 species of cactus endemic to Mexico, where it has been an important food and medicinal plant for thousands of years.

Both the fruit of the cactus, also known as cactus fig or *tuna*, and the paddle or the *nopal*, are edible. The fruit should be harvested carefully, with protection from the spines. After removing spines with heat or abrasion, and peeling the skin, the fruit can be made into candies, marmalade or eaten raw. When harvesting a nopales, find ones which are bright green and thin, an indication of being young. Spring is the best time to find tender ones. They can be prepared in stews, with eggs or meat, served in tacos, among many other ways.

Nopal is a plant of many offerings. As a food, these plants provide great nutritional value: per 1 cup serving, nopal fruit provides 13% RDA for vitamin C, 11% magnesium, 14% calcium, and 20% manganese, with nutrient content improving as the plant matures. Prickly pear sap has been used as hair conditioner, its dye has been used in craft, its flesh has been shown to purify water and its juice has been used to treat many health issues.