



## FOOD

# Cheap, Sustainable, Delicious: Fava Fries

Crunch into one of these crispy pieces of tempura and you'll never toss those bean shells again.

By [Ian Knauer](#) April 19, 2013 [Comment](#)



An inventive way to stretch one of spring's iconic crops. (Photo: Ian Knauer)

It's not news that California has some pretty good food, but there aren't many things I haven't seen when it comes to things edible. So, I was surprised when I spotted whole, fried baby fava beans on the menu of [Cotogna](#) in San Francisco. Instead of the more common preparation (where the beans are peeled from their pods, blanched, peeled again and then finished) these were simply battered and fried whole—a time-saver for sure. I had to try them. And, I liked them, but the skin of the beans (not the pod, but the thing you peel after they're blanched) was quite bitter. Still, this was an idea worth investigating.

The next day I met [Mark Marino](#), an organic-gardening consultant at [Carmel Valley Ranch](#), where they grow a large percentage of the produce for their restaurant. (They also make their own sea salt and honey—pretty cool.) I told Mark about Cotogna's fava beans and he immediately marched me over to the garden's fava plants and tore off a leaf. The leaves, it turns out, are also edible and have a spinach-y taste.

Now that I'm home and about to plant my own vegetable garden, favas are high on my list. Before I would be wary of a plant that takes up so much space and yields only a labor-intensive bean. But now that I know I can eat everything, I'm excited to grow them.

I also started playing with the Cotogna idea and have to say, I'm thrilled with what I've come up with. I still remove the beans from the pods and cook them like I always have—they make a great addition to pastas, soups, and crostini. But instead of adding the bulky pods to the compost I've started frying them in a tempura batter and serving them with a quick aioli. I served them last night to my dinner guests, one of whom is a retired chef and has seen it all, to their delight and surprise. Now that it's spring and favas are in full swing you can get your hands on a couple pounds and eat them—but save those pods for fava fries

### **Fava Fries**

Serves 4 to 6

1 pound fava beans

1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar

1/2 cup all-purpose flour

1/2 cup rice flour

1 teaspoon sugar

1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

1 1/4 cups club soda

Vegetable oil for frying

Quick Aioli (recipe follows)

Peel the fava beans and save them for another use. Remove the strings from the fava pods like you would with snap peas and place them in a bowl of cold water with the vinegar (this prevents them from discoloring).

Whisk together the flours, cayenne, 3/4 teaspoon each salt and pepper, then whisk in the club soda. Drain the pods and pat them dry.

Heat about 3 inches of oil in a heavy pot over medium-high heat until it registers 400°F. Dip each pod in the batter, coating the inside and outside, then fry them, in batches, until they are golden brown and crisp. Transfer to paper towels and serve with the quick aioli.

To make quick aioli (at home I call this souped-up mayo), stir together 1/2 cup mayonnaise with a few teaspoons of finely chopped shallot, a teaspoon of lemon zest and a pinch of salt and pepper. Top the sauce with some finely chopped chives.