



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

July 5-6, 2013

Fennel and Beets

by: Andrea Yoder

I must admit, I had limited exposure to both of these vegetables prior to my culinary school and farm days. My mother grew beets in her garden, but we basically ate them one way—steamed. My grandma made pickled beets and eggs...a typical Pennsylvania Dutch way to eat beets, but honestly the eggs looked a bit frightening to me. Neither preparation intrigued me and if you asked me what fennel was, I would've given you a blank look. So maybe it is my sheltered childhood that's to blame for the giddiness I get every summer when the first beets and fennel are ready to eat. These two vegetables have become two of my favorites, and I have Richard to thank for introducing me to the fact that these two vegetables actually go together...not only in seasonal timing, but also in culinary preparation. Actually, a longtime CSA member tipped Richard off to the fact that beets and fennel made a great pairing and Richard challenged me to prove this fact to be true.

Beets and fennel mark the transition in our growing season between spring greens and summer vegetables. The spring season starts off heavy with greens such as spinach and sorrel as well as lightweight, quick growing vegetables such as radishes. As we transition into the early part of summer when the nights are still cool and the daytime temperatures are still modest, we start to see a bit more variety first with kohlrabi, then peas, and then finally the fennel and beets are ready! These are all vegetables that can either be started early as a transplant or have seeds that can germinate well even in the cold, spring soil. Shortly after this point, the heat of summer sets in and our tables are flooded with all kinds of heat-loving vegetables such as tomatoes, peppers, eggplant and sweet corn. Beets and fennel mark that sweet spot between the seasons and really have a lot to offer.

Beets are sometimes referred to as "beetroot." The root part of the plant grows underground and the greens attached to the beet are what you see above the ground. While many people are familiar with the traditional red beet, there are actually two other colors of beets we grow—Golden Beets and Chioggia Beets (also known as Candy-Striped Beets.) If you have a family member who has a tendency to stick up his nose at the mention of beets, then gently introduce them to golden or Chioggia beets, both

This Week's Box

ZUCCHINI: Zucchini chocolate cake is a delicious treat. Top with homemade ganache frosting and serve with some strawberry ice cream!

Cucumbers: You may receive a traditional green slicing cucumber or a Golden Indian cucumber. This is an interesting cucumber that changes color as it matures, starting as a pale yellow, then golden, then russeted. You can use it the same as any cucumber.

FENNEL: In the mood for something warm and comforting on a rainy day? Roasted Fennel Soup with garlic scapes, ground ginger and scallions is an easy, rich soup.

GOLD BEETS: Simply roast these beautiful beets and top over mixed salad greens, zucchini, scallion, snap peas, blue cheese and mustard vinaigrette.

BROCCOLI: Looking for a quick dish to bring to a summer pot luck? Jazz up your pasta salad with some crunchy fresh broccoli.

SCALLIONS: Use these beautiful scallions the next time you make omelets for an added delightful flavor.

SALAD MIX: Salad Mix is great with strawberries, goat cheese, tangerine slices, walnuts, snap peas, and strawberry balsamic vinaigrette.

SUGAR SNAP PEAS AND SNOW PEAS: Simply sauté lightly in lemon butter with a little white wine. Reduce to sauce consistency, pair with pan seared scallops or tilapia.

SAUTÉ MIX: Eat your greens! Any of these mixes can be eaten raw or lightly wilted.

MINI RED ROMAINE LETTUCE: Cut in half, lightly brush with oil and grill just enough to get marks on the cut side. Drizzle with a light vinaigrette and enjoy!

of which are a bit more mild in flavor and very sweet. Beets and swiss chard are actually in the same family and you'll notice the beet greens have a striking resemblance to chard leaves. When you get a bunch of beets, you are actually getting two vegetables in one! Don't let the greens wilt and end up in your compost pile. They are rich in nutrients and flavor. You can cook the greens as you would swiss chard or other cooking greens. They can also be eaten raw if you marinate them in a vinaigrette for about 30 minutes. The actual beet may be eaten raw or cooked, although most often they are cooked. Raw beets can be sliced thin or shredded and enjoyed on a salad. If you're going to cook beets, you may choose to roast or boil them. Roasting takes a little longer, but the flavor of a roasted beet is very sweet and delicious. It is best to cook beets whole and unpeeled. Leave about ½ -1 inch of the stem on the top and don't trim the root. This will prevent valuable nutrients from leaching out of the beet during cooking. Whether you are boiling or roasting, you want to cook the beets until they are tender. You can test this by piercing one with a skewer or a fork. If the beet slides off the skewer easily, they are done. Once the beets are cooked, cool and then rub off the skin. If the beets have been cooked properly, the skin should rub off easily.

Fennel is characterized by a large white bulb with crazy stalks extending up from the top of the bulb. The stalks are covered with soft, fine, feathery fronds.

Fennel has the flavor of anise, or mild licorice. The bulb is crisp and sweet. It can also be eaten raw or cooked. Raw fennel should be sliced paper thin and can be used to make quick summer salads or can be added into other mixed summer veggie salads. You can also saute, roast or grill fennel. The anise flavor of fennel mellows when cooked and the sweetness of the bulb is intensified. The fronds can be pulled off the stem and used in salads or added to a cooked dish at the end of cooking to add another layer of fennel or to garnish the dish. The only part of the plant you're left with now is the stalk. Don't throw it away, there's flavor in there! The stems are often too fibrous to eat, but they have a lot of flavor that could be extracted if used to make a stock or base for soup or to flavor the liquid used to braise meat or poach fish. Like beets, fennel is really two vegetables in one and you can really get a lot of use out of fennel if you utilize all of its parts.

Beets and fennel actually pair well with many of the same ingredients. Some



ingredients often paired with beets and fennel include citrus (oranges and lemons), nuts (walnuts, almonds, pine nuts, etc.), blue cheese, aged cheeses and fresh goat cheese, cream, pomegranate seeds, apples, pears, dill, basil, mint, honey and walnut oil. Beets are bold enough to stand up to other more richly flavored foods such as roasted beef, duck and horseradish. Fennel pairs very well with fish and seafood and is found in many coastal Mediterranean seafood recipes. Don't forget these two vegetables pair very well with each other as well! Fennel and beets go together nicely in salads and make a lovely roasted vegetable side dish. If you've been hesitant to embrace fennel and beets previously, I hope you'll reconsider and try them in some new preparations. Neither vegetable really requires a lot of work and the flavors they offer are fresh and sweet with little need to enhance them with much more than salt, pepper and a little squeeze of lemon at the very least. I hope you enjoy this special combo this week!

Creamed Beets with Greens

By Chef Andrea Yoder

Serves 2-3

1 bunch of beets (about 5-6 small beets or 3-4 medium beets)

2 tsp butter

2-3 Tbsp cream

Salt and black pepper

1. Heat a small pot of water to boiling. Cut the beets from their stems, being sure to leave about half an inch of stem on top of each beet. When the water is boiling, add the beets to the pan. Boil for 10-20 minutes, cooking time will vary depending on the size of the beets. Test the beets for doneness by piercing them with a skewer or fork. The beet should slide off the skewer easily when they are tender. Drain the water off the beets and place them into a bowl of cold water.
2. While the beets are cooking, clean about half of the greens. Reserve the other half of the greens for another use. Cut the stems and leaves into bite-sized pieces and set aside.
3. When the beets are cool enough to handle, peel them and cut them into medium-sized cubes.
4. Heat a small sauté pan over medium heat and melt the butter. Add the cubed beets and sauté for 1-2 minutes or until the beets are hot. Add the beet greens and stems to the pan along with 2-3 Tbsp of cream and a few pinches of salt and pepper. Cover the pan. Allow the greens to steam for several minutes until they are all wilted, then remove the lid and continue to simmer until the cream has thickened and is nearly entirely reduced. Season to your taste and serve hot.

Pasta with Golden Fennel

This recipe was adapted from Deborah Madison's *Local Flavors* cookbook. I (Andrea) prepared it for the crew the year I was the Summer Farm Chef. Fennel was not a favorite vegetable and most of the dishes I made with fennel ended up in the compost bucket. This was the one dish that snagged all of them! They loved it and I don't think any fennel ended up in the compost that day!

Serves 2-3

1 Tbsp unsalted butter

1-2 medium fennel bulbs, quartered and sliced very thinly (about 1 cup)

3 Tbsp fresh lemon juice

Zest from one lemon

½ cup white wine

½ cup garlic scapes or 2 cloves garlic, minced

4 oz fettucine

½ cup fennel fronds, finely chopped

1-2 oz Parmesan cheese or other hard cheese appropriate for grating

Salt and black pepper, to taste

1. In a large sauté pan, melt the butter over medium heat. When the butter sizzles, add the thinly sliced fennel. Sauté for 10-15 minutes, stirring occasionally, or until the fennel softens and starts to brown a little bit. Add the lemon juice, lemon zest and white wine. Allow the fennel mixture to simmer until almost all of the liquid is gone and the fennel is soft and golden in color.
2. While the fennel is cooking, heat a pot of salted water and cook the fettucine according to package instructions until it is al dente. Drain in a colander and set aside in a warm place.
3. When the liquid in the fennel mixture is almost gone, add the garlic and cooked fettucine to the pan and stir to combine. Add the fennel fronds and season with salt and pepper. Cook for just a few minutes to make sure the pasta is hot. Grate the cheese into the pasta and toss it so the cheese will start melting. Serve the pasta hot with more cheese grated on top at the table.



Shaved Fennel & Beet Greens Salad

By Chef Andrea Yoder

Serves 2-4

1 medium bulb of fennel

10-12 stems of beet greens

3 Tbsp fennel fronds, finely chopped

3 Tbsp Fresh dill, finely chopped

Salt & Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 ½ Tbsp Fresh lemon Juice

1 Tbsp Extra-Virgin Olive Oil or a flavorful nut oil (such as walnut or hazelnut)

Drizzle of honey

1-2 oz feta cheese, crumbled

½ cup toasted nuts (hazelnuts, walnuts, almonds or pine nuts—your choice), chopped

1. Cut the fennel bulb into quarters and remove the small core at the base of each piece. Slice the fennel very thinly. You should have about 1 cup. Place the shaved fennel in a medium sized mixing bowl.
2. Cut the stem of the beet greens from the leafy portion. Stack the leaves on top of each other and cut them in half lengthwise so you now have two stacks of leaves. Slice the leaves horizontally into very thin strips and add to the mixing bowl. Cut the beet stems into small pieces and add to the bowl. Next add the fennel fronds and dill. Season with a few pinches of salt and pepper and toss to combine.
3. Drizzle the lemon juice and oil over the vegetable mixture. Toss to combine. Let the salad set for 15-30 minutes before serving. Just before serving, drizzle about ½-1 tsp of honey over the vegetable mixture and toss one final time.
4. Serve each portion of salad topped with feta cheese and chopped nuts.

