



# Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com

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## VEGETABLE FEATURE: FENNEL

By Andrea Yoder

Fennel was not in my vegetable repertoire growing up in central Indiana. I really wasn't exposed to it until my college years and even then, I wasn't quite sure what to do with it! Over the years, I have come to appreciate and look forward to fennel every year, and even sometimes miss and crave it in the off season! Fennel is often one of those vegetables that people either love or are still learning to like. There are many ways to utilize fennel and every year I encourage those in the latter group to approach fennel with an open mind and consider trying it in a new recipe. For many of those who have taken me up on this suggestion and ventured outside of their comfort zone, they've actually found ways to prepare fennel that they really enjoy! Back in 2019, I curated an extensive **list of recipes** to guide members in finding ways to utilize all parts of fennel. If you don't have a recipe in mind this week, or this is your first time utilizing fennel, I encourage you to refer back to that blog post and take advantage of that list. So, with that little dose of encouragement, lets take a look at this fragrant, feathery vegetable!

One of the unique characteristics about fennel is that all parts of the plant above ground are usable, which is why I like to call it "The Three In One Vegetable." The white bulb is the most commonly used portion, but the stalks and feathery fronds that extend from the bulb are also edible. The stalks can be more tough and fibrous, but they have a lot of flavor. The feathery parts that resemble dill are actually called fronds. They have a mild flavor and can be used more like an herb.

Fennel may be eaten raw and cooked. It pairs well with a variety of ingredients and flavors, so when you're looking at recipes, you'll likely see similar ingredients show up time after time. Fennel pairs well with lemons and oranges as well as herbs such as dill, parsley and basil. It also plays well with beets, tomatoes, celery, onions, carrots, potatoes, pomegranate, apples, stone fruit and berries. It is often used in dishes along with Parmesan, cream

and white wine which come together to make a delicious sauce. Lastly, fennel pairs very well with seafood, especially in soups and chowders, and pork products including sausage, pancetta, prosciutto, fresh pork cuts and more. While most think of fennel as a vegetable to use in savory dishes, it can also be used in sweet preparations paired with honey, citrus, berries, etc.

The stalks and bulb typically have the strongest flavor. If you enjoy the flavor of fennel, you'll likely enjoy it raw. I have one very important point to make about eating fennel raw. It must be sliced very thin, like paper thin! Fennel bulb is very fibrous and dense. If you slice it thinly it is more tender and enjoyable to eat, plus it mingles better with other flavors in the dish. In its raw form, fennel bulb is often used in simple raw salads and can also be used in fresh salsas, pickled, or preserved in alcohol to make your own

## What's In The Box?

**FENNEL:** Check out this week's **vegetable feature** to learn more about this unique vegetable and its feathery fronds! Plus, we have two feature recipes including fennel this week along with more suggestions for recipe ideas on the blog!

**GREEN TOP BABY RED BEETS:** Eat the beets and the greens! For easy storage, separate the beets from the greens, but don't discard those green tops! They are packed with nutrients and flavor! Add them to smoothies or cook them. Beets and chard are in the same family, thus beet greens can be used in place of or alongside chard in any recipe calling for chard.

**KOHLRABI:** If you're not sure what to do with kohlrabi, take a moment to read **last week's vegetable feature article**. Or, head over to our blog and take a look at **last week's Cooking With the Box** article where you'll find links to 17 recipes in addition to our featured recipe for Lemon Dill Kohlrabi Fritters.

**RAINBOW CHARD:** This gorgeous green is one of our summer favorites. As mentioned above, it is a cousin to beet greens so these two vegetables may be used interchangeably in recipes. Chard is most often cooked, but may also be eaten raw in salads. The colorful stems are also edible!

**GREEN SCALLIONS:** The only part of these scallions that should be remaining when you are done using them is the little cluster of roots at the bottom. The remainder of the onion and green tops are all edible.

**GARLIC SCAPES:** This curly vegetable is bursting with fresh garlic flavor and, since there is nothing to peel away, it's one of the easiest forms of garlic to use in the kitchen! Just chop it finely and use it in place of garlic cloves in any recipe calling for garlic. You can also pickle them or turn them into pesto. Head over to our blog for links to both in this week's **Cooking With the Box** article.

**STRAWBERRIES:** We are in the peak of strawberry season and the berries have been ripening fast in the heat so we started picking several days ahead of box packing. When you get home, open your containers and sort the berries. Use any that are soft or more ripe first. Keep them in the refrigerator and do not wash them until you are ready to use them. Some boxes may contain strawberries in brown paper pint containers. We are making an effort to decrease plastic on our farm and are transitioning to these paper pint containers. We encourage you to reuse them, but when they have come to the end of their life, they are recyclable and home compostable! Your feedback on this packaging would be appreciated!

**BROCCOLI:** Maximize the yield from a piece of broccoli by eating both the florets and the stems! The stems may require a little longer cooking time than the florets.

**GREEN ZUCCHINI AND MEXICAN ZUCCHINI:** All of these varieties may be used interchangeably in recipes calling for "zucchini" or "summer squash." Summer squash varieties such as these are best stored at room temperature so they do not suffer from chill injury which will decrease the quality and shelf life.

**RED OAK AND/OR MINI GREEN BOSTON LETTUCE:** This will be our final lettuce delivery until fall rolls around! Separate the leaves from the core at the base of the plant and thoroughly wash the leaves prior to use.

**SUGAR SNAP PEAS:** This variety has an edible pod. Just remove the string on the top by pulling back the stem end. Please note, you may occasionally have a pea pod that resembles a sugar snap pea, but when you eat it the pod is more fibrous and inedible. If you experience this, our apologies. The base seed stock sometimes has off types mixed in and it's difficult to distinguish them by appearance alone.

digestif. When you cook fennel, the essential oils that give it its distinct flavor and aroma volatilize and the flavor and aroma of fennel mellow and become milder and sweeter. Thus, those who find the flavor of fennel too strong when eaten raw often prefer to prepare fennel by cooking it. Fennel is delicious when roasted, simmered into sauces and soups, or sautéed and then added to recipes such as meatballs, warm grain salads, compotes, etc.

The stalk may be eaten, but seldom is. Rather it is often used for flavoring. I like to save the stalks and add them to vegetable or meat broth or just stick the whole stalk directly into a pot of soup to flavor it while cooking and then pull it out before serving. It can also be used as a stirring stick for cocktails or use it to flavor water, lemonade, etc. In a previous year we featured a recipe for **Candied Fennel Stalk** that is quite tasty. It's a great treat to munch on after a meal to help aid with digestion and appeal to that desire for something sweet.

Last but not least, let's talk about the mild, feathery fronds. Chop them up and use them as an herb-like garnish on salads, stirred into soups, cooked rice or as a final topping on a pizza. You can also blend them into smoothies and drinks or use them to make a cocktail. They may also be used to make **Fennel Frond Salt** or **Fennel Frond Pesto**, using only fennel fronds or you could blend in some fresh basil or parsley as well. Fennel frond pesto would make a lovely sauce for salmon, toss it with pasta, use it as a sandwich spread or mix it with mayonnaise and make a dipping sauce for fish or chicken strips!

Fennel should be stored in a plastic bag or other closed container in the refrigerator to keep it crisp until you are ready to use it. Take the time to wash the fennel bulb well before using it. Sometimes a little dirt can get in between the layers of the bulb as it grows. The layers of the bulb are held together by the core at its base. You may wish to leave the core intact to hold the layers together, such as when you may cut it into wedges and roast it. In other recipes where you may want the layers to fall apart, cut the core out of the base of the bulb and you're ready to go. Sometimes I cut the fennel bulb first and then put it in a colander to wash it thoroughly.

In addition to its culinary value, fennel has some health benefits. It can soothe the stomach and GI tract, thus it's often used to help with digestion. It can also freshen breath and has other potential health benefits including being antibacterial and working as an antioxidant to remove free radicals in our bodies. It is high in fiber and vitamin C in particular.

### Pasta with Golden Fennel

Yield: 2-3 servings

1 Tbsp unsalted butter	½ cup white wine	1-2 oz Parmesan cheese or other hard cheese for grating
1-2 medium fennel bulbs, quartered and sliced very thinly (about 1 cup)	½ cup garlic scapes or 2 cloves garlic, minced	Salt and black pepper, to taste
3 Tbsp fresh lemon juice	4 oz fettucine	
Zest from one lemon	½ cup fennel fronds, finely chopped	

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.

Note from Chef Andrea:

I originally shared this recipe in our newsletter back in 2013. Since then, many members have offered positive feedback on this recipe, especially amongst those who are still learning to like fennel and find the flavor of raw fennel to be too strong for their liking. This recipe was adapted from Deborah Madison's *Local Flavors* cookbook. Way back in 2007 when I first came to the farm as the Summer Farm Chef, I prepared this recipe for our farm crew. Fennel was not one of their favorite vegetables and most of the dishes I made with fennel ended up in the compost bucket. I was determined to find a way to prepare fennel that they would enjoy and this is the one dish that won them over! They loved it and I don't remember any fennel ending up in the compost that day!

### Kohlrabi Slaw with Fennel & Apple

Yield: 5 servings

1 medium fennel bulb with fronds	2 tsp minced shallot or green onion	1 medium kohlrabi, peeled and cut into matchsticks
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil	1 tsp honey	1 small apple, cored and cut into matchsticks
2 Tbsp apple cider vinegar	½ tsp salt	
2 tsp whole-grain mustard	¼ tsp ground black pepper	

1. Chop enough fennel fronds to equal ¼ cup. Cut the bulb in half and make a V-cut on the bottom to remove the core at the base. Thinly slice the bulb, as thin as you can using either a knife or a mandolin.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together oil, mustard, shallot (or green onion), honey, salt and pepper. Add the fennel and fronds, kohlrabi and apple; gently toss to coat all the components.
3. Serve chilled or at room temperature.

Recipe sourced from [www.eatingwell.com](http://www.eatingwell.com).