

This weeks recipes are excerpted from Farmer John's Cookbook: The Real Dirt On Vegetables: Seasonal Recipes and Stories from a Community Supported Farm by Farmer John Peterson & Angelic Organics (Gibbs Smith Publisher). The cookbook is available for sale in Laguna Farm's store.

Turnips

Tender young turnips often have a mild flavor and a delectable, juicy crispness that can be enjoyed raw, much like a radish. Young turnips are also wonderful cooked, especially in simple recipes that highlight their delicate taste and texture.

Storage

Remove radish or turnip leaves if they are still attached. Refrigerate the unwashed greens in a loosely wrapped plastic bag. Store turnips and radishes dry and unwashed in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to a week.

Handling

Scrub radishes and young turnips well to remove any lingering dirt. Trim off the stems and rootlets. Slice, chop, or mince the roots or leave them whole.

Young Turnip Salad with Apples and Lemon Dressing

Raw young turnips are sweet, with a tender-firm crunch. In this refreshing salad, lemon juice and tart, crispy apples accentuate both of these qualities. For a sweet treat, try tossing in some raisins, or top with chopped and freshly toasted pecans or walnuts. Friend of the Farm. Makes about 2 cups

1 cup peeled and grated raw young turnips (about 2 medium turnips)
1 cup peeled and grated tart apples (Granny Smith or greenings) (about 1 large apple)
1/2 cup finely chopped fresh parsley
3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
salt
freshly ground black pepper

Toss the turnips, apples, parsley, lemon juice, and vegetable oil in a large bowl. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour.

Fennel

From a distance, fennel plants growing in the field look like a tall, rich, plush carpet. With a sweet, delicate anise flavor, fennel can be used much like celery in soups, salads, stir-fries, and other dishes. When used raw, its distinct taste shines through. When cooked, it imparts a subtle but delicious quality to the finished dish.

Storage

Cut off the stalks where they emerge from the bulb. To use the feathery foliage as an herb, place the dry stalks upright in a glass filled with two inches of water, cover the glass loosely with a plastic bag, and store in the refrigerator for up to five days. The unwashed bulb will keep in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for at least a week.

Handling

Remove any damaged spots or layers. Cut the bulb in half lengthwise and check the inner core. If it's tough, remove it with a paring knife. Fennel should be washed carefully, because dirt can lodge between the layers of the bulb. Chop or mince the leaves

Fennel and Potato Gratin

This is a tasty variation of a traditional dish. Replace the half-and-half with whole milk for a less rich dish. Friend of the Farm. Serves 4 to 6

butter for greasing the baking dish
1 medium fennel bulb, cut crosswise into 1/8-inch slices (about 2 cups)
2 cups thinly sliced Yukon gold potatoes (about 2 large potatoes)
salt
freshly ground black pepper
2 cups half-and-half
2 tablespoons butter
1. Preheat the oven to 350° F. Lightly coat a shallow 2-quart baking dish with butter.
2. Cover the bottom of the baking dish with a layer of fennel slices. Cover with half of the potato slices. Sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste. Repeat layers until you've used up all your slices.

3. Bring the half-and-half to a gentle boil in a medium pan over medium-high heat. Pour it over the fennel and potato.

4. Using a large spatula, press down on the top layer to submerge it. Dot with butter. Bake until potatoes are tender and the top is golden, about 1 hour.

Kohlrabi

Handling

Rinse kohlrabi under cold running water just before use. Unless the skin seems particularly tough, kohlrabi does not have to be peeled. Just trim off the remains of the stalks and root. Grate, slice, or chop kohlrabi as desired

Kohlrabi 'n' Carrot Slaw

The cool, raw energy of the vegetables seems to bring new life into a tired crew after a morning of hoeing and harvesting. This recipe, a farm favorite, makes for a particularly attractive dish. Angelic Organics Kitchen (adapted from Greene on Greens). Serves 4 to 6

1 pound kohlrabi (about 4 medium bulbs), peeled, grate
2 medium-large carrots, grated
1 small red onion, chopped (about 1/2 cup)
2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme
1 large clove garlic, minced (about 3/4 teaspoon)
1/2 cup sour cream
1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
4 cups wine vinegar
1 1/2 teaspoons chili powder
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper

1. Toss the kohlrabi, carrots, bell pepper, onion, thyme, and garlic in a large bowl.
2. Whisk the sour cream, oil, vinegar, chili powder, salt, and pepper in a medium bowl.
3. Pour the dressing over the vegetables and toss to coat. Cover and refrigerate for 2 hours before serving.