

Broccoli From Another Planet



(Photo: Kenneth Chen)

Imagine a head of broccoli as envisioned by Jerry Garcia and you have the Romanesco, a variety that looks like the psychedelic understudy for the lead in Little Shop of Horrors. If only its season lasted a little longer—look for it over the next few weeks at the Van Houten Farms stand at Union Square—you could hang

Christmas ornaments on it. Funky looks aside, it's equally striking sautéed and tossed with pasta, as this satisfying dish from 50 Carmine's Sara Jenkins demonstrates.

Sara Jenkins's Maccheroncini With Romanesco

1/4 cup bread crumbs

2 tablespoons butter

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

4 cups Romanesco broccoli florets

1/4 cup pitted Gaeta olives

1 tablespoon capers, desalted

1 clove garlic, smashed

2 anchovy filets

1 pound dried pasta (Setaro, available at Buon Italia, is a good brand)

Salt and pepper

Illustrations by John Burgoyne.

(1) Fry bread crumbs in olive oil over medium heat until golden brown and set aside. Brown the florets over high heat in the melted butter and olive oil.

(2) Add the olives, capers, garlic, and anchovies until slightly crisp, and lightly stir until anchovies are broken up. Meanwhile, cook the pasta.

(3) Drain, toss with sauce and bread crumbs, salt and pepper to taste.

Serves four. nymag.com/nymetro/food/inseason/10384/

Easy Romanesco Preparation

Cook just like Cauliflower.

Steam: Let the Romanesco steam until tender, about 15 minutes.

Puree to make a soup of pureed romanesco and cream with little florets of the romanesco for a garnish.

Dramatic Appetizer for a 60's party: Break into florets and lightly steam. "What's that?!" will be a common response.

Seasoning ideas: use steamed florets and toss with a simple cheese or butter sauce, or simply sprinkle with a bit of rice wine vinegar.

Julia's Romanesco Cauliflower Soup:

1 head broccoli romanesco or cauliflower, freshly harvested

1-2 onions, chopped (substitute leeks, green onions, green garlic, depending on the season)

small amount olive oil

vegetable or chicken broth: about 4 cups

milk(optional) to thin out soup

Cook up onions in the oil in a dutch oven, then add florets and cook everything over medium heat until browning somewhat. Add broth and cook another 20-30 minutes until everything is well cooked. Cool slightly, then puree with immersible blender. (I love this gadget!).

Thin soup with milk if desired. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

<http://www.mariquita.com/recipes/broccoliromanESCO.html>

Roasted Romanesco

Romanesco, trimmed and cleaned as you would broccoli or cauliflower (break up into florets)

Olive oil

salt and pepper

sliced garlic

parmesan cheese grated

Preheat oven to 400. In a bowl toss all of the ingredients and roast on a baking sheet for about 20 minutes or until just tender.

<http://nofearentertaining.blogspot.com/2009/03/roasted-romanESCO.html>

Romanesco with Green Olives and Capers

Boiling the garlic with the romanesco flavors the floret and tames the garlic for the dressing (which is also great over steamed or boiled potatoes). This dish is good hot or at room temperature, as a side or as part of an antipasto platter (add more lemon and garlic and marinate for a couple of hours or overnight).

- 1 large or 2 medium heads romanesco or cauliflower (about 2 pounds)
- 3/4 cup brine-cured green olives, pitted
- 2 tablespoons capers
- 4 tablespoons fresh Italian parsley leaves
- Grated zest of 1 lemon
- 1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- Kosher or sea salt
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 4 large cloves garlic, peeled

1. Cut the romanesco into small florets and soak in ice water to cover for 20 minutes. Meanwhile, chop together the olives, capers, 3 tablespoons of the parsley, and the lemon zest. In a small pot, heat the oil and red pepper flakes over medium-low heat until hot. Remove from the heat and stir in the olive mixture, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and the lemon juice. Set aside.
2. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Drain the romanesco, drop it into the boiling water with the garlic cloves, and cook the florets until just tender, to 5 minutes. Drain well. Chop the cooked garlic with the remaining 1 tablespoon parsley, place in a large bowl, add the florets and olive-caper dressing and toss well. Taste and adjust with salt, red pepper flakes, and lemon juice. If serving at room temperature, adjust seasoning again before serving.
3. From: The Santa Monica Farmers' Market Cookbook, by Amelia Saltsman