



47th Ave Farm CSA for the week of July 30, 2012

Perfectly Cooked Green Beans (and a few ideas)
Chopped Salad with Green Beans, Fennel, Carrots, Lime, Feta and Basil
Thai Green Curry with Green Beans and Summer Squash
New Potato, Green Bean and Pesto Salad
Pesto
Caramelized Fennel with Goat Cheese
Pasta with Grated Summer Squash, Spring Onions and Bacon
Simple Fava Beans with Garlic

Perfectly Cooked Green Beans

Perfectly-cooked-green-beans is a rather subjective thing. My idea of a perfectly cooked green bean for this preparation—to use in the Chopped Salad below or simply to dip in homemade aioli or toss with feta and mint and olive oil—is to cook them in lots of generously salted, rapidly boiling water for about 5-6 minutes. Cooking really brings out the flavor in green beans and after 5-6 minutes you lose the “squeak” that you get if they’re not quite done enough. You want a big pot of water so the water returns to a boil right after you add the beans and it’s important to salt the water well, about 1 ½ tablespoons of kosher salt for a 6 quart pot of water. Drain them after 5-6 minutes and run under cold water. I don’t bother with the ice-bath method but you certainly can. Put out onto a dry dishtowel and pat dry.

Chopped Salad with Green Beans, Fennel, Carrots, Feta, Lime, Cilantro and Sunflower Seeds

--adapted from Smittenkitchen.com

You can use different vegetables as the season progresses. Cooked corn and fresh red peppers would both be great.

To bulk this up into a more rounded dish, you could add a cup or two of thinly sliced lettuce, 1 to 2 cups of cooked, cooled grains such as barley, quinoa or faro, or a cup or so of cooked black beans. In each case, it would be best to increase (possibly double) the dressing so you’ll be able to cover everything evenly.

Serves 4 as appetizers and 2 as more of a meal-sized salad

2 cups perfectly cooked green beans (see above), cut into ½-¾ –inch pieces
½ cup fennel cut into small dice
½ cup carrots cut into small dice
1/2 cup (2 ounces) crumbled feta or queso fresco
2 red spring onions, thinly sliced
1/3 cup well-toasted sunflower seeds, salted or unsalted
2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
2 tablespoons olive oil
1/4 teaspoon coarse or Kosher salt, plus more to taste

1/4 teaspoon chile powder or 1/8 teaspoon each your choice combination of chile powder, cumin, cayenne or sumac
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1/4 cup chopped cilantro

Mix the vegetables, feta, red spring onions, seeds and basil in a medium bowl. Whisk lime juice, olive oil, salt, spice and black pepper in a small dish and pour over vegetables, tossing to evenly coat. Adjust with more salt

Thai Green Curry with Green Beans and Summer Squash

Serves 4 (generously)

I have made variations of this Thai-inspired curry for 15 years. It is not an authentic Green Curry but a tasty, quick adaptation. It is suitable to a wide variety of vegetables: asparagus, new potatoes and green onions in the spring; summer squash and green beans in early summer; green beans and eggplant in late summer, and pumpkin, leeks and potatoes in the fall/winter. You can easily add chicken or tofu to it for an even heartier dish though it's wonderfully rich and satisfying without as well.

2 handfuls of green beans, washed and ends trimmed and cut into 2-inch pieces
2 cups summer squash, cut into 1/4-inch half-round slices
1 medium new potato, diced
1 – 2 inch piece of ginger, peeled and minced
2 cloves of garlic, minced
1 1/2 heaping teaspoon (or to taste) green curry paste (Thai & True is a great local brand and Mae Ploy is also readily available brand)
2 teaspoons soy sauce
1 -2 teaspoons fish sauce (can omit to make it vegetarian/vegan)
1 can coconut milk (full fat preferably but light will work too)
3 tablespoons basil, packed and roughly chopped
Juice of half a lemon or lime (optional)
White or brown cooked Jasmine or other long grain rice

Heat wok or large sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add 1/2 cup of coconut milk (use the thickest, part usually at the top of the can) and bring to a boil. Stir occasionally for 2-3 minutes. Add the curry paste, garlic and ginger and fry it for about 3-4 minutes until it's fragrant. Then add the remainder of the coconut milk plus 1/2 can's worth of water, soy sauce and fish sauce. Bring to a boil and then turn down to a simmer and add the diced potato and simmer for about 3 minutes and then add the squash and beans and simmer for about 7 more minutes until the vegetables are tender. Adjust seasoning with a bit of salt or more soy sauce and/or fish sauce if needed and finish with a generous squeeze of lime or lemon juice, if using. Serve hot over rice.

New Potatoes, Green Bean and Pesto

This is a classic Italian combination (sometimes beans and potatoes (diced fairly small are added to pasta with pesto – which you can certainly do as well though this recipe omits the pasta) and wonderful either warm or cold.

New red potatoes (however many you want to use), scrubbed but not peeled and cut into medium chunks and gently boiled making sure not to overcook
Green beans (however many you want to use) cooked using the above method, cut into 2-inch lengths
However much pesto seems appropriate to dress the vegetables somewhat generously

Toss everything together. You can thin the pesto just a little with some of the cooking water from either the potatoes or beans. Adjust for salt and pepper.

Pesto

I used to be a purist about pesto and I'm not anymore. I use almonds, walnuts or hazelnuts since I never have pine nuts. I use aged, Asiago Stella (available at Pastaworks and City Market) because it's much cheaper than Parmesan and still very good. I also use the food processor. And you can scale this up or down

1 bunch basil, leaves picked (between 2 and 3 cups leaves, packed)
2-3 smallish cloves of garlic, peeled and roughly chopped
Generous handful of almonds, walnuts, hazelnuts or pine nuts
About 2 ounces of Parmesan or aged asiago (Asiago Stella available at Pastaworks/City Market)
1/3 cup of good-tasting extra virgin olive oil (or more)
Salt and freshly ground peper

If you have a mortar and pestle, a strong arm and some time, by all means make the pesto by hand. I almost always now make it in a food processor and it's very good that way too.

Put the nuts and cheese in the processor and pulse until finely ground. Add the basil, garlic and salt and process until well chopped. Then slowly add the oil. Don't over process. Adjust for salt and oil. Then store in the fridge until ready to use.

Caramelized Fennel with Goat Cheese

--adapted from Plenty by Yotam Ottolenghi

Serves 4

4 small fennel bulbs (or 2 large)
2 ½ tablespoons butter
2 tablespoons olive oil (plus extra to finish)
2 tablespoons sugar
1 teaspoon fennel seeds (optional)
Sea salt and black pepper
1 garlic clove, minced
4 ounces crumbled fresh goat's cheese
grated zest of 1 lemon
¾ cup dill (leaves and stalks) chopped

Prepare the fennel by taking off the leafy fronds and any tough or brown outer layers. Then slice off some of the root part but make sure the base still holds everything together. Then slice the bulbs into ½-inch slices lengthwise.

Melt half the butter with half the oil in a large skillet over high heat. When the butter starts to foam add a layer of sliced fennel. Do not overcrowd the pan and don't turn the fennel over or stir it around in the pan until one side has become light golden, about 2 minutes. Turn the slices over and cook for another 2 minutes. Remove from the pan and continue with the rest of the fennel, using the remaining oil and butter.

Once the fennel has been seared, add the sugar and fennel seeds and plenty of salt and pepper to the empty (don't clean it!) pan. Fry for 30 seconds, then return all the fennel slices to the pan and caramelize them gently for 1-2 minutes (they need to remain firm inside so just allow them to be coated in the melting sugar and seeds). Remove the fennel from the pan and let cool a bit on a plate.

To serve, toss the fennel in a bowl with the garlic, dill, lemon zest and then taste and adjust seasoning. Serve dotted with the goat cheese.

Pasta with Grated Summer Squash, Spring Onions and Bacon

This is a good, quick technique this time of year. You can adapt it with different herbs, sausage instead of bacon, fresh goat cheese at the end instead of bacon, etc. . . .

Splash of olive oil
2 medium summer squash
2-3 slices bacon, diced
5-6 (or more) spring red onions, sliced (including most of the green)
handful or two of chopped basil
½ cup grated Parmesan or other hard grating cheese
Salt and pepper
¼ cup reserved pasta cooking water (scoop out right before you drain the pasta)
¾ lb penne, rigatoni, orecchiette, fusilli or other sturdy pasta

Grate the summer squash on the large holes of a box grater onto a clean dishtowel. Sprinkle with a little salt and let sit while you prepare the rest of the dish.

Cook the pasta in plenty of salted, boiling water until al dente. Don't forget to scoop out ½ a cup of so of hot pasta cooking water right before you drain the sauce.

Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over high heat. Add the bacon and cook, stirring frequently for a few minutes. Turn down to medium-high and add the onions and cook for a minute or two with the bacon.

Gather the corners of your dishtowel with the zucchini in it and squeeze out any excess liquid over the sink. Toss the grated zucchini with the onions and bacon and season everything with a little more salt.

When the pasta is al dente, drain well and toss with the zucchini mixture, the parmesan and the basil. Add about ¼ up of pasta cooking water and stir vigorously to create a thin sauce. Adjust seasoning and serve immediately.

Simple Fava Beans with Garlic

I was in a rush this week and still managed to cook favas, first shelling them and then boiling them for 5-6 minutes and then pinching the skin off each individual bean. It really goes quite quickly. I had intended to then sauté them with some bacon, onions, herbs, etc. but ran out of time. So I just tossed them with some garlic I had mashed with sea salt, a bit of chopped basil and just little squeeze of lemon juice and some good olive oil. They were perfect.