



Harmony Valley Farm

An update for our Community Supported Agriculture Members - Since 1993

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VEGETABLE FEATURE: Fennel: The Three In One Vegetable

By Andrea Yoder

When it comes to fennel, there are typically two groups of people. Those who love it and those who are still learning to like it. If you are in the latter group or you've never tried fennel before, I encourage you to approach this week's vegetable with an open mind. I wasn't exposed to fennel until my college years, and even then I was skeptical of it when someone told me it tasted like black licorice. My mom used to chew black licorice gum that I thought was horrid! While fennel does have an anise flavor similar to licorice, it's not the same as black licorice candy. I have grown to really appreciate fennel and am excited to share a whole slew of recipe ideas for how to use this vegetable! I've tried to be very thorough with my research for this week's article and pushed myself to "think outside the box" and go beyond traditional uses for fennel. I'd encourage you to visit our **blog** this week as I've included links to 25 recipes utilizing fennel. Unfortunately, I don't have room to include the list in print, but there are some really fun things you can do with this vegetable!

One of the unique characteristics about fennel is that all parts of the plant above ground are usable. 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, pomegranate, apple, 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.

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.

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 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 more mild and sweet.

The stalk can 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

What's In The Box?

STRAWBERRIES: Over the past week we've experienced temperatures in the 80's coupled with high humidity, rain and storms. These weather conditions have been hard on the strawberries, which are very delicate. Store in the refrigerator and use them within 1-2 days of receiving. We anticipate they'll have a short shelf life.

GREEN SCALLIONS: Scallions are more mild than full-sized storage onions and may be eaten raw or just lightly cooked. The entire plant, except for the root base, is edible!

RED SUMMERCRI SP LETTUCE: Also known as French crisp or Batavia lettuce, this type of lettuce is supposed to be more tolerant of hot weather without getting bitter. It resembles red leaf lettuce, but is crispy like romaine or iceberg lettuce. Wash and dry the leaves well and use in a salad.

GREEN AND/OR ITALIAN ZUCCHINI: The field is really producing this week and there's a generous pile of zucchini in your box! Store zucchini on the counter at room temperature and use within a few days. If you have more than you can use right now, shred it, bag it and freeze it so you can make zucchini bread this winter!

BROCCOLI: This is a bountiful broccoli week as well! Be sure to use both the florets and the stems of the broccoli. If you have more than you can use this week, blanch it and freeze it for winter.

AMARANTH GREENS: This beautiful cooking "green" with burgundy leaves thrives in the heat of summer. If you aren't familiar with this vegetable, check out **last year's vegetable feature** article from last year on our blog, recipes included!

FENNEL: Read more about this week's featured vegetable in the **newsletter**, or visit our **blog** for the article as well as links to 25 recipes utilizing fennel!

GREEN TOP BABY RED BEETS: Use the leaves as a cooking green (similar to chard or spinach), or slice them thinly and add to salads. The beets are sweet, tender and delicious when boiled or roasted whole.

SUGAR SNAP PEAS: These peas have an edible pod. Just remove the stem and the fibrous string that runs on top of the pod and then eat it! They are delicious eaten raw or lightly cooked.

CUCUMBERS: Our cucumbers are just starting to produce. There will be more to come very soon! Store in a warmer part of the fridge or on the countertop to prevent chill injury.

also be used as a stirring stick for cocktails or use it to flavor water, lemonade, etc. One of our featured recipes this week is for **Candied Fennel Stalk**. I gave it a try and really like it! What a great way to enjoy the stalk! You can munch on candied fennel after a meal and get the benefit of settling your stomach while meeting the need for something a little sweet.

Last but not least, let's talk about the mild, feathery fronds. Chop them up and use them as a herb-like garnish on salads, stirred into soups, or as a final topping on a pizza. You can also blend them into smoothies and drinks or use them to make a cocktail, such as a **Fennel Martini**. I also found a recipe for making **Fennel Frond Salt**. It is shelf stable and can be used to season your own homemade sausage patties, use it to salt fish, roasted potatoes, cucumbers, cream sauces, etc. Of course, you can always make **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!

Ok, that's a lot of information and it's time to get cooking. Be sure to wash the fennel bulb well before using. Sometimes a little dirt can get in between the layers. Cut the core out of the base of the bulb and you're ready to go. Store fennel in a plastic bag in the refrigerator.

Fennel-Ginger Smoothie

Yield: 1 quart (1 large or 2 small servings)

1 cup almond milk	½ cup fresh Italian parsley, roughly chopped	1 fennel bulb, chopped (approximately 1 cup)
1 cup spinach, chard or beet greens, roughly chopped	¼ cup fresh lemon juice	1 cup frozen pineapple
	½ inch piece ginger root, peeled	½ cup ice

1. Place all ingredients in the blender and blend until smooth. You can adjust the almond milk or ice depending on your preference for thickness.
2. Drink immediately.

Recipe adapted from www.toopreciousforprocessed.com.

Note from Chef Andrea: While I've only tried this smoothie with frozen pineapple, I think it would also be good with frozen blueberries or strawberries.

Candied Fennel Stalk & Fennel Simple Syrup

Yield: ¾ cup candy and 1 ½-2 cups syrup

1 cup sugar	1 cup water	1 ½ cups fennel stalks, cut on the diagonal into thin slices
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1. Preheat oven to 250°F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper or a silicone liner.
2. Combine the sugar and water in a small saucepan over medium-high heat. Cook, stirring, until the sugar has dissolved, about 5 minutes. Add the fennel and reduce the heat to medium. Simmer for 3 minutes, until the fennel is crisp-tender. Remove from the heat and let the fennel steep for 10 to 15 minutes, then strain the syrup into a container.
3. Transfer the syrup-coated fennel slices to the lined baking sheet, spreading them in an even layer. Bake for about 30 minutes, then separate any fennel slices that are sticking together. Bake for 30 minutes more or until the fennel is dry, slightly crispy and just a bit sticky.
4. Cool completely on the baking sheet before serving or storing. The candy can be stored in an airtight container at room temperature for up to 4 days. The syrup can be refrigerated in an airtight container for up to 2 weeks.

You can munch on candied fennel after a meal and get the benefit of settling your stomach while meeting the need for something a little sweet. You can also add it to fruit salads or use it as a topping for baked goods & ice cream. The fennel simple syrup has a lovely mild floral-fennel flavor and can be used to sweeten beverages such as mocktails, cocktails, lemonade, tea, etc

Recipe borrowed from www.washingtonpost.com

Strawberry, Fennel & Orange Salad

Yield: 4-5 servings

2 Tbsp fresh lemon juice	2 navel oranges	1 green onion, thinly sliced
2 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil	8 oz (1 pint or 1 ¼ cups) strawberries, hulled and quartered or halved	6 cups torn head lettuce
½ tsp sea salt	1 fennel bulb, thinly sliced lengthwise	Parmesan or sharp cheddar cheese, for serving
Coarsely ground black pepper, to taste	3 Tbsp finely chopped fennel fronds	

1. In a medium mixing bowl, whisk together lemon juice, olive oil, salt and black pepper. Zest two oranges and add to the lemon juice mixture. Cut the bottom and top off of each orange so the top and bottom are flat. Use a knife to cut away the peel and pith by running the knife from the top of the orange to the bottom. Once the peel is removed, hold the orange in your hand and use a paring knife to cut out the segments, letting them fall into a bowl, along with the juice.
2. Add strawberries, sliced fennel and fronds, and green onion to the bowl of orange segments and toss together gently.
3. Put 1 to 1 ½ cups lettuce on each plate and spoon about ⅓ of the fennel and fruit mixture over the lettuce. Garnish with freshly shredded Parmesan cheese.

Recipe adapted from marthastewart.com