

Flavor your next salad with fennel's licorice taste

BY DANA JACOBI
SPECIAL WRITER

With its creamy bulb resembling a stalk of unusually rotund celery, unexpectedly topped with fine feathery fronds, fennel was once a rarely seen Italian specialty. Now, most supermarkets offer this licorice-tasting vegetable, also called anise or finocchio, between September and May.

In November and December, when prices are lowest, fennel is especially nice added to salads and holiday platters of crudites, or accompanying roast chicken or turkey.

Fennel is quintessentially associated with Italy, France and Greece, where cooks braise, roast, or grill it, as well as serve it raw. In Italy, I have enjoyed it shaved paper-thin and topped with curls of Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese. Italians also serve it cut into thin wedges and accompanied by saucers of extra virgin olive oil and salt — one dips the fennel into first one, then the other. The combination of flavors and crunch is as irresistible as munching on potato chips, but far more healthful. (A cup of raw fennel contains only about 30 calories.)

Look for fennel bulbs with no discoloration, firm stalks and bright green, perky fronds. To use it, cut off the stalks across the top of the bulb where it turns white. Discard them or use to flavor sauces and stock. Slice off the root end. Peel away the

tough outer layers. Halve the bulb vertically. You will see a triangular, hard core; using a small knife, cut out most of it, leaving enough to keep the layers attached.

If serving fennel raw, slice it into thin wedges and fan them out nicely on a plate. If not served immediately, prevent discoloring by dropping the slices into a bowl of water adulterated with the juice of half a lemon. Just before serving, drain it and pat dry. For grilling, braising or roasting, cut chunkier slices. To braise, cook the fennel in chicken or vegetable broth until tender.

At the end of a meal, Italians sometimes serve fennel with fresh fruit. Fennel's sweet anise flavor complements most fruits. Sicilians particularly enjoy a salad of fennel and oranges, often accompanied by a few black olives. This lovely combination is equally good before or after the main course.

FENNEL AND ORANGE SALAD

- 1 small bunch arugula, rinsed and dried
- 1 large navel orange, peel and white pith removed
- 1 large fennel bulb
- 4 paper-thin slices red onion
- 16 oil-cured black olives
- 1 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoons fresh orange juice or 1/2 tablespoons frozen orange concentrate

- 1/2 tablespoon dried orange zest
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper

Arrange arugula to make a bed on each of 4 salad plates.

Cut orange crosswise into thin slices. Arrange two-fourth of slices over arugula on each plate.

Cut away feathery tops of fennel at base of round stalks and discard. Slice off bottom of bulb, remove tough outer layer of bulb and discard both. Halve bulb vertically. Using very sharp knife, cut each half crosswise into very thin slices. Arrange over orange slices.

Separate onion slices into rings and arrange over fennel. Add olives. Sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste. In small bowl, whisk oil with orange juice or concentrate and zest.

Drizzle dressing over each salad. Serve immediately. Makes 4 servings.

Nutritional information per serving: 137 calories, 8 g. fat (1 g. saturated fat), 14 g. carbohydrate, 3 g. protein, 4 g. dietary fiber, 268 mg. sodium.

Dana Jacobi writes for the American Institute for Cancer Research book and is the author of *The Joy of Soy*.



AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR CANCER RESEARCH

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Our advertisement was printed before September 11, 2001.

We reprinted the advertisement in many East Coast cities, but were unable to reprint it nationally. We chose to remove the CD from our stores, and therefore it is not available at this time.



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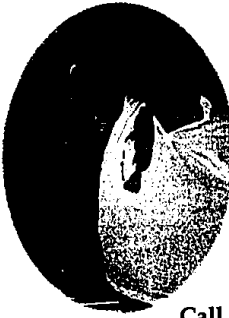


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