

## Flavor-filled Fennel is good for salads and more

If there has ever been an overlooked vegetable, it would definitely be fennel. Some people have an aversion to its licorice-like scent, while others feel as if fennel is a bizarre and obscure vegetable that they have no interest in learning how to prepare. However, those who have discovered it know that ignoring fennel is a waste of a versatile vegetable's amazing flavor and healthful benefits. Even those who already cook with fennel might find that they aren't taking advantage of its versatility. For example, many people use only the delicate, lacy parts of fennel as a flavor-enhancing garnish for soups or salads. Others stick to just using the green-white bulbs, while tossing the remaining pieces aside. However, there's no season like now to start using and enjoying all the parts of fennel.

Fennel is available from autumn until early spring and both its stems and bulbs have been found to contain many nutrients. Fennel spice, which is made from the vegetable's seeds, can be found year round, as it is one of five spices in Chinese five-spice powder. One cup of raw, sliced fennel is a huge source of vitamin C, folic acid, fiber, and potassium. History has shown that fennel can be taken to alleviate bad breath, indigestion, intestinal spasms, cramps, and gas. It is thought that Puritans chewed the seeds in order to tame hunger during fasts. Recently, scientists have found that fennel contains antioxidants which promote good health.

In order to gain these healthful benefits, be sure to purchase white or pale-green fennel that has clean, firm bulbs. The bulbs should not be split, bruised, or spotted, while the stalks that grow from the bulb should be relatively straight. Additionally, the vegetable's fronds would be green but not flowering because blooms indicate that the bulb is past maturity. When consumed right away, fennel is at its best. But, it can be kept in the crisper for up to four days. Be sure to wash it before using its base in hors d'oeuvres, salads, and gratins. Also, make sure to reserve its fronds in order to enhance dishes in a potent way. With such versatility in the kitchen, there is absolutely no excuse not to include fennel in your meals this season.

Once you discover that fennel is both crunchy and slightly sweet, you will want to incorporate it into many of your daily meals. Thankfully, fennel can enhance many dishes and make them extraordinary. Here are some quick ideas for using fennel this season. You can thinly shave the desired amount of a fennel bulb and toss it with a bit of olive oil, fresh lemon juice, and a small amount of Parmesan cheese to make a fennel salad at moment's notice. Another option is sauté sliced fennel with equal parts of onion and bell pepper in order to make a simple vegetarian side dish. One can take advantage of fennel's ability to enhance flavors by adding fennel with tuna or grilled sea bass. Fennel can also be cut vertically, leaving bulb, stalk, and leaves intact and then brushed with olive oil and grilled until lightly browned. Another idea is to garnish your favorite vegetable soup with coarsely chopped fennel fronds.

## About the Author

More information on the herb [fennel](#) is available at VitaNet &reg;, LLC Health Food Store. <http://vitanetonline.com/>

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