

# FENNEL

This vegetable is very popular in Europe, where the bulbs are either consumed raw or prepared by baking, blanching, or boiling.

Fennel is crunchy and slightly sweet. The bulb, stalk, leaves and seeds are all edible. Fennel is closely related to parsley, carrots, dill and coriander. Fennel contains its own unique combination of phytonutrients that give it strong antioxidant activity.

**Storage:** Wrap it tightly in plastic and keep in refrigerator for up to 4 days.

**Preparation & Cooking Tips:** Slice off the tough bottom of the bulb. Cut off the stalks; if cooking them, peel. Pull off layers of the bulb and discard the hard core. If eating raw, remove the strings from the outer layers of the bulb. Cut or slice as desired. Fennel is great raw in salads. It can also be braised, boiled, sautéed, baked, broiled or grilled (try it in kabobs). Puréed, cooked fennel is a delight.

## Baked Fennel with Parmesan

- 2 fennel bulbs
- 1 tablespoon butter
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup half-and-half cream
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup crème fraîche\*
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup grated Parmesan cheese

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Cut the base off of the fennel bulbs, and cut a cone shape into the base to remove the core. You can see the core because it is whiter than the surrounding green. This is optional, but helps the fennel cook faster. Slice the fennel vertically (upright) into  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch thick slices.

Melt the butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the fennel, and fry for about 5 minutes. Stir in the half-and-half and crème fraîche until well blended. Transfer to a shallow baking dish. Sprinkle Parmesan cheese over the top.

Bake for 30 minutes in the preheated oven, or until the top is golden brown and the fennel is tender enough to pierce with a fork.

\* Can substitute sour cream

## Fennel Soup

- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup butter
- 5 fennel bulbs, trimmed and quartered
- 1 (32 fluid ounce) container vegetable broth
- salt and pepper to taste

Melt the butter in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the quartered fennel bulbs; cook and stir until golden brown, about 10 minutes. Pour in the broth, and simmer until fennel is tender, about 15 more minutes. Ladle into soup bowls, and season with salt and pepper.

This could be the easiest ‘fancy’ recipe ever. Very delicious! Reheats well too.

## White Bean Fennel Soup

- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 small fennel bulb, thinly sliced
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 5 cups reduced sodium chicken or vegetable broth
- 1 (15 ounce) can white kidney or cannellini beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 (14.5 ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 cups shredded fresh spinach

In a large saucepan, sauté onion and fennel in oil until tender. Add the broth, beans, tomatoes, thyme, pepper, and bay leaf; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 30 minutes or until fennel is tender. Discard bay leaf. Add spinach; cook 3-4 minutes longer or until spinach is wilted.

## Fennel and Orange Salad

- 1 bulb fennel, trimmed and sliced
- 2 large oranges, sliced
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon poppy seeds
- 2 bunches arugula – rinsed, dried and chopped
- salt to taste

Place the fennel and orange in a large bowl. Drizzle with olive oil and vinegar; sprinkle with poppyseeds and salt. Chill and serve over a bed of arugula.

## Fennel in Wine and Honey

- 4 fennel bulbs, trimmed & quartered
- ¼ cup olive oil
- ½ cup chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 cup white wine
- 1 teaspoon mustard seed
- salt and pepper to taste

Place the fennel quarters in large deep skillet with the centers facing up. Drizzle with olive oil then pour in the chicken broth and honey. Season with mustard seed, salt and pepper. Cover and cook over low heat for 45 minutes turning occasionally.