SPICE OF THE MONTH CLUB

Keller Public Library
SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

February 2021

Join us to discuss!

2/23 @ 6:30pm online

Spend the month cooking with your spice and join us on Zoom on the last Tuesday of the month to discuss your opinions, experiences, and love (or hate!).

Join the discussion: http://bit.ly/KPLSpiceClub

This month's spice: FENNEL SEED!

History

Fennel is indigenous to the Mediterranean region of southern Europe. Since antiquity, the seeds have been used as a condiment by the Chinese, Indians and Egyptians.

References to fennel can be found in the writings of Pliny, Charlemagne, and even Shakespeare.

Historically, all parts of the fennel plant were used in many kinds of love potions and in the performing of rituals "to awaken love." In the language of herbs, fennel signifies flattery and the fronds of the plant are often found in romantic flower arrangements.

Use

Fennel seeds work well in a wide variety of dishes including soups, breads, sausages, pasta sauces, pickles, sauerkraut, and salad dressings.

Fennel seed can be used whole, or it can be ground in a spice grinder or with a mortar and pestle. Whole seeds will soften when cooked in a sauce or a stew, but are preferably ground when being used as a rub or in dishes with a short cooking time.

source: The Spice & Herb Bible (Third Edition) by Ian & Kate Hemphill

World Trade Press

Porchetta

Porchetta is a pork roast recipe that was brought to America from Italy during the early 20th century. The dish remains a favorite in the Upper Midwest, especially in Michigan and Minnesota, where it was introduced to mining communities by Italian immigrants. Typically made from a fatty pork shoulder roast with the skin on, this savory dish is seasoned with garlic, rosemary, fennel, and other herbs. The skin, which is sometimes scored, cooks to a crisp to become tasty cracklings. Porchetta sandwiches are commonly found on menus in Connecticut and Philadelphia.

Porchetta

Recipe Servings: 8

Prep Time		Cook Time		Total Time
7x	+	2x	=	10x
15 minutes + 7 hours 15 minutes resting		2 hours 30 minutes		10 hours

Raw Pork Shoulder

☐ Vegetarian ☐ Vegan ☑ Gluten Free ☑ Dairy Free ☐ Kosher ☐ Halal

Ingredients

- ☐ 7–8 lb pork shoulder roast (bone-in, skin-on) or 6–7 lb boneless pork shoulder roast (skin-on)
- ☐ ¼ cup fennel fronds, chopped
- ☐ ¼ cup fresh rosemary, chopped
- ☐ 2 tsp fresh sage leaves, chopped
- ☐ 5 garlic cloves, grated or mashed to a paste
- ☐ 1 lemon, zest finely grated
- ☐ 1½ Tbsp kosher salt
- ☐ 1 tsp fennel seed
- ☐ ¾ tsp red pepper flakes
- ☐ ½ tsp ground black pepper
- ☐ ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

Directions

1. Pat the roast dry using paper towel.
2. Score the skin and fat all over the pork roast using a knife and taking care not to cut down to the meat. This step is optional.
3. Combine the fennel fronds, rosemary, sage, garlic, lemon zest, salt, fennel seed, red pepper flakes, ground black pepper, and olive oil in a food processor. Pulse until a paste forms.
4. Rub the paste all over the pork roast, place it in a large bowl, cover the bowl with plastic wrap, and chill it in the refrigerator overnight or for at least 6 hours.
5. Remove the pork from the refrigerator 1–2 hours before it will be cooked.
6. Preheat the oven to 450°F.
7. Transfer the pork to a rimmed baking sheet, placing it skin-side up, and roast it in the oven for 35 minutes.
8. Reduce the heat to 325°F and continue to cook for 2½–4 hours, until a thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the meat reads 180°F. Boneless roasts will cook more quickly than ones with bone.
9. Remove the roast from the oven, transfer it to a cutting board, and let it rest for 15–30 minutes before slicing and serving.

Grilled Chicken Satay

Chicken satay must be one of my fondest memories of living in Singapore as a child. It was our first port of call at the hawker stalls, and we devoured those tender sticks of chicken dipped in sweet peanut sauce as often as we could. Satay is a great introduction to spiced food for children, and this version lacks the sharp acidity detectable in many prepared satay sauces (it's required for preservation). This satay sauce also makes a good dip for crudités.

Makes 6 servings

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 20 minutes

Tips

If using wooden skewers, soak them in water for at least 30 minutes prior to using, to prevent them from burning while cooking.

You can make the sauce up to 4 days ahead and refrigerate it in an airtight container. If the sauce becomes too thick and dry, simply add more water. If you add too much water, stir over low heat until it thickens.

- **Metal or wooden skewers (see Tips, left)**

SATAY SAUCE

1 tbsp	ground fennel seeds	15 mL
2 tbsp	curry powder	30 mL
1½ tsp	palm sugar or packed light brown sugar	7 mL
1 tsp	oil	5 mL
1 cup	crunchy peanut butter	250 mL
1 tsp	soy sauce	5 mL
	Water	

CHICKEN

4	boneless skinless chicken breasts (about 2 lbs/1 kg total) cut into 1½-inch (4 cm) cubes	4
1 tsp	oil	5 mL
	Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper	
1	cucumber, peeled, seeded and cut into 4-inch (10 cm) matchsticks	1
6	green onions, white and green parts, julienned (see Tips, page 275)	6

1. *Satay Sauce:* In a dry saucepan over medium heat, cook ground fennel, stirring constantly, for 30 seconds. Stir in curry powder and cook for 30 seconds. Stir in sugar and oil. Cook, stirring, for 1 to 2 minutes, until a rich, dark paste forms. Add peanut butter and soy sauce and mix well. Add water to reach desired consistency. Remove from heat and set aside.
2. *Chicken:* In a large bowl, toss chicken with oil and season with salt and pepper to taste. Thread equal portions onto 6 skewers. Cover and set aside in refrigerator until ready to cook.
3. Heat a barbecue or grill pan to High. Cook skewers until chicken is cooked through and slightly charred (this adds great flavor), 4 to 5 minutes per side. Serve hot, garnished with cucumber and green onion. Serve satay sauce overtop or on the side for dipping.

Tips

Julienne is a term for cutting into matchsticks roughly ⅛ inch (3 mm) thick and 3 inches (7.5 cm) long.

Chicken thighs can also be used. They may require an extra 2 minutes cooking time on each side.

source: The Spice & Herb Bible (Third Edition) by Ian & Kate Hemphill

BRILLAT-SAVARIN WITH FUSILLI, PEARS, FENNEL, AND TORN CROISSANT TOPPING

SERVES 2 TO 4

- 4 tablespoons fennel seeds
- 8 ounces fusilli
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium bulb fennel, sliced paper thin
- 2 tablespoons water
- 2 cups milk
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 3 tablespoons flour
- ½ teaspoon sea salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground white pepper
- 1 pound Brillat-Savarin, rind carefully peeled off, chopped into large chunks
- 3 French butter pears, peeled and chopped into ½-inch cubes
- 1 large croissant, torn into small pieces by hand

ALTERNATIVE CHEESES: Délice d'Argental, Dél ce de Bourgogne, Cowgirl Creamery's Mt. Tam, Sweet Grass's Green Hill

ALTERNATIVE FRUITS: Bosc pears, Anjou pears, Seckel pears, Comice pears

WINE PAIRINGS: Chardonnay, champagne, dry Riesling

ADDITIONAL PAIRINGS FOR THE CHEESE: toasted hazelnuts, spiced pear compote, cornmeal biscuits

WE'VE HEARD BRILLAT-SAVARIN CALLED "THE ICE CREAM OF CHEESE," AND IT IS INDEED something special. When ripe, this French triple-cream develops a lusciously rich, buttery texture that begs to be eaten straight up, perhaps with a tiny spoon.

Named after the eighteenth-century French gourmand, Brillat-Savarin is produced in the Normandy region of France, where the cows are known for their profoundly rich milk. When you buy this cheese, make sure it is soft and gives way under a gentle touch; if it doesn't, allow it to ripen in your refrigerator for up to a week to achieve its signature smooth, buttery body.

This dish is all about subtlety. It's not bursting with flavor like some of the other recipes in this book—rather, it's a soft, pure, textural treat. We recommend removing the rind before chopping, but peel carefully—you don't want to waste even a morsel of this lovely cheese, especially the perfectly ripe outer layers!

1. Heat a small saucepan over medium-high heat. Add fennel seeds and toast until they are fragrant and start to darken just a touch, agitating them constantly. Remove from heat.

2. Cook the pasta in salted boiling water until al dente. Drain through a colander and set aside.

3. In a large pan, heat olive oil over medium-high heat. Add sliced fennel bulb and cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add water and continue cooking until soft but still toothsome, with a touch of caramelization, about 5 more minutes. Set aside.

4. To prepare the mornay sauce, heat the milk in a small saucepan over medium heat. As soon as the milk starts to steam and tiny bubbles form around the edges of the pan, turn off the heat. Place the butter in a medium saucepan and melt over medium flame. Add the flour and stir with a flat-edge wooden paddle just until the roux begins to take on a light brown color, scraping the bottom to prevent burning, about 3 minutes. Slowly add the milk and stir constantly until the sauce thickens enough to evenly coat the back of a spoon—a finger drawn along the back of the spoon should leave a clear swath. Remove from heat and stir in salt and pepper. Add cheese to sauce, stirring until completely melted.

5. Preheat your broiler. In a shallow casserole dish, combine pasta, cheese sauce, sautéed fennel bulb, and pears. Fold gently until well combined. Cover the top of the dish with torn croissant chunks and slide under the broiler. Broil just until the top of the cheese is bubbling and the croissant bits are toasty. Dish into bowls and sprinkle lightly with toasted fennel seeds.

source: Melt: The Art of Macaroni and Cheese by Stephanie Stiavetti & Garrett McCord (2013)