

Asian Vegetables Can Enhance Any Meal

Asian vegetables offer a host of unique flavors and are quick and easy to prepare. In many Asian cultures, meat is used sparingly in cooking, almost as a seasoning. Therefore, the meal centers around the unique flavors offered by the vegetables.

For more information on Asian vegetable visit:
<http://www.horticulture.wisc.edu/freshveg/>



Mustard Greens Under a Floating Row Cover



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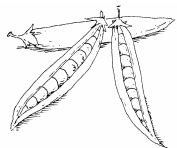
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DISCOVERING ASIAN VEGETABLES



A Sampling of Asian Vegetables

PEA SHOOTS



The term “pea shoots” refers to the tendrils and the top pairs of leaves at the end of a pea stem. Since peas are a cool-season crop, you’ll find pea shoots in the market in the spring and fall.

When purchasing, look for tips that are green and fresh looking. Avoid any tips which have wilted or have yellow leaves.

Wash shoots and cut into 2-inch lengths. Pea shoots are often eaten raw and add a very pleasant taste when mixed with other greens in salads. A pea shoot salad can also be prepared by first washing the shoots, patting dry, and then topping them with lime or lemon juice.

LEMON GRASS

Lemon grass is a staple of Thai cooking. When using raw, use only the bottom four inches of the bulb. Slice as thinly as possible and add a small amount to soups, stews, salads, curries, stir-fry, or egg rolls.

MUSTARD GREENS

Mustard greens have a peppery flavor although the degree of pungency will vary between varieties, plant part eaten, and climate in which they are grown. Small, young leaves usually have a milder flavor.

When purchasing, look for moist, firm stems and leaves without holes or signs of yellowing.

Use smaller leaves raw in salads. Mustard greens can also be steamed, boiled, or stir fried. Steam mustard greens for 6-9 minutes until the color brightens. Boil for 3-5 minutes, drain and serve with red wine vinegar. Add mustard greens to stir-fry for about 3 minutes before the end of the cooking time.

YARD-LONG BEANS

Yard-long beans, also referred to as asparagus beans or Chinese long beans, originated from Asia, and are named due to their length. The beans can reach 30 inches long but should be purchased when they are 12-14 inches long as they will have their best flavor at this point.



“Red
Noodle”
Yard-Long
Beans

Look for beans that are 10-16 inches in length and firm without spots. Buy beans that are sold loose so you can get pods of equal size so they cook uniformly. Do not buy beans if you can see the seeds bulging through the pod or that are woody or stringy. Beans with tough skins or that appear wilted should also be passed up.

You can prepare yard long beans in the same manner as you would green or wax beans. However, since the beans are so slender, they cook rapidly.

CHINESE CABBAGE AND PAK CHOI

Chinese cabbage is a very versatile Asian vegetable and it is referred to by many different names including Napa cabbage, bok choy, choy sum, and celery cabbage. To further add confusion, Chinese cabbage grows in a wide variety of shapes. These include a barrel shape, tall and cylindrical, “loose-headed” type which forms a partial or semi-head, and a looser variety with a very fluffy appearance.

Pak Choi is a relative of Chinese Cabbage and grows in a wide variety of shapes. These include the white-stemmed type, soup spoon type, squat or Canton type.

When shopping, look for leaves that are fresh and crisp. Avoid yellow or wilted leaves. Chinese cabbage and other “stemmed cabbages” should be free of brown spots on the leaves or stems.

Chinese cabbage and Pak Choi may be eaten raw, steamed, stir-fried, or fermented. If stir-frying, chop leaves and stem and add them to the wok during the last two minutes of cooking.